

When the European Union says “*Marco*” do local governments say “*Polo*”?

A case study on local governments in Skåne and their
responses towards European integration

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Abstract

Local governments in Sweden live in a reality where the European Union has an increased impact on them, via legislation, policy making, EU-funding programs etc. This thesis focuses on local governments' responses towards European integration. It does so by using elements of the theory of fusion – the fusing of institutional levels creates a world where the EU is the policy initiator, national governments are the transcribers and local governments are the implementers. In this thesis, fusion is used as an analytical tool consisting of three indicators: absorption, adaptation and action. These indicators work as a typology for local governments' responses towards European integration. The study is conducted through an analysis of a representation group, focusing on how local governments in Skåne structure their responses. By conducting interviews with civil servants and applying the three indicators the thesis aim is to investigate and explore local governments' responses towards European integration. The results indicate local governments share both similarities and differences in how they respond towards European integration.

Key words: Local Government, Skåne, European Integration, Response, Fusion
Words: 19964

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List of Abbreviations

Council of Regions	CoR
European Community	EC
European union	EU
Local government	LG
The Swedish Institute for European Policy Studies	Sieps
Skåne Association of Local Authorities	SALAR
Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions	KFSK

1 Introduction

”What does the EU have to do with the decision to construct a sports center in Vetlanda?”¹

Needless to say, the EU is not the main driving force in the construction of Vetlanda’s new sports center. However, it still affects the process by for example regulations² on public procurement and environmental aspects in city planning and construction.³ What that entails is the LG⁴ not only having to consider national political structures but also increasingly supranational influences. By this form of integrated governance it is not only the national governments that set the framework for action for LGs, but also the EU.⁵ In the Swedish case this has resulted in a development in which an increasing amount of LGs seek to affect the EU.⁶ This development could hypothetically explain some of the increased complexity in European integration and governance as actors have been added that previously wasn’t a direct part of the European integration process. The result is a process of integration and governance within the EU that moves vertically, both upwards and downwards. Subnational government such as counties and municipalities have, over the past decades, received and assumed a different role within the EU and they are now essential in the delivery of EU policies. They carry this role as they have developed a more pro-active stance and engagement into the affairs of the union.⁷

Although the precise integration and governance processes within the EU and how they affect LGs are challenging to illustrate, two general trends will be described. Firstly, there is an increased legal impact on LGs as they to a greater extent than before are confronted with EU. Secondly, a new structure with opportunities has arisen for LGs and in this new structure LGs have the possibility to promote their interests and even influence policy⁸. According to De Rooj, national constraints are a significant factor in whether LGs utilize these new

¹ Sveriges Kommuner och Landsting, 2010, *EU i lokalpolitiken. En undersökning av dagordningar från kommuner, landsting och regioner*, 7.

² One should keep in mind that the way EU affects local and subnational governments in Sweden is, in many ways, unique due to the principle of local self-government in Sweden. *ibid*, 8.

³ *Ibid*, 7.

⁴ LGs in this study refers to the Swedish word ”kommuner”. An English synonym is the word “municipalities”.

⁵ *Ibid*, 7.

⁶ Local and subnational governments have for example onsite representation in Brussels, *ibid*, 7.

⁷ Guderjan, Marius, 2013, *When Europe meets the local level: a fusing multilevel compound?* PhD Dissertation Manchester Metropolitan University, 2.

⁸ De Rooij, Rob, 2002. *The impact of the European Union on local government in the Netherlands*. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 9:3, 449.

opportunities or not. The constraints could for example be LGs position in regard to the constitution or national competences being centralized.⁹ Another constraint relate to resources¹⁰ and how differences in resources influence how LGs can respond towards EU integration and take advantage of its opportunities. This would by default imply that LGs' ability to respond to the impact of European integration derives from national constrains. The result is a reality in which European integration is differentiated and carries with it different consequences for LGs all over the union. The European Commission White Paper from 2001, discussed the issues that LGs are increasingly carrying the financial and administrative burden of EU legislation and not living up to their role of being the link between the public and EU policy. The paper makes the interesting suggestion that there should be a systemic dialogue to engage national, regional and local associations when the Commission develops policy proposals, to make sure their knowledge and conditions are accounted for.¹¹

European integration and how LGs respond towards it, is the main focus of this thesis. As will be illustrated in the following sections, this "new reality" LGs are facing is not always easy to deal with and it offers both possible opportunities as well as obstacles. In this thesis, the theory of fusion will be applied as an analytical tool. Elements of fusion will be turned into a typology of three different indicators: *absorption*, *adaptation* and *action*. These indicators will be used to analyze and describe possible factors that could influence LGs' responses to European integration. The analysis will be based on interviews with civil servants from LGs in the region of Skåne in Sweden.

1.1 Swedish Local government in a European context

In the case of Sweden, the LGs uphold a sizable amount of core functions and services. EUs policy output directly affects LGs in Sweden as they are the end implementer of many directives.¹² This can carry substantial consequences for the LGs in terms of resource allocation, administrative concerns, new levels of governance to take into consideration and when the political power shift from the national level to a European level. The LGs' role in the Swedish society can be boiled down to into four core functions: the role of being a community builder, service producer, employer and regulator. According to SALAR the impact of the EU on LGs and these core functions can be illustrated in the following ways: LGs has a monopoly on plan for construction within its borders. This makes them a

⁹ Ibid, 449.

¹⁰ Resources could for example be finances, personnel, location or access to politicians or officials, *ibid*, 449.

¹¹ European Commission, 2001. *European Governance: A White Paper*. COM (2001) p, 428. Available [here](#). Last updated: 2015-10-22. 9-11.

¹² A report made by SALAR shows that on average, the EU affects around 60 percent of the municipal agenda in Sweden, either directly or indirectly. Swedish association of Local Authorities and Regions, 2010. *EU in local politics – a study of agendas from municipalities, county councils and regions, preface*.

crucial actor in building the community and the EU's legislation regarding construction and special environmental concerns highly influences the planning. Furthermore, in terms of being a service producer the LGs have responsibility for schools, elderly care, healthcare, public transport and waste management. These are also areas the EU directly affects by for example rules on public procurement on goods and services. Regions, county councils and municipal authorities are the current employers of an estimated 1.1 million people in Sweden and the EU directly affects LGs in their roles as employers through legislation on for example work hours, work environment and principles of equality in employment. As regulators the LGs are responsible to uphold laws and regulations concerning operations that can impact the environment and production of food.¹³

By the illustration above it becomes clear that the EU does not only indirectly affect LGs through policy output on national governments, but also directly by legislation, directives and other forms of initiatives such as participation in EU-programs for funding. In many ways EU constantly, directly or indirectly, influences LGs and local politics. This could imply that LGs in Europe uphold a significant role in the ongoing European integration process. If LGs are parts in expanding and understanding European integration, generating an understanding of potential consequences of the European integration becomes highly important for the LGs.

The actual impact and influence of LGs' work in Europe is substantial. In 2009 there were close to 300 regions and 91 000 municipalities in Europe and they accounted for approximately 2/3 of the public investment expenditures that year.¹⁴ In combination with the EU's subsidiarity principle in decision making, LGs do not only possess an important role, but are also key actors for making European integration transpire. The EU does not only work downwards with policy implementation, it provides LGs with great opportunities, such as program funding. It has also provided arenas for information exchange, a tool much needed to exchanging the best practice methods. To summarize this section, there are always two sides to every story. Even though the European integration carries with it certain limitations it has also opened up a new world with many possible opportunities for the LGs.¹⁵

¹³ Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions. *EU påverkar lokalt*. Published: 2016-01-25. Visited: 2016-02-15. Available: [here](#).

¹⁴ Committee of Regions and coordinated by Directorate- General for Communication, 2009, *The role and impact of local and regional authorities within the European Union Opinions on the different levels of public authorities and awareness of the Committee of the Regions*. Special Eurobarometer 307/Wave 70.1 – TNS opinion & social, 3.

¹⁵ Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions, 2010. *EU in local politics – a study of agendas from municipalities, county councils and regions*, 40.

1.2 Fusion and previous work

Previous research done in the field conclude that there is a need to create contextual differences, this since the thesis connects to different streams of inquiry. In the first stream regards European integration, this since the fusion approach seeks to explain the consequences and reasons behind this process. In a second stream the study of LGs in a European context is relevant, and in a third stream the research done within the fusion literature. Understandably the streams are not clear-cut, they do interlink and create a grander picture of European integration, fusion literature and the role of LGs in the European Union.

The process of interlinking can be observed in the work of Goldsmith and Klausen¹⁶, in their book they seek to discover the impact of EU at, as they describe it, its lowest political and administrative level.¹⁷ Furthermore, they seek answers regarding what has been done with that impact at a local level. They do this by conducting an investigation around attitudes and roles of the involved actors. One argument made is that in order to understand European integration a multitude of theories is needed, such as network- political process and organization all add to the understanding of integration.¹⁸ They also put forward a definition of European integration as a process that develop systems of and relations of mutual dependency and that this should be studied by combining political, economical, cultural, administrative and social features of integration.¹⁹ In a article by Goldsmith²⁰ from 1993 he argues that the mutual dependency between the EU institutions and LGs have developed over a long period of time. In his article he focuses on the impact that the EC had on the behavior of LGs. Here Goldsmith argues that as the EC supranational level keeps changing, these changes have lead to a focus on LGs by the supranational level EC and that subnational actors have increased their focus upon Brussels, specifically through lobbying.²¹ It is important to note that these developments have lead to a scenario in where LGs cross national boundaries at an increased level resulting in scenario of moving past national governments to deal directly with Brussels; a process that works vice versa.²²

In the doctoral dissertation²³ Guderjan makes an in-depth analysis and exploration of the European integration process, the role of the LGs within it, and how fusion can be used and understood as a third way integration. Fusion moves between supranational integration and intergovernmental cooperation as a way to explain transfers of competences from national to a European level according to

¹⁶ Goldsmith, M. & Klausen, K (edt), 1997. *European Integration and Local Government*.

¹⁷ Ibid, 6.

¹⁸ Ibid, 5-7.

¹⁹ Ibid, 5.

²⁰ Goldsmith, M, 1993. *The Europeanization of Local Government*. *Urban Studies*, 30, 5/6, 683-700.

²¹ Ibid, 683.

²² Ibid, 698.

²³ Guderjan, Marius, 2013. *When Europe meets the local level: A fusing multilevel compound?* Department of History, politics and Philosophy, Manchester Metropolitan University.

Guderjan.²⁴ Guderjan points to the issue that there has not previously, to any larger extent, been made any attempts to create a comprehensive, differentiated, and theoretical perspective to understand and explain macro-trajectories within the EU and how LGs links to the process.²⁵ In the dissertation Guderjan focuses on assessing whether fusion can explain systemic linkages between LGs change and European integration, the fusion of competences and accountability in the multilevel policy structure of the EU and the attitudes towards the integration process among local actors.²⁶ In order to be able to apply fusion on LGs and test it Guderjan develops five empirical indicators²⁷ these are then applied to a case study of North West of England and North Rhine-Westphalia.

Another aspect of research done within fusion and subnational governments relates to regions and how they interact with the EU. The scholar Lee Miles²⁸ has published a series of different works that both explore fusion as an approach and conducts analyses of what possibilities fusions enables in exploring interactions with the member states' regional structures and the EU.²⁹

One notable scholar in relation to fusion approaches is Wessels and his development of the approach. In his 1997 article³⁰ Wessels draws a theoretical outline for the position of fusion in the canvas of European integration. Wessels fusion is not a new way of describing the integration process, but it moves away from the traditional view of European integration as pooling of sovereignties. Instead it refers to a merger of public resources from several state levels. This process can result in difficulties in tracing accountability as responsibilities for areas becomes more diffuse and the trends of merging resources at different levels also create a situation that becomes increasingly harder to reverse.³¹

1.3 The objective and the question at hand

In the illustrated scenario above it becomes rather clear that the impact of the EU upon LGs in Sweden is relatively large. However, this thesis will not focus on analyzing the case of Sweden as a whole, instead the LGs in Skåne is the focus target. In this thesis a group of LGs will be selected and act as a representation for

²⁴ Ibid, ii.

²⁵ Ibid, ii.

²⁶ Ibid, ii.

²⁷ The indicators developed are the following: *absorption* of European legislation and policy by local government; Europeanization of local actors' *attention* towards supranational policies and legislation; institutional and procedural *adaptation*; vertical and horizontal, as well as direct and indirect *action* of local government; *attitudes* of local actors' towards European governance and polices, Guderjan, 2013, ii.

²⁸ Miles, Lee, 2008 *Future of a Fusing Europe*. Karlstad University Studies: Karlstad, 2008. Online access [here](#).

²⁹ Lindh Magnus, Löden Hans, Miles Lee, Räftegård Curt, Stegmann McCallion Malin, 2009. *Fusing Regions? Sustainable Regional Action in the Context of European Integration*. Nordic Research Programme 2005-2008, Nordregio:Stockholm, 2009.

³⁰ Wessels, Wolfgang, 1997. *An Ever Closer Fusion? A Dynamic Macropolitical View on Integration Processes*. Journal on Common market Studies, Vol 35 No 2, 268-299.

