

Accountability in a Compact Governance Context

- A Good or Bad Marriage?

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Abstract

This thesis' focus is upon accountability in a compacting governance context – the VSOPP-collaboration between the nonprofit organization Stadsmissionen and the public authority Region Skåne. Previous research has indicated that a collaborating governance context might either challenge traditional aspects of accountability or bring about non-traditional and horizontal aspects of accountability. This thesis investigates the implications of accountability in a compacting governance context by looking closer into the accountability structure of a compacting collaboration, through a case study design, containing qualitative methods and empirical materials such as text documents, interviews and observations. The analysis of the empirical results indicates that the accountability structure in the VSOPP-collaboration between Stadsmissionen and Region Skåne is characterized by a prevalence of vertical accountability relationships and informal accountability mechanisms, which could be explained by the principal stewardship theory. The analysis further indicates no sign of accountability deficit, but rather favourable conditions for accountability. Furthermore, the thesis contributes both empirically and theoretically to the research field of public administration. The empirical contribution has to do with the fact that research on accountability from a compacting governance perspective is scarce. The theoretical contribution is made by disentangling the “tangled web of accountability” and by providing an analytical model of the accountability structure.

Key words: Public accountability; Governance; Compacts; Nonprofit sector; Public service delivery

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Appendix 1 – Compilation of VSOPP-collaborations

Appendix 2 – Interview Guide

1 A Tangled Web of Accountability

Since the beginning of the 1990s the Swedish welfare state has experienced a dramatic change. State actors would no longer have monopoly on the welfare production and the delivery of welfare services in Sweden, instead they would have to collaborate with both for-profit and non-profit actors (Trägårdh 2007:10, Johansson 2005:168). Still the most dominant actor, though, is the public one. However, both the private sector with for-profit actors and the civil society sector with its non-profit actors are present in the local welfare production, the former to a higher extent compared to the latter (Sivesind 2013:77). During the last ten years there has been a political goal in increasing the participation of the civil society in the welfare production (The Swedish Government 2009, Johansson et al. 2015:343). In strengthening civil society and promoting welfare pluralism there is an expectation that, above all, democracy and free choice will be enhanced (The Swedish Government 2009:51). Collaboration with civil society is highlighted as the future path of the welfare societies if they wish to exist and expand. By including the civil society in the welfare production there is also an expectation that it will be easier to meet future challenges in terms of an ageing and diverse population (Trägårdh et al. 2013:28).

The political goal of incorporating the civil society in the welfare or public service production resulted in the so called *agreement* at the Swedish national level, which is a government-voluntary sector compact aiming in formalising and standardising the relations between the government and the nonprofit organizations¹ (Reuter 2012). The national *agreement* then spread to the regional and the local level, and thus, a recent trend in Swedish regional and local governments has been to collaborate with non-profit organizations, by concluding so called VSOPP-agreements². This form of collaboration has been stressed as *the way to co-operate with the nonprofit sector*, and as one public official states: “everybody wants it!” (Edvinsson 2016:34). But what happens, in relation to accountability, when the traditional government collides with the quite novel compacting governance context? The question can be related to one of the most commonly discussed trade-

¹ There is a rich flora of definitions concerning the nonprofit organizations or the nonprofit sector, as for example voluntary, value-based, civil society organization (CSO), nongovernmental organization (NGO), etc. Each and one of the definitions carry with them different connotations (see Kearns 2011:199ff.; Trägårdh 2010). The choice of using *nonprofit organizations* in this thesis, was to more easily distinguish them from the for-profit organizations, that the public sector also collaborates with in public service provision. Thus, I do not intend to make any ideological claims in using the term.

² VSOPP is an abbreviation for *Voluntary Sector Organisation Public Partnership*. In Swedish it is called *Idéburet Offentligt Partnerskap* (IOP). An outlining of the VSOPP will be done in chapter 3.

offs in the accountability literature, i.e. between flexibility, innovation and diversity on the one hand, and constitutional values of transparency and accountability on the other hand (Heinrich et al. 2010:8). Some researchers have expressed concerns about this horizontal interaction between autonomous but still interdependent actors, in relation to democracy and accountability (for example Michels and Meijer 2008, Papadopoulos 2006, Pierre and Sundström 2009, Rhodes 2006). Klijn and Koppenjan (2014) mean that networks can be problematic from an accountability perspective as it becomes difficult to hold actors accountable for outcomes that are products from a lot of different actors collaborating in processes, that are not as straight forward as traditional hierarchical ones, i.e. “the problem of many hands”. In addition, Romzek (2011) recognizes that a collaborating context does not only involve numerous actors, but also “multiple vertical and horizontal accountability structures, which reflect both formal and informal accountability relationships” (ibid:23). All these elements contribute to the so called “tangled web of accountability”. In this perspective, governance collaborations are seen as a threat to the traditional governments and the vertical accountability structures (Klijn & Koppenjan 2014:247; Romzek 2011:23). In another opposing perspective, a somewhat more positive picture arises as it is assumed that governance collaborations can bring about other forms of accountability that are more horizontal and informal (Klijn & Koppenjan 2014:247).

1.1 Aim and Research Questions

The aim of the thesis is to study accountability in a compacting governance context, in where the public authority collaborates with a nonprofit organization regarding public service delivery. This compacting governance perspective is to be found in the VSOPP-collaboration between Region Skåne³ and Stadsmissionen⁴, which will be discussed further in chapter 3. But how does this compacting governance context affect accountability? As for example, does some kind of accountability deficit arise as a result of the “tangled web of accountability” or does the collaboration contribute to other forms of accountability that might even strengthen the accountability perspective? A way to study this is to look upon the accountability structure and clarify what accountability relationships and accountability mechanisms are prevalent in the collaboration. This leads us to the main research question of the thesis:

³ Region Skåne is public authority at the regional level in the south of Sweden, which is responsible mainly for health care services.

⁴ Stadsmissionen is a Swedish nonprofit organization