³¹ Ibid, 247.

how LGs in Skåne generally responds towards EU integration. A specific policy field is not investigated, rather this inquiry focus on a more overarching level in order to create a larger depiction of this response. Where case specific policy fields are mentioned, they are used to highlight the possible diverse nature of European integration and LGs response towards it.

Therefore, the overall aim of the thesis will be to explore consequences of European integration on LGs. In order to understand these possible consequences, the focus will be directed towards investigating how LGs respond towards EU-related matters and what type of responses they work with.

By utilizing the fusion approach, three different pathways for LGs response have been adopted. They represent a typological framework for understanding both how the EU can impact downwards but primarily create a way for exploring and describing how LGs responds towards EU impact. The approach highlights differentiated pathways that LGs can walk down in terms of formulating their strategy for the EU, thereby providing distinct factors to look for in the exploration process.

Through interviews conducted with civil servants, located at a strategic level within the LGs the aim is to find and compare differences and similarities in how LGs respond. Both in terms of downwards impact from the EU but also how LGs structure its work horizontally and vertically. The actual comparison is not conducted with an aim to judge which areas are doing well or poorly with EU strategy, rather it is done to see if there are different paths LGs walk down and possible reasons to why these paths exist or not.

In order to meet the objective of this thesis the following research question have been formulated:

How do local governments in Skåne respond and react to European Integration and are there similarities or differences in their responses?

To answer the formulated questions, three possible scenarios have been formulated. They relate to the three identified and later on presented pathways that depicts LGs responses. In short they are: *absorption*, *adaptation* and *action*. By doing this the aim is not to test if they are true or not, instead they are used as a way to structure the ongoing analysis in chapter four.

Scenario 1: Absorption is connected to the legal impact of the EU on LGs, both directly and indirectly. Within this scenario the least amount of variance will exist among LGs, since LGs cannot choose what laws to implement or not. Possible variations are, instead, related to the existence of structures within the LGs dealing with the implementation of legislation directly.

Scenario 2: Adaptation is how LGs adapts into new institutional settings at various levels. In this scenario there can be a higher degree of variance, since LGs can make choices on how they want to adapt to structural changes, i.e. how they work within their own organization if they are part of formalized cooperations both domestically and internationally.

Scenario 3: Action is related to what LGs do in order to affect the allocation of funding and policy processes at the EU level. This is a form of reaction and promotion of the LGs' own preferences. Within this scenario the individual LGs in Skåne are not individually active in the European policy process, rather they seek to influence through associations and networks. And if individual LGs actively influence the European policy process, they are most likely deviant cases.

1.4 Outline of the thesis

Chapter one has illustrated how LGs is affected, highlighted some of the elements of the previously done research and presented the research objective.

In chapter two the theoretical use of the fusion approach will be presented and the indicators used to create a typological pathway to explore and describe LGs response towards European integration. European integration and how the fusion approach views it will also be discussed in this section.

Chapter three then moves into the methodical choices and operationalization done within the scope of this thesis. Here process-tracing is introduced as a way of structuring the typology and assist as a method in the exploration process. The case of Skåne is also presented and limited. Lastly the interviews are discussed in terms of how they are done and source critical principles.

Chapter four moves into the analytical presentation of the material, both from interviews and combined with published sources. The chapter is an ongoing analysis with the three pathways in focus and the material is used as a way of depicting the forms that LGs response takes.

Chapter five then moves into conclusion of the work in relation to asked research question and scenarios.

2 Fusing European Integration from Brussels to Local Governments

2.1 Fusion and European Integration

When seeking to understand and explain current European integration between the institutions of Brussels and LGs the fusion approach offers a crucial and significant analytical tool. This tool does not only assist the process of understanding European governance but also provides a set of empirical indicators³² that can be applied to a integration process between the EU and LGs; providing the possibility to create an understanding of the actual integration process, how its conducted and what possible consequences it carries with it for LGs.

A key factor when referring to the fusion approach in general is that fusion, by itself, moves beyond horizontal pooling of sovereignties and cooperation as explanatory factors for integration. We live in a political reality that fuse both vertically and horizontally within a mutual policy cycle and national and European institutions do not act independently. They are instead both parts of the mutual exchange from the policy-cycle under the supranational organization³³ the EU.

Fusion provides the researcher with a tool to conduct dynamic analyses of European integration, governance and how member states change within, including subnational government.³⁴ Scholars often apply traditional theories of understanding integration with a focus on states and the EU-institutions and by doing so they risk undervaluing the open-ended integration process.³⁵ Wessels underlined that fusion targets the explanations related to differentiated integration. As a result, when analyzing subnational governments, the differentiated integration process is highly relevant.³⁶ This derives from a notion that since member states have diverging interest, the general European integration process is asymmetrical and a differentiated process³⁷, a reality that could be even more true when analyzing subnational governments across the European Union.³⁸ The traditional grand theories struggle to explain this asymmetry and fragmented integration process

³² Guderjan, Marius. 2015, 938. *Theorising European Integration of Local Government-Insights from the Fusion Approach*. Local Government Studies, 41:6, 937-955.

³³ Ibid, 938.

³⁴ Ibid 938

³⁵ Wessels, 1997, 269-270.

³⁶ Guderjan, 2015, 939.

³⁷ Guderjan, 2013, 11.

³⁸ Ibid, 11.

while theories such as multilevel governance, network theory and Europeanization theories don't offer a specific nor comprehensive enough explanation to differentiated integration.³⁹ Explaining and understanding European integration is not an easy task, one reason for this could be that European governance differs from traditional government structures within a nation-state. Although hierarchical structures are established the supranational aspect to the EU is still characterized by informal and formal interdependencies in an evolving nature.⁴⁰ In order to face this troublesome task fusion has been developed by a collection of approaches, meaning that it is not exclusive by nature but instead shares assumptions and insights with other concepts regarding European integration.⁴¹ By applying fusion the researcher is offered useful insights and conceptual tools to expand the thought-process regarding European integration.⁴² According to for example Goldsmith factors such as a hierarchical structures within the EU and the EU as a whole is characterized by formal and informal networks that interact in an ever-changing interdependent environment.⁴³ The consequence of such a complex system of governance for an analysis is that instead of narrowing the theoretical focus there is a need to broaden and combine approaches to be able to investigate transformation of states, institutions and loyalties from the traditional state centric perspective into a European polity.⁴⁴

Guderjan states that the fusion approach is a well functioning tool for analyzing LGs. According to him state-centric, neo-functionalist theories, multilevel governance, and Europeanisation concepts do not provide a comprehensive enough understanding at a macro perspective as neither one of them are able to combine European integration trajectories with the possible consequences and changing dynamics for LGs.⁴⁵ This is since their focus revolves around power shifts between the European level and the national levels, while research done on LGs demands a focus on the ongoing interplay between actors and institutions over different levels.⁴⁶ Multilevel governance and fusion do contain similarities and both account for a shift in decision-making capabilities from strict territorial aspects towards the interlinked compound decision-making with degrees of overlapping networks that impacts both vertically and horizontally between actors and institutions on various levels.⁴⁷ The issue with multilevel governance is according to Guderjan that since its not fully developed into a theory of European integration it struggles to offer insight regarding causal links between the process of European governance and the

³⁹ Ibid, 11.

⁴⁰ Guderjan, 2013, 8.

⁴¹ Mittag, Jürgen, 2011. *Towards disciplinary transfers? Benefits and restraints of European integration and fusion theory for historical science*. In Diedrichs, U., Faber, A., Tekin, F. & Umbach, G. (eds.) *Europe Reloaded – Differentiation of Fusion?*, 129

⁴² Miles, Lee , 2011. *Thinking bigger: Fusion concepts, strengths and scenarios*. In Diedrichs, U., Faber, A., Tekin, F. & Umbach, G. (eds.) *Europe Reloaded – Differentiation of Fusion?* 187-188.

⁴³ Goldsmith, 2003, 129.

⁴⁴ Goldsmith & Klausen, 1997, 5

⁴⁵ Guderjan, 2013, 9.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 9.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 2013, 10.

responses toward this process by subnational government.⁴⁸ Europeanization also provides insight into the world of fusion and LGs concerning European governance, but it does so without providing an explanation to the integration process. Europeanization is rather an outcome of integration and focuses on activities and institutions within a member state and their ongoing adaptation process toward EU⁴⁹. In the context of Europeanization, fusion provides an explanatory framework that incorporates the Europeanization processes at the local level with the macro level of European integration. Fusion explains Europeanization and defines it as a process that moves actors' attention and actions towards the EU. This move occurs through adaptation in institutional and procedural elements and through socialization of the attitudes of actors.⁵⁰

But what is fusion really? Fusion assumes that with a growing economic interdependence both globally and within Europe, nation-states on their own cannot provide the expected welfare to its citizens. To meet the welfare needs of its citizens governments move sovereignty to the supranational level, thereby merging resources into a complex reality of shared institutions. This can be seen as incremental steps in a process of transforming the nation-state.⁵¹ The transformation derives from an open-ended process in which politicians both seek to protect sovereignty and to understand supranational solutions and their possibilities in facing challenges related to generally desired policy outcomes. This scenario can be interpreted as a third way of governance, it contains more than intergovernmental cooperation but less than a European federal state that pose a threat towards sovereignty.⁵² The process that leads to this development involves two central factors; firstly, the incremental socialization of politicians by European integration has lead to even further integration and secondly preferences associated with integration varies among policy fields and political structures. These two factors provides the end result of an overall fusion of subnational, national and supranational levels related to competences which creates a structure of vague accountability.⁵³ The fusion approach has a specific focus on the systemic linkage that emerge between subnational, national and supranational institutions and actors in regards to competences and responsibilities.⁵⁴

2.1.1 How will fusion be used in this thesis?

In order to be able to apply fusion on LGs and test it Guderjan has developed five empirical indicators which all derives from the fusion literature and have been particularly generated for empirical assessment and exploring explanations of the

⁴⁸ Ibid, 10.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 10.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 11.

⁵¹ Ibid, 12.

⁵² Ibid, 13.

⁵³ Ibid, 13.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 13.

role held by LGs in the EU.⁵⁵ In short these five indicators are *absorption* of EU policies and legislation; *attention* towards said policies; *adaptation* at different levels of government; *action* of LGs to participate in policies and utilize the same and LGs *attitudes* concerning integration within the EU.⁵⁶

In this thesis, only three of these indicators will be used to explore the responses of LGs toward European integration. These indicators will then be used as typologies to represent LGs responses toward EU integration and governance.⁵⁷ The indicators that will be used are *action*, *absorption* and *adaptation* and in the following subsection all three of them will be discussed. The reason for only applying three out of the five stems from a notion that they incorporate key elements⁵⁸ which relates well towards the aim of the thesis. Due to the limitations of the thesis, applying three indicators offers an analytical frame on the work thereby reducing the risk for non-relevant information being processed. The indicators applied provide an illustration that covers different levels of analyses, with absorption representing the vertical top-bottom focus “how EU impacts LGs”, adaptation provides insight into how LGs has adapted the fusing process and action provides a bottom-up focus on how LGs structure their EU work and face European integration and governance.

These indicators offer the researcher a possibility to structure the analysis to cover multiple aspects from different levels and to explore which possible factors could explain why LGs’ responses toward the EU are more or less present in these different indicators.

2.1.2 Absorption

Absorption concern the level of implementation of EU legislation and can be used as an indicator of how the arrangement of the European political system is constructed. Mandatory outputs forces LGs, to different extents, to react and adapt. Implementation of EU legislation is considered to be the strongest connection between LGs and EU institutions.⁵⁹ The link between LGs and EU institutions, however, depends on an important factor - how the national legislation process is designed. Currently there are a variety of different implementation systems. To provide a few examples; in England 50% of legislation is implemented by LGs, in Germany that figure is 80%, and in Sweden it is estimated that somewhere close to

⁵⁵ Guderjan, 2015, 938.

⁵⁶ The indicators represent different analytical focus, absorption and attention represent a top down perspective, adaptation focus on how far competences between European and local levels have fused, action offers a bottom-up engagement by local government and attitudes is directed towards if policy-makers have developed a preference for integration with the European level, Guderjan, 2013, 16.

⁵⁷ The use of the indicators as types of local government response will be further explained in the coming subsection.

⁵⁸ The three indicators focus on legal, action (how local government act towards the EU) and institutional adaptation.

⁵⁹ Guderjan, 2015, 941.

60% of the legislative implementation is done at the local governmental level.⁶⁰ EU legislations is important and these binding decisions illustrate how the EU differs from other supranational organizations. Absorption of legislation can therefore highlight the consequences of the integration process and how it develops over time. Legislation increasingly affects LGs within the EU as integration within the system deepens. However, EU institutions are dependent on member states and their implementation capability, and member states are depending on their LGs in turn for this implementation.⁶¹

Absorption also focuses on the arrival of new policy challenges that can both impact and benefit LGs. Through policy challenges the EU can influence and impact, even though they don't have extensive legal competence. In fields such as demographic change, unemployment, economic growth, climate change, energy and security the EU don't have any major legal competences but instead vast programs for funding.⁶² These programs⁶³ holds a top-down perspective with the EU actually imposing certain regulatory aspects in terms of compliance with regulatory frameworks that LGs has to meet in order to apply for program funding.⁶⁴ This process shapes the LGs behavior as the Commission can determine criteria for application. According to Goldsmith and Klausen this provides the Commission with the possibility to not only decide who can play in the funding game, but also how that funding game is going to be played.⁶⁵

With the EU cooperation a new level of law has in many ways been added for LGs to consider and follow in their work. One of the most prominent fields that is affected is the field of public procurement⁶⁶. Other fields are also affected such as services directives⁶⁷ which impacts features such as water, electricity, waste management, public transport, childcare, cultural actives, education, social and health care.⁶⁸

2.1.3 Adaptation

Fusing LGs and Brussels is not, according to the theory of fusion, a one-way downward exchange. Actors seek institutional access at the EU level and this pressure can force the EU to reform its capacities in order to meet a potentially

⁶⁰ Guderjan, 2015, 941 and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions, 2010, preface.

⁶¹ Guderjan, 2013, 54.

⁶² Guderjan, 2015, 942.

⁶³ Funding programs could for example be: Interreg; Urban; Urbact; Leader; Life+ etc

⁶⁴ Guderjan, 2015, 942.

⁶⁵ Goldsmith & Klausen, 1997, 238.

⁶⁶ Directives such as on Procurement in the Water, Energy, Transport and Postal Services Sector 2014/ 24/EU and 2014/25/EU); state aid (Altmark Trans Judgment on Compensation Payments C-280/00; Monti-Kroes Package on Rules Governing Compensation for Public Service Obligations IP/05/937; SGEI Package IP/111571) and human resources management (Directive on Public Works, Supply and Service Contracts 2004/18/EC; Working Time Directive 2003/88/EC).

⁶⁷ Teckal C-107/98 and The City of Halle C-26/03 Judgements on Inter-municipal Cooperation; Directive on Services in the Internal Market 2006/123/EC.

⁶⁸ Guderjan, 2015, 942.

growing demand for input into policy. This willingness to act within a formal institutional setting at a EU level, however, also puts obligations and strains on the LGs' own administration to adapt into new settings and a potentially active role within the EU context.⁶⁹ The adaptation indicator does not only indicate but also investigates changes at various levels of government in relation to LGs.⁷⁰ The indicator investigates changes in these structures and institutions that have an impact on LGs, both nationally and internationally. Furthermore, it discloses how LGs change internally. The focus of this thesis will be how LGs have changed internally and what type of overarching networks and associations they are members of.

In terms of structured and formalized representation within EU-institutions LGs don't possess any clear and significant role within the EU system. The only formal institutional structure that LGs is part of is the CoR. Apart from the CoR LGs might be part of and represented in the Commission working groups in where a dialogue between the Commission, local and regional associations can be present⁷¹. Since LGs don't possess this formal role in EU institutions they mostly focus on cooperation through different associations, which provides a theoretical possibility for greater influence and the possibility to further represent their own interests at a EU level.⁷² With this in mind the adaptation indicator focuses on LGs ability to cooperate both with other local and regional actors, but also with EU institutions. Furthermore, it focuses on the issue of adapting to these possible new institutional cooperations, such as associations and the impact that they can have both on the LGs itself and also on the EU. As a possible response to the need to be present within the European policy machinery and to provide an example of how LGs adapt to new institutional settings the establishment and presence of offices in Brussels that represent individual LG can be mentioned.⁷³ This can also be seen as a link to the action indicator, since having an office in Brussels that works directly with EU would indicate that the individual LG is more active in EU and have adapted to a new institutional setting.

2.1.4 Action

At times there is a need not only to adapt, absorb and pay attention towards the EU but also to act. Action is a key indicator within fusion. Generally speaking, action within fusion reflects how policy-makers react towards absorption of both legal directives from the EU and policy. They do this by acting on their own, to influence the policy cycle at the European level.⁷⁴ Through the absorption indicator a picture of relevant policy fields in which LGs and the EU institutions are

⁶⁹ Ibid, 945.

⁷⁰ Ibid, 945.

⁷¹ Ibid, 945.

⁷² Ibid, 945.

⁷³ Ibid, 946

⁷⁴ Ibid, 947

interacting can be established.⁷⁵ With principal policy fields identified it falls to the action indicator to locate what types of actions that LGs are evolved in. One common type of involvement for LGs within the policy fields is often the allocation of funding, an activity which is typical among LGs.⁷⁶ This would imply that financial aspects are crucial for LGs, when levels of action into EU policies are under investigation. The financial streams are important for action at the local level, but action also involves influence and prevention of outcomes in the policy cycle that would be negative for LGs.

The influence and prevention parts of the indicator focus on legislation and whether LGs are active in the process or not. This process can relate to influence through consultation procedures or preventing legislation through influence that could affect them negatively.⁷⁷ In investigating LGs' action within EU policies it becomes important to keep in mind that LGs has little to no institutional access to the EU⁷⁸, apart from the CoR⁷⁹. With no direct access to European institutions LGs has to rely upon associations, networks and other forms of agents if they want to pursue an active role and actively impact policy⁸⁰. Because LGs often organize themselves within associations, the action indicator also focus upon work conducted related to relevant associations, national and transnational.⁸¹

2.2 Fusion as a typology

The theoretical perspective of the thesis derives from the typological use of theory. A typological theory initially focuses on the specification of pathways that are used to specify the outcomes⁸², with that in mind the three indicators of *absorption*, *adaptation* and *action* becomes relevant. They are the pathways in which the empirical material of this thesis will be applied into.

At its core the typological way of theoretical reasoning is the possibility to identify actual and potential conjunctions of variables and thereby create linkages in-between causes and effects that may occur.⁸³ One also uses generalizable pathways that depicts a type of event and why it carries the result that it does. The indicators explained above, combined with the typological theoretical approach will be used to allow the reader a clear picture of possible pathways for LGs.

⁷⁵ Ibid, 947

⁷⁶ Ibid, 947

⁷⁷ Ibid, 947.

⁷⁸ Ibid, 947.

⁷⁹ Local government in Sweden are not directly part of CoR, the national organization The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR) is the umbrella organization for local and regional government and member of CoR.

⁸⁰ Guderjan, 2015, 947.

⁸¹ Ibid, 948.

⁸² George Alexander & Bennet, Andrew, 2005. *Case studies and theory development in the social sciences*. MIT press Cambridge, Massachusetts; London, England, 235.

⁸³ Ibid, 236.

Moving further into the use of a typological theory, the George and Bennett definition will be applied⁸⁴, and the theoretical use of fusion will, according with the typological theory, be divided into three tiers of application. During the first tier the indicators are the pathways that LGs can use for their EU-related work and how they respond to impact from the EU. *Absorption, adaptation or action* establish a classification scheme i.e. typologies, and are defined in the above theoretical section. In the second tier it will be up to the researcher to explore and specify the factors that can explain the outcomes, selecting different explanatory factors for LGs work in the different paths by default. In the third tier of the analysis the indicators are applied to a number of cases, which will create the ability to come up with a generalized depiction of how these explorative and explanatory indicators work.

Fusion should not to a full extent be viewed as a typology because it does not include in its current stage all the logical and possible typologies, which is needed for a fully established typology⁸⁵. With this in mind one should view the results in this thesis as a possible addition to the development of fusion as a typology; making the research explorative in its core and connecting the results towards a larger group of pathways and typologies within fusion⁸⁶.

Employing fusion as a theoretical and typological baseline for the the thesis offers multiple analytical steppingstones into the world of European integration and how LGs work can be affected by it. Not only does it offer explanations on how European integration and governance is conducted, but it also highlights areas that are crucial to explain and understand in order to understand the implications of integration on LGs and how they respond to this development. The indicators, presented above, will be used as different pathways LGs can adopt in dealing with impact from European integration. When employing a typological theoretical approach, the pathways act as theoretical roads that through the use of different types can explain and explore a specific outcome. The pathways themselves are not fixed, instead they represent an open system and one specific outcome can be reached through the use of different pathways.⁸⁷ The specific outcome for the thesis would be how LGs respond to European integration.

⁸⁴ They define a typological theory as a “*theory that specifies independent variables, delineates them into the categories for which the researcher will measure the cases and their outcomes, and provides not only hypotheses on how these variables operate individually, but also contingent generalizations on how and under what conditions they behave in specified conjunctions or configurations to produce effects on specified dependent variables*”, 235.

⁸⁵ Ibid, 240.

⁸⁶ Ibid, 240.

⁸⁷ Ibid, 235

3 Method

An important component in every type of thesis work is knowing what to do and when to do it, therefore the research design becomes important. Not only does it describe what the plan is, it also provides the reader with greater insight. Most notably, it sets limitations and a frame for the entire work. The subsequent sections in this chapter will discuss and explain the methodological choices for this thesis and how they can impact and why they are selected for the work undertaken.

3.1 Methodological Outline and Operationalization

The thesis will be structured according to the following manner in terms of methodological choices and output. The foundation is the theoretical frame of fusion and the three indicators: *adaptation*, *absorption* and *action*, which provide a typology frame that can be used to explore possible explanations. The goal in relation to the presented theory is not to disprove or strengthen the term fusion, instead it is to use it as a tool for exploration. This corresponds well with the heuristic research aim that is applied to the thesis as it is to, based on the indicators, explore possible variables that effects the way LGs in Skåne arrange their responses towards EU integration. The heuristic objective is characterized by that the researcher inductively tries to identify new variables that can provide probable answers to the asked research question.⁸⁸

In combining a heuristic research method with typology the thesis aim of exploring and discovering significant independent variables⁸⁹ and outcomes within the set typology frame becomes possible.

In order to meet the objective of exploration the thesis will operationalize into two ways of gathering data: interviews and process tracing that are presented through a case study of LGs in Skåne. Research in form of a case study offer value to the heuristic method since cases can contain co-variation in high and low numbers and therefore provide a sound foundation to uncover potential causal mechanisms.⁹⁰ Instinctively you would assume that the work LGs do within the three typology indicators *absorption*, *adaptation* and *action* would vary and

⁸⁸ George & Bennett, 2005, 75.

⁸⁹ Anckar, Carsten, 2008. "On the Applicability of the Most Similar Systems Design and the Most Different Systems Design in Comparative Research", International Journal of Social Research Methodology, 11:5,392-393.

⁹⁰ George & Bennet, 2005, 75.

therefore increase the possibility to derive possible causal mechanisms within the frame of the thesis. However, one should keep in mind that a case study conducted this way combined with the case selection could potentially be limiting as the results are contextual and based on the specific case and might therefore not apply to the wider population of cases excluded from this study.⁹¹ The results and explanations found in this case study can be unique for this group, but the possibilities for at least limited inference could still exist if causal mechanisms are identified⁹² when conducting the analysis.

3.2 Process-tracing and its collaboration with fusion as a typology

Moving on to the method of process-tracing, according to George and Bennett, it is suitable in research that aims towards testing a theory within a context where there can exist multiple interaction effects i.e. a world where it becomes problematic with only a limited number of independent variables.⁹³ The objective of this thesis is not to test if the fusion approach holds up, but rather to use process-tracing as a way of exploring the material and find possible factors that can be of importance for specific response pathways.

When applying an process-tracing oriented research method the researcher attempts to uncover and identifying a process containing causal mechanisms that interlink the variables, with the assistance of tracing potential causes that can potentially explain the outcome.⁹⁴ Process-tracing and its basic functions addresses the issue of a reality in where multiple interactions can affect an outcome⁹⁵. This function makes it well adapted for a complex reality that can contain multiple dimensions. It emphasizes causation through causal mechanisms in the observed variables. Process-tracing is thereby outcome related as the key of the process-tracing method is to find outcomes by asking how different events and conditions do or do not produce the end result.⁹⁶

In relation to the work conducted through the scope of this thesis process-tracing would work as a second dimension for the empirical analysis of interviews by tracing factors that makes LGs move into a certain response pathway. Simply put it will function as a way to link the information from the interviews to the written sources such as LGs policy documents and reports on EU impact on LGs.

With the specific aim of the thesis in mind, process-tracing suits the research very well. The aim as previously stated is to explore how LGs respond towards EU-

⁹¹ George & Bennet, 2005, 75.

⁹² Ibid, 75.

⁹³ Ibid, 206.

⁹⁴ Ibid, 206-207.

⁹⁵ Ibid, 206.

⁹⁶ Ibid, 206

impact within a frame of three indicators that provide typologies to be applied to LGs and their different respond pathways. This provides the aim with an explorative nature which focuses on outcomes and possible factors that could influence LGs responses towards EU governance and integration.

By identifying tracing processes that can have lead to an outcome a researcher can narrow the spectrum of potential causes that lies behind the resulted outcome⁹⁷. However, there could be a potential hindrance in doing so because of the fact that it is not always easy to pinpoint the exact explanation and discharge rival explanations. To handle this issue process- tracing offers equifinality as a tool. As a tool equifinality forces you to take alternative paths into account when analyzing the outcome and thereby provides the researcher with an opportunity to map out multiple potential causes that could have lead to the specific outcome.⁹⁸

3.2.1 Exploring the answers via typology and process-tracing

When applying the method of process-tracing and typology to the research the possibility for a comprehensive end result could increase since they complement one another. By utilizing process-tracing and a typology the researcher is provided with tools to deal with complexity. This means that the researcher can face issues with complex causal relationships by using the previously stated equifinality to analyze how multiple interactions affect the outcome.⁹⁹ A combination of process-tracing and typology provide a two step way to structure complexity; process-tracing is the means by which the researcher examines the phenomena in detail and typology is a way to theoretically structure this complexity into models.¹⁰⁰ The cohesive research structure that is provided by the two methods craft a control mechanism for spurious links, process-tracing acts as a control tool to avoid said spuriousity¹⁰¹ that could have arisen in the comparison of the typologies.¹⁰² The aspect of exploration is also highly relevant for the selection of process-tracing and its combination with typology; it offers a possibility to identify effects that where not part of the original explanation and were not intended to be included. However, as George and Bennett points out, it will not act as a safety mechanism controlling that all relevant variables to explain the outcomes will be found, but it does enhance the possibility.¹⁰³

To summarize this section, the research design has a heuristic viewpoint on the variables analyzed in this thesis. This results in an aim to explore and discover possible explanations for the outcomes derived from the use of the fusion typologies: *action*, *absorption* and *adaptation* in LGs in Skåne. In order to be able to do this the methodological strategy will be to apply process-tracing combined

⁹⁷ Ibid, 207.

⁹⁸ Ibid, 207.

⁹⁹ Ibid, 12.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 13.

¹⁰¹ That the result would be untrue or false.

¹⁰² Ibid, 254.

¹⁰³ Ibid, 254.

with interviews and thereby creating a possibility to find possible mechanism and explore potential pathways to answer to the asked research question.

3.3 The local government in Skåne; a representation

As mentioned in the above sections, the case for this study are the LGs in Skåne. However, there is a need to redefine and narrow down the subjects of the case in order to create a clear view on what entities should be investigated in this thesis. The region of Skåne, contains at this date, 33 LGs with variation in size, population, political rule, rural and urban areas and other factors that could indirectly affect their responses towards European integration. Skåne is interesting from the perspective that there are multiple EU funding programs directly assigned for the area¹⁰⁴. The area receives both a top-down absorption according to the fusion approach which offers the possibility for button-up action by the LGs. The top-down impact by the EU should be the same for all LGs, specially in terms of legal impact and institutional change. The main points of difference should therefore be allocated within action, seeing as within this pathway LGs have the possibility to respond and make strategic decisions that they deem suit their strategic goals.

However, due to the limitations of this thesis and the use of interviews as a primary source of information to investigate response pathways there will be a need to narrow this down further. A group of LGs will be selected to act as representation for all 33 LGs. The selected group functions as a representation of the larger population, and constitutes a strategic selection in order to highlight characteristics that would influence the process of how LGs move into the typological response pathways. Furthermore, this selection is done in order to facilitate the interviews and because the selected LGs offer the possibility to identify differences in their response pathways and single out factors that could have lead them there. The number of LGs chosen are six, thereby offering a possibility for variation and control at a suitable level for the research problem. A selection of a smaller representation, a sample, has been made based on the notion that either all the LGs should be included or a smaller group in order to be able to analyze the responses more in-depth. In choosing the smaller sample the researcher risks reducing the validity of the material. However, the results still offer indications on how LGs respond to European integration in the greater population of all 33.

The selection of the representation group is done based on the SALAR classification of Swedish municipalities from 2011. In this classification LGs are

¹⁰⁴ Interreg Europe, Interreg North Sea program, The Skåne-Blekinge regional development program, part of the European Regional Development Fund, Skåne-Blekinge regional Social Fund program, Interreg South Baltic program, Interreg Öresund-Kattegat- Skagerrak and Interreg Baltic Sea Region. Via the Region of Skånes compilation of relevant programs for the area, Available [here](#). Last update: 2015-09-24.

divided into ten groups¹⁰⁵ based on their structural parameters.¹⁰⁶ In this study six municipalities are strategically selected in order to bolster the possibility to identify and describe factors that could influence the way LGs respond towards European integration. They are selected in order to provide diversity, variation and a representative sample of Skåne. In the chart below the selected LGs and their classification are presented:

Local Government	Classification	Explanation
Malmö	Metropolitan municipalities (1).	Municipalities with a population of over 200,000 inhabitants.
Helsingborg	Large Cities (3).	Municipalities with 50,000-200,000 inhabitants and more than 70 per cent of the population lives urban areas.
Kristianstad	Large Cities.	-II-
Hässleholm	Large Cities.	-II-
Landskrona	Municipalities in densely populated regions (9).	Municipalities with more than 300,000 inhabitants within a 112.5 km radius.
Perstorp	Manufacturing municipalities	Municipalities where more than 34 per cent of the night population aged 16 to 64 is employed in manufacturing, mining, energy, environmental and construction industries.

By doing this selection the study contains a variety both in terms of LG size and the size and structure of municipality itself. This is interesting since it relates to a resource perspective. Larger LGs tend to have more resources at hand and thereby, as noted in the introduction, their constraints with EU work aren't as dominant.

¹⁰⁵ 1. Metropolitan municipalities, 2. Suburban municipalities, 3. Large cities, 4. Suburban municipalities to large cities, 5. Commuter municipalities, 6. Tourism and travel industry municipalities, 7. Manufacturing municipalities, 8. Sparsely populated municipalities, 9. Municipalities in densely populated regions and 10. Municipalities in sparsely populated regions.

¹⁰⁶ Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions, *Kommungruppsindelning*. Published 2016-01-11, Accessed: 2016-04-21. Available: [here](#).

Even though not all classifications¹⁰⁷ are present in the study the representation group is still solid. It offers the possibility for cross-referencing the findings and is also large enough to see trends in differences and similarities. Some classifications¹⁰⁸ are not present among the LGs of Skåne, thereby excluding them by default.

3.4 Sources and Material

The material used in order to conduct this inquiry is divided into two data collecting parts: the conducted interviews and official documents¹⁰⁹ from the LGs in the representation group. Providing primary and non processed sources as a baseline for the analysis. This will be complimented by secondary material such as research reports published by agencies and associations and published research material. The published material is used to put the information provided in the interviews into a context and to aid when tracing the EU-related work LGs do in relation to the response pathways.

3.4.1 Interviews – collecting the information

Due to the nature of the inquiry, the proposed research questions and the theoretical frames of the thesis, there is a need to create data through interviews. Collecting data for the thesis is crucial in order to meet some of the information gaps that exist regarding how LGs respond to EU impact. Additionally, it could also provide a deeper insight into how the EU is structured at the local level, going into issues such as whether action, adaptation and absorption is present or not in the LGs' responses.

The interviews will be conducted in an informal structure, more resembling a conversation with a few base questions to navigate the interviewee between the three pathways. The questions are broadly formulated not to steer the answers in a certain direction, the aim is rather to keep the interviewee on topic. They are also used as possible control questions that will later be used in the comparison between the LGs. With this in mind the interviews will be conducted in a way that put the interviewee in focus, or as according to *Easiasson, Giljam, Oscarsson and Wängnerud* interviews that focus on the interviewee to conduct a fact-finding examination. In that type of interview the interviewer treats the interviewee as a truth-teller that contributes with information regarding to how reality is constituted

¹⁰⁷ The classification in 2, 4 and 5 are all based upon percentage of inhabitants that commute to other cities and municipalities for work.

¹⁰⁸ For example, 8 and 10 in the classification made by the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions.

¹⁰⁹ Such as EU-strategies or action plans.

in specific events.¹¹⁰ Therefore, the use of interviews in order to answer the proposed research questions dose not only provide a good source of empirical material for the analysis, but also provides insights into how the reality for the LGs' administration in terms of EU response is structured. This interview style provides the possibility to create data related to action chains and depicting their outcomes.¹¹¹ The interviews are to be seen as individual because the aim of conducting the interviews is not to get the exact same answers from all of the LGs. Instead, the data from different sources is meant to create a general depiction of the current situation within the LGs in Skåne and specifically within the selected representation.

A central issue is who will be part of the conducted interviews. In order to create a solid picture of ongoing processes the selection of the interviewees is important, as it could possibly influence the end product. The goal will be to interview centrally and strategically located civil servants from each of the six LGs. The selection of interview subjects is based on an interaction between the six selected LGs and a list of members in the KFSK's "Brussels network"¹¹². This is an umbrella organization for all LGs in Skåne and their Brussel's network contains civil servants with EU-coordination roles in their respective organization, even though their titles do not always match. This will provide an opportunity to conduct interviews and explore explanations to EU response from a centrally located data sorceress, since the civil servants are often alone with having their respective role within their LGs. This could also provide a solid foundation in identifying possible patterns in EU responses since these individuals potentially can provide a lot of information.

In terms of the interviews' objectivity all interviews are recorded and the interviewee is offered the possibility to read through the used material. This is done in order to secure that both the interviewee and the interviewer find the material to be true and to avoid any false claims that could make the material untrustworthy. All interviews are recorded and then transcribed in order to make the analysis of the data more effective and accurate. The information derived from the interviews will be analyzed based on the theoretical indicators provided by the fusion approach: action, adaptation and absorption. These, as presented in section two, provides the research with different aspects to inquire about, for example the dealings with EU legislation and if the LGs tries to influence the policy process. They can also provide notions to look for, such as structural change at the local level. This is then combined with the principles of source criticism which will be used when processing the collected information.

¹¹⁰ Esaiasson, P, Gilljam, M, Oscarsson, H, & Wängnerud, L 2003, *Metodpraktikan : Konsten Att Studera Samhälle, Individ Och Marknad*, Stockholm : Norstedts juridik. 253.

¹¹¹ Ibid, 254.

¹¹² Skåne Association of Local Authorities, *Bryssel nätverket*. Updated: 2015-12-18. Accessed: 2016-04-04. Available: here.

3.4.2 Source-critical principles in regards to the material

Due to the fact that the empirical material in the thesis to a certain extent is gathered or in other words, constructed, through interviews a source-critical thinking will be applied when analyzing the empirical output from the interviews.

Firstly, in source-critical thinking the notion of authenticity is important as the key is that the source is authentic.¹¹³ The interviews¹¹⁴ offer the possibility for both cross checking and comparison between the empirical input that they generate. The interviews combined with process-tracing should satisfy the criteria of authenticity. Secondly, when moving on to the second principle of critical thinking the level of independence in the material is under the magnifying glass. The criteria of independence focus on the actual content and the reliability of the source.¹¹⁵ Within independence there are three subcriteria need to be met. The researcher needs to be able to confirm the information, should keep in mind the relative distance between the source and the origin of the information they provide and lastly there needs to be a level of independence from the source towards the topic.¹¹⁶ Once again applying process-tracing in the combination with having multiple interview subjects provide the opportunity for a cross-reference check and therefore the conformation aspect is safeguarded. In terms of information proximity all interviews are primary sources of information and the level of trust in their experience and expertise within their respective field does not diminish but rather increase due to them working with these issue on a daily basis. Moving on to the second subcriteria of source criticism the notion of time is relevant. With simultaneity in mind it becomes important to remember that descriptions can change over time and influence the interviewees' depiction of events. This increases the risk for hindsight wisdom affecting the interview subject. The conclusion that can be drawn from this is that that proximity in time is important for information given in a interview.¹¹⁷ Since the thesis is focused on current state of affairs and the aim is not related towards conducting an analysis over possible change over time the issue of proximity in time is therefore somewhat avoided. Concerning the third factor regarding the interview subjects own independence in regards to the information they provide the main issue would be their degree of either dependence or independence.¹¹⁸ The interviewees hold a level of dependency in the sense that they work with EU integration at the local level. However, they also uphold a level of independency since the nature of the inquiry is not directly related to their own work but rather a general view of the work undertaken.

¹¹³ Esaiasson, Gilljam, Oscarsson & Wängnerud, 2003, 307.

¹¹⁴ The interviews are also conducted with civil servants, in one way their credibility in relation to the posed questions and issues could be viewed as sound, however, one should also keep in mind that the interviewees are depicting their reality.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, 308.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 309.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 310-311.

¹¹⁸ *ibid*, 309.

The last source principle to apply to gathered data is tendency. Tendency derives from the notion that some actors can provide information that is tampered with, this means that they make certain claims due to their own interests and preferences which could intentionally affect the story to suit their views about reality.¹¹⁹ If one of the interviewees would show predispositions towards certain issues, the comparison between the local actors would assist in identifying that. By applying other sources of information such as reports and LGs strategies possible tendency issues could be avoided. Furthermore, if one interviewee would make claims that goes completely against the others a special focus would be given to those claims in order to investigate possible factors and reasons for that. Generally, the information can be cross-referenced between LGs but to an extent also with in published material. This provides a valid approach to the method of critical thinking when applied to the empirical material derived from the interviews.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, 311.

4 European integration and Local Governments in Skåne

In this chapter there will be an ongoing analysis and presentation of the material generated from the interviews conducted with the representation group. This will be contrasted with more general non case specific information that still falls within the scope of the fusion typology.

4.1 *Absorption*: the impact of EU legislation on local governments' responses

LGs' responses towards EU impact uphold a significant role in the field of legislation. LGs have a core function in the public administration in Sweden. They are expected to provide public services, act as a supervisory, act as official authority and are tasked with developing the local communities.¹²⁰ This competence is handed down to them from the division of governance within the Swedish system. Given that, a brief description of how the system is divided and what possibilities LGs have within this system will be given, to provide the reader with an understanding of the institutional context at play here.

Starting of, the principle of local self-government is founded in the constitution. It is then up to the Swedish parliament, the Riksdag, to create and define the specific sets of laws related to the LGs' authority and responsibilities. However, restrictions on local self-government should, according to the Instrument of Government, never go further than necessary with consideration to the purpose of the restriction.¹²¹ Another aspect in order to understand the self governing role of LGs in the Swedish system is their rights to collect taxes. Regarding the organization, structure and working procedures of LGs, a provision in the Instrument of Government states that LGs uphold the right to structure themselves and that the central government may not interfere with this.¹²² Provisions such as these provide the LGs a high degree of autonomy in relation to the government.

¹²⁰ Persson, Vilhelm, 2013. *Sweden – Local government in Sweden: Flexibility and independence in a unitary state*, p 314. In Panara, Carlo & Varney, Michael (edt). 2013. *Local Government in Europe – The “fourth level” in the EU multilayered system of governance*. Routledge, New York.

¹²¹ Ibid, 306-307.

¹²² Ibid, 307.

Given the high degree of independence of LGs in Sweden, the impact from the EU often has a direct effect on the LGs.¹²³ The LGs have to meet new demands from for example EU requirements regarding reports and harmonization of standards. Furthermore, they are expected to deal with EU rules that range from supervision of water quality in public baths to public procurement of goods and services¹²⁴. This places LGs as important actors in Sweden in regard to the implementation and enforcement of directly applicable EU law¹²⁵, since they are the public administration working closest to the citizens. Directives and legal acts are not directly applicable, the Riksdag, government or agencies transposes it; placing the LGs in the role of indirectly enforcing new EU rules.¹²⁶

Supervisions carry with them a more direct effect on LGs, an effect that can possibly relate to the harmonization goals within the EU. The indirect impact of EU law on LGs in Sweden can be complicated because LGs need to consider multiple aspects when carrying out their responsibilities. For example, in terms of service provider LGs need to consider the free movement of services within the EU and as community planners they need to consider EU requirements on for example environmental investigations when making up plans for new infrastructure. One issue with these added responsibilities and task is that they enlarge the workload for LGs in terms of time spent and the cost for planning.¹²⁷ But the main issue regarding the financial impact of EU law derives from the situation when they arise not from the indirect effect of national regulations, but rather directly from the EU. In those situations costs are not covered by the state financing principles¹²⁸. In the literature, the impact of EU law has been described, to a certain extent, as something negative impacting LGs as it adds new burdens, demands, costs and is seen as something complicated and excessively bureaucratic.¹²⁹

4.1.1 Absorption of legislation; a strategic response?

In terms of legal aspects, or the absorption indicator, a few key characteristics regarding the awareness and how work within this field is conducted are highlighted through the interviews. In the previous section it was made clear that legal aspects have an impact on LGs. According to fusion, absorption provides the researcher the possibility to highlight, explore and understand systematic linkages. Absorption contextualize the top-down impact, bottom-up responses and organizational changes that can occur through European integration.¹³⁰ Absorption sets the frame, and within that frame the indicators adaptation and action can be present.

¹²³ That has for example been mentioned in the introduction of this thesis.

¹²⁴ Ibid, 317.

¹²⁵ Ibid, 317

¹²⁶ Ibid, 317

¹²⁷ Ibid, 324

¹²⁸ Ibid, 325

¹²⁹ Ibid, 328.

¹³⁰ Guderjan, 2013, 133.

The EU often delivers secondary law, which needs to be implemented on a national level. This process illustrates fusion's view of the division of responsibilities. The responsibilities are divided as the EU acts as an initiator, the national government acts as the transformer and the LGs as implementers. As illustrated above in section 4.1 this is also true for LGs in Sweden. However, as the interviewees will point out; there is no actual or clear difference for LGs whether it is EU legislation or national legislation.

In terms of how the EU legally impacts LGs, the interviewee from Kristianstad¹³¹ indicated that there exists a general awareness of this impact. However, the legal impact is not always obvious. A main issue, as indicated above in section 4.1, is the process of legal output in Sweden. Since pure legal changes take a detour through the national level of government and its agencies, before it reaches the LGs. The interviewee did however point to an awareness when it comes to major legal impact, then there is generally an earlier and more clear awareness of possible consequences for the LG.¹³² Furthermore, the task of each local administration is to conduct intelligence scanning of relevant legalization changes within their field of work. The interviewee did however indicate that this process does not differ between legal changes that arise from the EU or the national government.¹³³ When conducting the interviews there was a notion that EU legislation lack visibility, at least on an overarching perspective. This is highlighted in the interviews done with representatives from the city of Helsingborg. They, as other interviewees, pointed out that EU legislation often comes processed from national governmental agencies and as a result it falls into the normal level of intelligence monitoring related to specific work and policy issues¹³⁴. Legal aspects in general are tied to each administration within the LG and viewed as normal task work. Legal impact is not directly connected to the overarching work done by the international coordinators, since it doesn't fall within their assignment to systematically monitor legal output¹³⁵.

This notion, that legal impact is not something that LGs in Skåne works with directly, was also further emphasized in the interview with the representative from Landskrona. Laws in general are not viewed differently and no distinction is made between laws that originate from the European level compared with the national level. Generally, as stated in the pervious interviews, specific administrations are tasked with monitoring incoming legislation and prepare for its implementation. The overarching perspective in Landskrona means that the EU-coordinator offers some form of intelligence analysis on major issues arising from legislation. However, this is not specifically guided towards legal aspects instead it is part of

¹³¹ Interview 1. *City of Kristianstad*. EU-Samordnare. 2016-04-08. Phone interview. Recorded, transcription done in Swedish, contact author for documents or the recording.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Interview 3. *City of Helsingborg*. Internationella sekreterare. 2016-04-18. Personal meeting. Recorded, transcription done in Swedish, contact author for documents or the recording.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

the broader intelligence monitoring that is done for the LG.¹³⁶ The city of Landskrona also has an EU-network in which there are representatives from each administration tasked with keeping track of relevant information within their respective field.¹³⁷

During the interview with the two representatives from Hässleholm the absorption indicator was also discussed and whether there is an overarching strategy for dealing with legal impact from the EU. According to both of the interviewees there is no common overarching process for specifically dealing with legislation that descends from the EU. This is dealt with by each administration and how they work with EU-legislation differs. Since some administrations are more affected, for example the environmental department and public procurement office, they are more prone to keep track of the legal impact. Regulatory authorities are more aware and work more directly with the legislation.¹³⁸ Furthermore, they did see a possibility for an increased role of legislation, especially in terms of how LGs could influence it. They would like to see a process in which LGs are invited to take a larger part of the transposing of EU directives by national agencies¹³⁹ before the actual suggestion is put forward for referral, since effectively LGs are the administrations dealing with the actual implementation. Being involved earlier in the process could therefore help them influence what should and can be done, which would be preferential.¹⁴⁰

Neither during the interview with the representative from Malmö was legalization impact put forward as a major concern for the LG. Instead, as with the other interviews, each administration handles the laws that affect them as well as being in charge of implementing them. Generally, this is not seen as a major issue.¹⁴¹

Legal impacts are neither something that the LG in Perstorp have as a high priority within their EU related work, but this is mostly due to lack of time and resources. Instead they focus is on the daily work, meaning legislation falls directly within the scope of each administration, and whether or not it originates from the EU doesn't matter.¹⁴² This implies that there is a clear similarity between how the larger LGs view the legal impact of EU-legislation, with the main difference being the highlighted issue of resources and time, aspects they did not bring up.

There is no doubt that EU legislation has a significant impact on LGs, the interviews do not deny this. Instead the interviews paint a picture of European

¹³⁶ Interview 4. *City of Landskrona*. EU-Samordnare. 2016-04-20. Personal meeting. Recorded, transcription done in Swedish, contact author for documents or the recording.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Interview 5. *Municipality of Hässleholm*. EU-Samordnare. 2016-05-02. Personal meeting. Recorded, transcription done in Swedish, contact author for documents or the recording.

¹³⁹ Generally national agencies first make an assessment of the directive then it is sent to different institutions and actors for referral before the parliament votes to make it into legislation.

¹⁴⁰ Interview 5. *Municipality of Hässleholm*.

¹⁴¹ Interview 6. *City of Malmö*. Utvecklingssekreterare. 2016-05-04. Personal meeting. Recorded, transcription done in Swedish, contact author for documents or the recording.

¹⁴² Interview 2. *Municipality of Perstorp*. Processledare EU-projekt 2016-04-13. Personal meeting. Recorded, transcription done in Swedish, contact author for documents or the recording.

integration in form of legislation, being so deeply integrated with the national process that LGs don't separate it from the national legislation. They neither view it as an obstacle, but rather something that is a part of the normal day-to-day work. The absorption of legislation has reached a point where it is incorporated within the LGs administrations' daily work and routines. One should keep in mind and assume that this result could change if specific policy fields and administrations within the LGs would be investigated. At least in terms of how their strategically organize their work directly with EU legislation within a specific administration.

The process mentioned above also appears to contain fairly small levels of variation within the representation group. They all have similar structural responses, having left it to specific administrations to deal with legal impact. However, as will be shown further down, the *adaptation* and *action* indicators show that some LGs have a more active role in influencing policies. This indicates that absorption indirectly produces an effect or need to influence legislation at the European level.

4.1.2 Absorption's indirect effect: EU programs and funding

An aspect of absorption is how the EU indirectly can influence LGs by the use of funding programs. The EU has this influence since elements of regulatory compliance and frameworks has to be met in both the application process itself and in the expected outcome of the project.¹⁴³ This derives from a widening of the EU's policy agenda, that have resulted in LGs not only being affected through binding policy tools but also through soft policy such as financial opportunities to engage them in certain policy areas.¹⁴⁴

During the interviews it was put forward that this direct influence is not such an important issue. One interviewee¹⁴⁵ highlighted that this doesn't have a major impact, since the LG doesn't engage in projects that aren't relevant to its overall challenges and development issues. As the interviewee pointed out “ [...] usually the process starts with identifying a challenge or a development issue within the LG¹⁴⁶ [*itself*] ”. Thereafter the process of securing and finding external funding within program structures in the EU is initiated.¹⁴⁷ This indicates a matching process rather than the above illustrated top-down impact. The top-down impact could instead possibly be noted in the project calls as they are directed towards a certain output. The current trend is that calls are more narrow and target specific issues. According to the interviewee this can be seen both in the regional fund and in the different Interreg¹⁴⁸ programs.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴³ An example of this indirect regulatory impact

¹⁴⁴ Guderjan, 2013, 134.

¹⁴⁵ Interview 1. *City of Kristianstad*

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Department of Growth, *Interreg: Europeiskt Territoriellt samarbete*, More information [here](#).

¹⁴⁹ Interview 1. *City of Kristianstad*

This indirect control is also mentioned in the interviewee from Landskrona, who said that this indirect steering of LGs is not a prominent issue. When they engage in EU related project funding it is always based on the city's needs. This indicates that the process actually starts at the local level when an issue has been identified and then moves upwards and tries to secure project funding within a funding scheme that suits the city's needs. The interviewee points to the fact that being involved in an EU-project demands both personnel and financial investments,¹⁵⁰ so there must always be an identified local issue area that could benefit from being a part of an EU-project. Also with the high administrative demands that project participation has on the LG the view of participating in projects just "for the money" or for the sake of doing one is something Landskrona tries to prevent.¹⁵¹

The process described above of participation in EU funding initiatives being based on the LG's direct needs and related to the overall aims in local strategy documents was also highlighted by the interviewees from Helsingborg. The city is currently involved in a variety of funding projects¹⁵² at different levels which are run by the city's administrations. The administrations are assisted by the city's centrally located staff which handle contacts, project management and assist with writing the applications. The main reasons for participating in these funding calls are to optimize the use of external financial means, but more importantly to bring new knowledge and experience into the organization.¹⁵³

This trend of not applying for EU projects that falls without the LG's own interests and scope was further emphasized by the interviewee from Perstorp. Projects have to be part of the goals and ambitions of the LG. EU-funded projects serve as crucial opportunities for the city due to their size of 7000 inhabitants as the resource strength compared to other LGs is smaller. EU projects offer " [...] the possibility to execute the development projects they want and need, but cannot finance themselves".¹⁵⁴

The effects of soft policy tools such as funding programs, wasn't seen as a way of controlling or steering the city according to the interviewees of Hässleholm. Funding programs and funding calls they participate in match issues the city has, to a certain degree and level. Once again it was pointed out that the LG would like to be involved earlier in the process and provided an opportunity to voice its opinions on what type of calls should be funded through EU projects so that these projects could better correlate with the local needs.¹⁵⁵ In regard to the participation in the EU financial program structure, the view is that it is a possibility for the city to develop through the program funds. This process also starts at the local level at the city's administrations. The idea to participate in a project needs to come from them since they will be doing all the work, however the interviewees pointed out, that

¹⁵⁰ Since for example that EU, in most cases, offers financial support up to a certain percent.

¹⁵¹ Interview 4. *City of Landskrona*.

¹⁵² Helsingborg, *EU projects*. Published 2016-04-06, Updated:2016-04-07 Available: [here](#). Accessed: 2016-04-18.

¹⁵³ Interview 3. *City of Helsingborg*

¹⁵⁴ Interview 2. *Municipality of Perstorp*

¹⁵⁵ Interview 5. *Municipality of Hässleholm*.

sometimes the EU brings forward project opportunities that they believe would suit the administration. Nevertheless, the strategic thinking that lies behind participation in EU funding structures derives from European Project Analysis which is a method that examines the cities goals and ambitions and then finds suitable EU-project calls, funds and programs¹⁵⁶.

In terms of how the EU can influence the course of the LG's work through funding programs the interviewee from Malmö stated that it provides both possibilities and hindrances. One possibility is for example the current regional development fund for Skåne-Blekinge¹⁵⁷. The fund covers a broad spectrum of five areas and the interviewee made a comparison with the Danish counterpart, Zealand which only consists of one area. The interviewee pointed out that due to the different number of project areas, in the Danish case EU's impact is greater with a higher degree of policy steering and in the Swedish case there is a higher degree of freedom.¹⁵⁸ In the Swedish program, the operative parts of the program are quite strict and even if you have a project idea that suits one of the five issue areas there is still a need to actively work on your idea and to tweak it in order for it to fit your area's specific calls. LGs have to adapt into a system, structure and procedure that someone else has decided for them, even if the city tries to affect the content of the funding programs.¹⁵⁹ Furthermore, the idea that the EU is steering LGs with project funding, was somewhat questioned. The interviewee said that rather, the funding programs are based on needs within the LG and its administrations. It is important that project participation and applications originate from this local level. The initial trigger is the need to develop an area. The LG doesn't initially look up financial means they could possibly receive, and then try to make a project out of that sum of money without no perceived need of a project like that in the organization and the city.¹⁶⁰ Instead the process is characterized by a strategic perspective that prioritize EU funding opportunities that correlate with the needs of the city. As pointed out by the interviewee, the workload of EU projects is heavy and the applicant still needs to co-finance the project.¹⁶¹

When analyzing the effect of regulations on the representation group and how they deal with participation in funding programs and projects two interlinking trajectories can be seen. Firstly, there is the more direct effect which consist of the formal procedures, demands on application, actual work undertaken during the project and the process that follows a project. All the interviewees have stated that this direct effect has the largest constraints and obstacles. Administrations see it this way because projects involve challenges such as the ongoing processes of making the application structure well functioning. Another complicated aspect is that EU programs create a direction, which doesn't always match up with the LGs' needs. There can arise discrepancies in policy fields and sometimes there is a need to tweak applications in order for them to match the set project criteria.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Tillväxtverket, *Skåne-Blekinge Programmet*. Updated: 2016-02-17. Accessed 2016-05-05. Available [here](#).

¹⁵⁸ Interview 6. *City of Malmö*.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

What is interesting is how LGs work strategically with their applications as a way to counter possible negative effects. This form of strategic application can reduce potential risks of tiresome processes for the applying administrations, since applying for EU program funding is usually a long and difficult process. Furthermore, it also creates possible synergy effects for the entire LG's development work when applications are linked to for example a LG's general goals. Noteworthy is that participation is based on the LGs' own conditions, which is true for all within the representation group. Therefore, this notion that the LGs have to comply with the EU becomes less prominent. This notion is still there though, through the thematic direction of financial programs and projects. But as mentioned above, LGs only seem to participate in programs and projects believed to suit their own developmental needs and interests.

4.2 *Adaptation*: organizational and institutional adaptation of local governments in Skåne

At its core adaptation assumes a top-down impact of Europeanization. This impact has initiated a process in which LGs re-organize their organizational and administrative functions, in order to deal with the impact of policies and legislation.¹⁶²

At a overarching level Swedish subnational governments are represented by 12 different offices in Brussels¹⁶³ and three of them are actors from Skåne¹⁶⁴. These offices perform a variety of services, but some of their more common features are monitoring the EU and different policy areas, acting as advisors, increasing the amount of EU-financed projects among its members and conducting advocacy work for municipalities¹⁶⁵. The role of the offices located in Brussels have changed over time. During their initial establishment a lot of their work was related to providing their members and staff with information. Today instead, a lot of their work is directed towards influencing politics in the EU.¹⁶⁶ In this adaptation towards a new political structure, at least for LGs, the CoR plays a significant role. The CoR provides LGs with a direct path into the European policy process and allows LGs to influence it directly, without having to go through the national authorities.¹⁶⁷

In 2007 the Sieps published a report on what different contact pathways there are between subnational government in Sweden and the EU. The report highlights that there are tendencies of a change having occurred within local and regional

¹⁶² Guderjan, 2013, 153.

¹⁶³ Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions, *Svenska Regionkontor i Bryssel*. Published: 2016-04-16. Visited: 2016-05-02. Available: [here](#).

¹⁶⁴ City of Malmö EU Office (represents the city of Malmö), Skåne Association of Local Authorities, (the office for all 33 municipalities in Skåne), and Skåne European Office (represents the regional authorities).

¹⁶⁵ SOU: 2016:10. Betänkande av Utredningen om delaktighet i EU, *EU på Hemmaplan*, 96-97.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 97.

¹⁶⁷ SOU: 2016:10, 109.

government in how they conduct their EU-related work. There is now a greater focus on affecting the EU policy process.¹⁶⁸ When investigating LGs it was found that one of the key factors for internal structural change and internationalization for LGs is the presence of an international/EU-strategy and resources allocated to that work.¹⁶⁹ Sieps notes a trend where LGs move further away from having separate strategies for their international work and instead move closer to strategies that are connected and linked with the overall goals and strategy documents for the LG. This could be explained by the process of decentralizing EU and the international work carried out within LGs, as international issues are generally moved and integrated into the daily administrative operations.¹⁷⁰

4.2.1 Local governments' horizontal adaptation

To start this section, the internal adaptation of the LGs within the representation group will be presented as this is the most intimate response towards European integration.

Kristianstads international strategy states that the international work conducted by the LG should lead to the marketing of the municipality, have a strategic impact and increase organizational development. This work should be an integrated part of all activities and levels of the LG and all development work should be investigated with an aim to secure external funding from the EU.¹⁷¹ In terms of division of labor each administration is in charge of international issues that falls within their scope. The EU-coordinator acts support for project applications and ongoing EU projects. The coordinator is also tasked with overall coordination of the LG's EU-related work¹⁷². During the interview with the representative from Kristianstad, matters related to the internal process of adaptation was highlighted. To start off with, there are differences between administrations as some are more active in for example EU-projects than others. This could be explained by the field of work they are involved in and whether the administration has personnel with previous experience.¹⁷³ A key step for this internal adaptation is having someone with an overarching responsibility. This is necessary since without someone centrally located to overlook the EU work, the entire organization risk losing its drive and focus. Without a strong organization, the LG risks being dependent on individuals within the organization instead, which could ultimately lead to the international work suffering.¹⁷⁴ There is according to the interviewee an ongoing trend in Skåne

¹⁶⁸ Berg, Linda & Lindahl, Rutger, 2007. *Svenska kommuners och regioners kanaler till Bryssel – Subnationella nivåers försök att påverka EU:s policyprocess*. SIEPS 2007: 7. Stockholm, Grafiska AB, 6.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid, 23.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, 24.

¹⁷¹ Kristianstads kommun, Kommunledningskontoret, 2011. *Strategi för Kristianstads kommuns internationella arbete*, 3.

¹⁷² Ibid, 4.

¹⁷³ Interview 1. *City of Kristianstad*.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

where LGs that previously did not have centrally located staff for coordination of EU work, now either share offices or personnel or establish an administrative organization themselves.¹⁷⁵ This trend could indicate that there has been a change in awareness of how LGs can respond towards funding opportunities. If an LG, for example, seeks to influence the allocation of funding and program structures it is necessary for it to strategically and attentively work with it, which requires an adaption of its organization.

Landskronas EU-strategy, similar to the other LGs, focuses on long-term needs and benefits of the city and is connected to the overarching goals for the LG. These needs are met by increasing the city's competences through participation in EU projects, by cooperating with other LGs and organizations and by optimizing the use of external financial opportunities. The strategy is linked to national and regional goals set by the national government's EU 2020 strategy and the Region of Skåne's development strategy for 2030. These strategies have been combined with prioritized local goals such as developing networks with strategic partners, securing external finance in coherence with the long-term investments, establishing an EU-network between the city's administrations, and optimizing administrations work with external financial opportunities at an overarching level.¹⁷⁶

The strategy for the city of Malmö states that the strategy is all-embracing and includes all international work within the city. It applies to all committees, sub-administrations and individuals that represent the city in an international context. The goal for the city's international work is, according to the strategy, to aid the overarching goals that are set by the LG. The city's international work shall be based on the demands and long-term gains for the city and aid the long-term development of Malmö.¹⁷⁷ The strategy also makes it clear that each administration and committee are responsible for international issues within their own field. Furthermore, they should state their international priorities in their plan of operations for each year.¹⁷⁸

Apart from the formalized structure and combination of objectives in the strategy, Malmö also works with international matters in different institutional settings within the city itself. At the highest level, a political working committee containing highly ranked politicians from both the ruling parties and the opposition make strategic decisions of the city. At the civil servant level an EU-network¹⁷⁹ with representatives from each administration has been established. Both of these networks are significant for the city's international work. The political committee focuses on issues of great importance either by dealing with them themselves or by referring issues to relevant political bodies, such as for example the city council. The EU-network creates a platform for information exchange, identifying cooperation opportunities and synergies between the departments within the city at

¹⁷⁵ Ibid

¹⁷⁶ Landskrona stad, 2015, *EU-strategi 2015-2018 för Landskrona stad*, 1-3.

¹⁷⁷ Malmö stad, Stadskontoret, 2009, *Strategi för Internationellt arbete*, 1.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, 1.

¹⁷⁹ A list of the members of Malmö's EU network, available [here](#).

a civil servant level. The network is also the direct link between the centrally located staff that works with international issues and the different departments¹⁸⁰.

Moving on from the largest LG in Skåne to the smallest, Perstorp has an international policy¹⁸¹ that was accepted by the city council in 2009. The policy says that the purpose of its international work is to promote active participation in EU funded projects, assist in development of the city through international exchange and to strengthen the budget through financial opportunities from EU programs and funds. The goals of the policy are to enable and develop the labor market, to promote international exchange and to develop the LG's activities. These goals should be implemented into each administration's individual strategies.¹⁸² In the interview with the civil servant from Perstorp it was revealed that a major difficulty for their adaptation have been the lack of resources. In terms of staff they recently hired an EU-coordinator that will do project related work as writing applications and monitoring funding. Previously this was allocated to another individual, who combined with other work tasks had the role as EU-coordinator. As a result, a lot of the previous work consisted of information gathering and sharing this information within the organization. EU-projects participation was based in the administrations and its individual civil servants, instead of deriving from a well structured organization as the one mentioned above in the case of Malmö. Generally, the administrations EU-related work is limited and an explanation for this is according to the interviewee the limited organizational capacity – a combination of the lack of time, finances and staff.¹⁸³

Like the other LGs, the city of Helsingborg also has an international strategy. The purpose of the LG's international work is to increase the attractiveness of the city, optimize external financial opportunities and promote the city and its administrations¹⁸⁴. Helsingborg has got two civil servants working as international coordinators and they are tasked with monitoring and participating in relevant networks and EU-questions. They are also tasked with assisting project development for EU funded programs. This establishment could be seen as the strategic center for EU related issues within the city and in addition the city has also established a EU-network with members from almost all its administrations. Furthermore, the city is also a partner in a EU-direct office¹⁸⁵ that covers the northwest parts of Skåne. An organization that mainly focuses on information and education about the EU.

Helsingborg's main ways of using adaptation is seeing the EU as an opportunity and possibility to secure external funds for development projects. It is a way to enhance the competence within their organization, for example when the LG

¹⁸⁰ Interview 6. *City of Malmö*.

¹⁸¹ During the interview the civil servant from Perstorp points to that this policy is complemented by a "EPA" – European Project Analysis. An analytical method to highlight EU-funding possibilities that correlate with the local governments long-term goals and political visions.

¹⁸² Perstorps kommun, 2009, *Internationellt arbete i Perstorps kommun*.

¹⁸³ Interview 2. *Municipality of Perstorp*.

¹⁸⁴ Helsingborg, Kommunstyrelsens Förvaltning, 2012. *Strategi för internationellt arbete*, 2.

¹⁸⁵ Helsingborg, *Europa Direkt Skåne Nordväst*. Published: 2014-11-03, Updated: 2016-04-13, Available: [here](#).

partakes in EU projects to gather knowledge and develop the services provided by them. Active international work provide the possibility to obtain new knowledge and to find common issues and their solutions.¹⁸⁶ The city seemingly adopts this in a more general way, not focusing directly on the EU.

Hässleholm has a EU-strategy that sets the goals, ambitions and the framework for EU-related issues. The strategy states that when the city is working with the EU it should focus on long-term needs and benefits. It divides the responsibilities and labor within the LG and has set three focus areas: education, points of contact between groups and organizations in the community and sustainable development. These focus areas are then divided into different subgroups.¹⁸⁷ The current strategy is under revision, and the interviewees said that the new one will probably be approved before or after the summer, since it is currently being processed between the different affected administrations and political bodies¹⁸⁸. In the interview two major aspects of the future strategy was presented by the interviewees. Firstly, in the new strategy there will be a greater focus on strategic impact, since there is a perceived need to take on a larger role regionally and nationally. The city already has many contact points because of the long history of team work and cooperations they have done¹⁸⁹.

Secondly, Hässleholm has a goal to be more proactive in affecting for example thematic goals when national and regional contact points set the frame work the structural funds. Integrated in that is the process of internal formalization. The city of Hässleholm has no EU-network at this point, just contact persons at its respective administrations. The interviewees highlight, that a EU-network is needed if they want to achieve the goal of being more proactive. Since, as stated in their EU strategy, each administration is in charge of their policy area and related EU-issues, administrations would have a larger role in the proactive work. This creates a need for a more formalized work processes within the LG.¹⁹⁰ Their adoption contains features of both an already established adaptation combined with an ongoing development process. Hässleholm seems to have reached a first level of securing basic adaptation and resource allocation, now the process is to be directed upwards.

By looking at the internal organization of the LGs one could start with acknowledging that with having at least one civil servant working with the EU, the larger cities have more formalized organizations with a clearer division of responsibilities. They all have strategies for working with the EU, but an interesting aspect to underline is the small difference in emphasis regarding why the strategy exists. Malmö and Hässleholm link long-term gain and a strong bond with the common goals of the LG. In contrast, the policy of Perstorp is more focused on EU projects and financial opportunities. In one way Helsingborg could be seen as a

¹⁸⁶ Interview 3. *City of Helsingborg*.

¹⁸⁷ Hässleholms kommun, 2012. *EU-strategi för Hässleholms kommun*, 3.

¹⁸⁸ Interview 5. *Municipality of Hässleholm*.

¹⁸⁹ They organize "Europaforum" each year, the largest event in Sweden for discussions regarding EU issues, they act as host for a EU-direct office, an information office and the Commissions contact link between itself and citizens, and is also a member of the EU-office Skåne Nordost.

¹⁹⁰ Interview 5. *Municipality of Hässleholm*.

divergent within the representation, since their strategy is not connected specifically towards the EU as it only mentions the EU once¹⁹¹ and carries a more universal and international approach.

4.2.2 Adapting vertically

Malmö has its own office in Brussels which works with influencing policy processes, project development, promotion and cooperation through networks. At the national arena, the city holds a close cooperation with relevant actors for its intentional work, such as agencies in charge of financial programs. Malmö is also part of two networks for cities, one national and one European. The national network consists of three major cities in Sweden.¹⁹² The cities meet and coordinate themselves in different matters such as the cities' needs and how these needs can be included in for example new program periods for EU financed projects. The city is also very active in the European network, Eurocities¹⁹³, in fact the interviewee states that this is the network they are most active in and utilize. The network offers the city possibilities to cooperate with other cities that share similar issues. This is done within a variety of policy fields. Since Eurocities is an influential network with many members the cities are able to take development issues to European institutions through the use of the network.¹⁹⁴

KFSK, generally fills a vital role for the LGs and has an office in Brussels where Malmö is member. According to the interviewee the KFSK Brussels office have two major difficulties that would need to be fixed in order for the work there to become more efficient. Firstly, there is an issue of a possible discrepancy between the LGs' needs and what can be provided by the office. LGs in Skåne need to find a common ground and agree on what they need from the office in Brussels. Secondly, in order for the office to live up to its function, LGs in Skåne need a strong organization and someone within that organization who can acquire the work done in Brussels, otherwise there is a risk that the office works for nothing.¹⁹⁵

This would imply that an actor with plenty of resources, such as Malmö, responds quite directly towards European integration, since they have the capability to do so. However, as the interview highlights, networks are an important factor for LGs as they provide strength in numbers for policy influence. Also the possibilities for cooperations and taking advantage of what that entails such as collaboration work, joint program applications and exchange for best practices could be considered a strength.

The upward adaptation for Helsingborg is to a high degree interlinked with each of its administration and their respective policy issues. During the interviews it was stated that the city cooperates and partakes in different networks at various

¹⁹¹ Helsingborg, *Internationell Strategi*, 2012, p 4.

¹⁹² Stockholm, Göteborg and Malmö.

¹⁹³ Eurocities, About Eurocities, Accessed: 2016-05-10. Available [here](#).

¹⁹⁴ Interview 6. *City of Malmö*.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

governance levels, depending on the issue at hand. This occurs both within local gatherings, the regional setting and the national and international/EU level. The important aspect is, according to the interviewees, that the process is not just conducted “for the sake of doing it” but rather it is a tool that can be used by the LG and its administrations. One way Helsingborg could be seen as having institutionally adapted is through the membership and cooperation with KFSK’s Brussels office, that provides information exchange and representation in Brussels. The office offers ways for the city to influence upwards. It should be noted that the interviewees from Helsingborg state that they don’t use the Brussels office for as they put it “lobbying”, instead they receive “[...] interesting information from the office concerning EU-programs, networks, seminars etc.”.

Other forms of adaptation are related to how administrations work and meet with national contact points from different EU programs.¹⁹⁶ Other ways in which Helsingborg could be considered as having vertically adapted is through their strategy and through the different platforms and opportunities mentioned in the interviews, even though the strategy is not as focused towards the EU as other cities in the representation group. Helsingborg still holds a vertical approach, even though it is not specifically focusing on the EU but rather the overall international scene.

Hässleholm is also a member of the KFSK, thereby offering them the possibility to act through the association and the Brussels office at the European level. The interviewees state that one of the core reasons that office was created was because LGs were not provided direct accesses to the Region of Skåne’s office in Brussels. Since the Region of Skåne deal with different issues there is a need for LGs to have their own agent on site in Brussels, to monitor their interests and needs.¹⁹⁷ The office is also useful, as it is a tool for LGs to use. To effectively use this tool the LGs must depend on their own ability to formulate their needs and there must be a clear purpose within the LGs’ own organization¹⁹⁸. At the regional level Hässleholm, together with Perstorp and Kristianstad, is part of a regional cooperation structure called EU-office Skåne Nordost¹⁹⁹.

For Perstorp, the two primary sources of vertical adaptation are KFSK and the work it does in Brussels and the previously described EU-office Skåne Nordost. During the interview, the interviewee said that KFSK’s office in Brussels was of great benefit for Perstorp, even though they don’t utilize it to its full potential. This is due to their own internal organization and the membership in EU-office Skåne Nordost.

Offices such as the EU office Skåne Nordost offer its members a mid-range institutional adaptation, meaning that they can cooperate within a group in order to share resources and exchange competences and thereby facilitate possible institutional constraints. These offices are primarily active at a local, semi regional levels and are thereby not directly linked towards the EU institutions in the way

¹⁹⁶ Interview 3. *City of Helsingborg*.

¹⁹⁷ Interview 5. *Municipality of Hässleholm*.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ The EU-office Skåne Nordost, is a cooperation between a group local government. The office works with EU project advice, applications, assist intelligence monitoring and educational aspects of civil servants, and politicians. More information [here](#).

fusion describes that link. However, it shows an institutional adaptation towards European integration since the pure presences of offices such as the EU office Skåne Nordost imply that LGs actually see a need to respond to it. If compared to the larger LGs in this study, such as Malmö and Helsingborg, neither partake in similar structures. One explanation could be the resource issue. The larger LGs possess the organizational strength themselves to work and respond to European integration, whereas smaller actors are more limited in terms of organizational strength and could therefore be more prone to cooperate and share competencies.

During the interview with Landskrona, the interviewee said that this type of mid range adaptation described above is a well functioning concept for LGs, although they don't partake in a similar structure themselves. The interviewee did however say that they have tried to create a similar structure within an already existing and non EU focused cooperation structure. However, the interest this far has been relatively low in organizing anything more than an informal structure²⁰⁰ which has led to a situation where the main source of vertical adaptation is happening through the KFSK.

When analyzing the LGs responses from the adaptation point of view it is clear there is a variance in how they have adopted into the new institutional setting deriving from European integration. The results indicate that there is a difference in how adaptation takes form, especially when comparing the larger LGs with the smaller. Larger cities such as Helsingborg and Malmö do more networking at various levels and Malmö has its own EU office. Smaller LGs limited in resources tend to seek out opportunities and possibilities for cooperations instead. This would imply that LGs have responded in ways that suit their own conditions, strengths and needs. In some instances, the similar upwards adaptation is present in the entire representation group. The LGs are all members of the KFSK, providing them the opportunity to act more directly towards the European level. However, as indicated in the sections above, this cannot be done unless their own adaptation process is structured and formalized. Combined with this are the different needs of the LGs, which could bring forth coordination problems for the associations working at the EU level and the type of services they provide. This could potentially reduce the possibility to work effectively with advocacy and will be further explored in the following section on action as a response.

4.3 *Action* – Influencing Brussels?

A basic principle within fusion is that absorption and adaptation results in action. Basically absorption impacts, this impact leads to adaption and ultimately action is taken. The action response, as depicted in chapter two, focuses on how LGs at a European level seek to influence the allocation of funding and even the policy

²⁰⁰ Interview 4. *City of Landskrona*

process itself. This could be sought within a range of policy issues as it all depends on what issues the LGs view as important and which policies they seek to affect. Since there is little to no formal access for LGs at the level where decisions regarding funding and policies are taken, the presence of agents such as associations or networks becomes highly significant for the LGs to be able to engage in this type of action response.

At an overarching level all LGs within the representation group are indirectly involved with influencing the policy process. This indirect involvement derives from their membership in SALAR²⁰¹ which is part of the CoR.²⁰²

KFSK has had its office in Brussels since 2013 and its main purpose is to offer support to LGs from Skåne and assist them in taking advantage of the opportunities that are offered at the European level. The work they do can be divided into three main objectives: to provide support in project development, to develop contacts for LGs at a European level and to do advocacy work and interest monitoring.²⁰³ An important factor in the success of offices established in Brussels in terms of advocacy and contact enabling is its actual manpower, since that means that it can cover multiple policy fields. The time spent in Brussels can also influence the success, with some regional and local offices have been on site in Brussels since the early 1990 with well established working processes and networks. Some of the offices established more recently are, as a consequence, still developing.²⁰⁴ This leads to a scenario that Berg and Lindahl describe as personnel dependency — with a limited amount of people working with their own specific networks, the network's success is highly dependent on these people and if they were to leave there is a risk to lose out on the advocacy work and networking processes already established.²⁰⁵

In general LGs' direct contacts with Brussels and its institutions are usually concerned with the gathering of information rather than doing impact work through advocacy. The exception in this study is Malmö as it has its own Brussels office and is part of a different setting. In Berg and Lindahl's study one conclusion drawn was that in order for LGs to work more effectively with advocacy work, they should cooperate²⁰⁶. This would provide them with a greater influence. This action via association is an important process, which is described in the theory of fusion as well.

The Berg and Lindahl study from 2007 find that there are differences in already active LGs and non active LGs' attitudes towards advocacy work and how they view their ability to influence EU. Generally, non active LGs view the decision

²⁰¹ SALAR roles is to assist the elected politicians in their work within the frame of the CoR, the elected politicians represent both local and regional government from all over Sweden, currently there are two members of the Swedish representation from the cities in the study; Illmar Reepalu (Malmö) and Heléne Fritzon (Kristianstad), both from the Social Democratic party. [The Swedish delegation](#), published 2016-01-08.

²⁰² The Committee of the Regions offers the possibility for local and regional government in the EU a voice in development regarding legislation, primarily that effects cities and regions. [About the CoR - Key facts](#).

²⁰³ Skåne Association of Local Authorities, *Brysselkontoret*. Last updated: 2015-09-08. Accessed: 2016-05-11. Available [here](#).

²⁰⁴ Berg and Lindahl, 2007, 48.

²⁰⁵ Ibid, 48.

²⁰⁶ Ibid, 30.

making process as something they cannot influence whereas the already active LGs, which in the case of Sweden are mainly metropolitan cities, are more positive towards advocacy work.²⁰⁷

The more indirect way of influencing the policy process is taking a national route instead of a European. This process is described by one of the interviewees as “[...] a more reasonable path for LGs”. This route is characterized by LGs using nationals means as civil servants within the central governmental administrations and agencies often have close connection to the policy process at the EU level. They are, as Callanan puts it, invited to the table to partake in discussions regarding pre-proposals in the Commissions expert committees and prepare work for national ministers in the Council working groups.²⁰⁸

4.3.1 How do the six local governments take action?

Concerning the action indicator, Helsingborg doesn't engage in any direct action as described by the fusion theory. They don't take this direct action since they “don't want to say that they use the Brussels office to influence policies and different areas of politics (as it looks today)”. Instead, they participate in different networks, exchange information with contact points for the EU programs and actively participate in the KFSK's office in Brussels and their local work. The interviewees state that the representatives from administrations are encouraged to take opportunities to work with specific policy fields. This could include travelling to Brussels to take part in seminars, events and to network. Taking part in these types of activities would mean, according to the interviewees, that Helsingborg as a LG takes part in the discussions in Brussels.²⁰⁹ Participation in these activities by different administrative levels of LG officials further highlights the connection between adaptation and action and an informal process of influencing. The general view is that work done in the international setting should be based on an identified need and utility for the city.²¹⁰ The work conducted in order to influence policy processes is dependent on whether there already exists an issue or need for the city. This work is often executed through cooperation with platforms as for example Greater Copenhagen.²¹¹ This is then combined with active participation in events and meetings that the national contact points for EU programs arrange. An example of this would be the labor market administrations participation in meetings with the Swedish ESF council²¹² on how the administration should structure the new social fund after the current program period ends.²¹³ This action response could be viewed

²⁰⁷ Ibid, 30.

²⁰⁸ Callanan, Mark, 2012. *Subnational Collective Action: The Varied Patterns of Mobilisation of Local Government Associations*. In *Local Government Studies* Vol. 38, No. 6. 755-756.

²⁰⁹ Interview 3. *City of Helsingborg*.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Greater Copenhagen is a metropolitan region that spans Eastern Denmark and Skåne and is a political platform that aims to promote regional collaboration and economic growth. [About Greater Copenhagen](#).

²¹² The Swedish ESF Council is a government agency under the Ministry of Labor, responsible for managing the Social Fund and the Integration Fund in Sweden. [The Swedish ESF Council](#).

²¹³ Interview 3. *City of Helsingborg*.

as informal and is oriented towards the national representation of EU rather than the supranational.

The greatest response to European integration was predominantly, in terms of action, seen in Malmö. As shown in the adaptation section above the city is active in the European policy process, both directly by their own representation, but also through agents such as networks and associations. The city partakes in the Eurocities network which provides them with a possibility to influence policy through the network. Eurocities also offers the possibility for the LG to include its own organization in the process. Each administration partakes in different forums organized by Eurocities, depending on their policy specialty. The administrations then report either to the EU-network or the centrally located staff in Malmö.²¹⁴

The Malmö Brussels office offers a more direct accessibility to for example members of the European Parliament, since the city is engaged in promotion and other policy influence with different Directorate Generals within the European Commission.²¹⁵ Another interesting aspect of Malmö in terms of action is their office in Brussels, which acts as support for the entire LG. Within this setup, there is a clear element of strategy based thinking. The administrations within the city is both the requesting body and the receiver of the work undertaken by the office, which makes the office a well functioning tool for them. The mentioned EU-network in the section above is also a key factor in the horizontal organization as it collaborates with the centrally located civil-servants and the office in Brussels.²¹⁶

The interviewee from Kristianstad said that generally, an office in Brussels should focus more on the EU wide funding programs than the national and regional specific program.²¹⁷ This is because the EU wide funding programs require more attention, presence and experience. This is important, says the interviewee, because if LGs in Skåne wants to partake in these programs and be active within them they need support. This support would suit them better than advocacy work, since what the LG needs is direct assistance with projects and programs. Which, according to the interviewee is a more sensible.²¹⁸

The perception is that affecting the policy process is unnecessary, unless it is directed towards final programs and their allocation, because Skåne is too small. Influencing the policy process should, according to the interviewee, rather be done by large actors in which LGs could be included, such as SALAR. Another option would be leaving the process to national authorities. The reason for this is that the interviewee doesn't see any demand for this kind of policy influencing work from either the top political or highest levels of civil servants in the LG. Instead of focusing on a European level and how finances are distributed within programs, as in for example the Cohesion fund or Regional Development fund, the interviewee

²¹⁴ Interview 6. *City of Malmö*.

²¹⁵ Ibid, and a presentation of the International work of Malmö provided during the interview

²¹⁶ Ibid, and a presentation of the International work of Malmö provided during the interview.

²¹⁷ Specific issue area programs with partners from the entire EU, they are active between 2014-2020 and in applying for their project calls you compete with actors from all over Europe.

²¹⁸ Interview 1. *City of Kristianstad*.

thinks that it would be better to focus at the national level because it is there the distribution for for each region is set. The LG cannot, according to the interviewee, affect how the EU decides to divide finances between countries, that is something only the national government can do.²¹⁹

The work done by the KFSK in Brussels offers, as the interviewee from Landskrona points to, specific and targeted work that benefit LGs and their respective issues. It can provide support and work on issues in a more individual way compared to other actors and it thereby both assist the entire group of members and specific parties. Other platforms can be seen as “too far away” from the EU, but the KFSK understands issues and difficulties in a “local” context²²⁰. LGs should focus on possibilities such as these and the link with the EU it can offer them, instead of generally focusing on agencies and the national government in Sweden²²¹.

In the interview with Hässleholm the interviewees talk about the unused potential of the offices in Brussels. Why local LGs don't use them to their full potential could be dependent on a diversity within the members of different organizations. To perform advocacy work in Brussels there would be a need for all LGs in Skåne to identify common issues at the local level and these issues would then be communicated to institutions in Brussels via the association's staff.²²² But to work closely with LGs back home, identifying their needs and trying to move their EU work forward while at the same time be active in Brussels could potentially demand more from the associations current organizational structure and staff. One of the most important aspects in LGs using an office in Brussels is therefore connected to how their own structure functions and whether they can communicate what needs and issues they currently have.²²³ The office in Brussels is a tool and LGs can use it if they have a set goal in mind. The point made is, that there is a need for a structured internal process linked with a clear idea of what the goal with EU work is.

The above mentioned scenario is not the case for Perstorp. They believe that they as a LG benefit from the Brussels office, but that it's core functions should be related to providing information and entry points into EU financial programs more than conducting actual advocacy work. The interviewee says that in the future the LG could possibly use the office more, but as of right now they need to formalize and structure their own EU related processes before they can begin focusing on Brussels.²²⁴

A few aspects can be distinguished between the LGs' similarities and differences. In understanding how LGs try to affect the EU vertically long-term experience seems to be a factor. Cities such as Malmö that have been present in Brussels for a long time also seem to have an organizational strength and willpower to conduct EU-related work. In this study, this factor makes Malmö a deviant case.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Interview 4. *City of Landskrona*.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Interview 5. *Municipality of Hässleholm*.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Interview 2. *Municipality of Perstorp*.

This is not because the other LGs aren't active in Brussels, but rather because the activity of Malmö is different as the city works as a single actor partaking in networks and working directly with influencing policy.

In terms of similarities all in the LGs in the representation group are members of the KFSK implying that they all, theoretically, have the same level of access to advocacy and connection work provided by the association. How they utilize this, as the interviews have shown, is dependent on the internal organization and structure of each individual LG.

There is also the division between action taken in Brussels and action taken by the national government when discussing advocacy. As discovered through the interviews the decisions made at the national level directly affects LGs. Therefore, one possible way to define action, which goes beyond the fusion indicator and its focus on Brussels, is through national agencies and departments which could possibly leave better responses when it comes to issues such as the allocation of funds. Through the interviews, it has also become evident that the LGs' general responses towards European integration are not primarily directed towards Brussels nor do they aim to influence the policy process.

5 Conclusion

When contemplating the results and analysis of the previous section in combination with the researched question a few interesting remarks can be made. Firstly, in general the responses observed within this study were not as clear cut as assumed. Instead the responses imply that the six LGs have incorporated all the indicators in their responses, but they are more or less present in the individual cases. To further explain, there are obvious individual differences between LGs, i.e. some indicators are more predominant than others, however, there is no LG in the study that hasn't incorporated any of the indicators at all. When comparing the overall aim, which is to identify and explore European integration's possible consequences for LGs, to chapter four, the results shine a light on several aspects of how LGs are affected by the European integration. As have been revealed in the interviews several factors affect LG such as the increased presence of EU legislation; funding opportunities; internal and external institutional adaptation; and the possibility for LGs to influence the policy process through new platforms.

When reviewing the presented scenarios in chapter 1, the following can be concluded: In scenario 1 it was believed that there would be little variance between the LGs in how they absorb EU legislation. As illustrated by the interviewees this seems to be true, as there are striking similarities between all the LGs in the representation group, irrelevant of size. All the LGs view EU legislation as an integrated part of their daily operations and they don't directly distinguish it from any other type of legislation. This confirms the theory of fusion's view of the integration process within absorption being integrated with the national and local systems. The analysis brings forth a strategic thinking process present in LGs associated with the indirect impact from funding programs. According to fusion indirect impact can steer local governments and act as a tool for the Commission to influence fields that lie without their legal scope. Within the representation group, all LGs view EU funded project participation roughly the same, as generally participation is based on the LGs' own needs. Even if the Commission or national agencies set the thematic direction of funding opportunities that isn't viewed as constraining. It does narrow the opportunities, but they still correspond well to local needs. A possible issue was rather the actual funding projects, since they don't always suit the resources and needs of the local government. Creating large and diverse projects with cooperation's with members of multiple countries are difficult to administrate and it is harder for the LGs to see the actual gains.

Scenario 2 offered a higher degree of variance within the representation group as the LGs' internal adaptation varies between more or less formalized structures. This variation could be explained by factors such as size and resources; the larger LGs have a need to formalize their internal work more, in order to work efficiently. All the LGs have strategies related to the EU, which also underlines the need to

adapt into a new integrated structure in accordance with adaptation. However, the strategies have a slight difference in their focus. The aspect of securing external funding are present in all strategies, but the upward focus of influencing the policy process is not, except for in the case of Malmö. Malmö's response to influence the policy process also influences Malmö's response in the action scenario.

As a result of this different strategy focus, a sub group emerged within the representation group in which LGs cooperate at a sub-regional level with their own collective EU-office. Since there is no common response in the representation group i.e. not all LGs partake in this type of structured adaptations, one could assume that this is also the scenario in the case of Skåne. This fact could be an intervening variable, since the similarities within the structures of Kristianstad, Hässleholm and Perstorp to some extent depend on this office. However, this would only apply to the indicator adaptation since in the other indicators, as shown in the interviews, there are similarities and differences between all the LGs in the representation group, irrespective of the EU-office. The sub-group also have differences in the way they perceive the need for vertical adaptation. But one similarity all LGs in the representation group share is that they are members of the KFSK, and thereby have access to their Brussels office. The conclusion that can be drawn regarding the main differences in how the LGs have adapted is associated with how well structured and formalized the LGs' internal work is. This has proven to be an important factor, as it creates the base from which the LGs can move to the Brussels level. But even though all the LGs have access to an office in Brussels, that doesn't necessary mean that they will use that opportunity to influence policy, which leads us into scenario 3.

Scenario 3 and the action indicator focused on by which means LGs influence the allocation of funding and policy processes at the EU level. In the scenario it was brought forth that they can do this either by themselves or through agents, such as networks and associations. The results from the representation group indicate that the LGs mainly use advocacy groups, such as associations or networks, to influence at the EU level. The results also indicate that there are differences in how important the LGs think it is to influence at that level. Parts of the representation group don't identify a need for advocacy work in Brussels, through for example the KFSK's Brussels office. Instead advocating has been given a national focus. There was also a notion that influencing through offices in Brussels is a tool, which can only function if LG has their local structures and priorities set.

As predicted in the scenario, if any LG exercise an active influence over the policy processes themselves at the EU level, they are likely a deviant case. Within the action indicator, Malmö stands out from the rest of the representation group as it has its own office in Brussels and a EU strategy which deliberately aims to influence the policy processes.

In relation to the asked research question, the analyzed representation group offered insight into how LGs in Skåne respond towards European integration. It is clear that their responses in many ways are similar, but there are also differences. These differences are highly related to the individual LG's internal structure, resources, needs, and organizational strength. Furthermore, these results could provide an insight into what types of processes are present within LGs in Skånes' responses. Meaning that the individual setting for each LG would be a factor for how they structure their responses towards European integration.

Mid-range cooperations, such as the EU Skåne Nordost office, and their relation to LGs could be of interest for further research. These mid range cooperations seem to offer its members an adaptation level that suits them very well, at least in terms of securing project funding and exchanging knowledge. An interesting aspect would be how much they influence the response pathways of the LGs.

The adaptation process is, as indicated in the study, slightly different for all LGs, and depends on factors such as size, goals, resources, perceived needs and the goals with the EU-work. In using the results to make general claims about all 33 LGs it seems clear that these factors would be of importance for all LGs in terms of how they respond to European integration. How LGs adapt, and to what level, is as the results indicate individual for each LG, although similarities in their internal adaptation process do exist. This would imply that all LGs walk down the path of adaptation, but how they walk it contains elements of variation.

The action response is, as indicated by the results, the pathway with the most differences, but also highly linked to adaptation. This link is connected with what levels LGs have adopted to – if you vertically adopt towards the EU, then as indicated by the results, this adoption links to action. This means action is dependent on the LGs level of adaptation. In the representation group, one of the LGs are actively seeking to influence policy, making it a deviant case. Applying this to the larger group of 33, would imply that if LGs in Skåne directly try to influence policy in Brussels they are most likely a deviant case. Influencing policy directly would, according to the results, not be the general trend among the LGs in Skåne, at least from the perspective of Brussels and European integration. Instead, the general trend is related to the national setting with the government and its agencies. Project funding and its allocation carries a noteworthy interest for the LGs, since it provides them extra opportunities to develop their cities or other areas. There is no reason, based on the results, to doubt that this is not the case for all LGs in Skåne.

The effects of European integration are clear throughout the study. LGs respond towards European integration in ways that suit their organizational strengths, goals and observed needs. The reality is not always as clear as one could imagine, instead of clear distinctions between the responds pathways used in this thesis the results are rather blurred. Simply put, the responses are all connected and generally, LGs cannot be present in one pathway without being present in another.

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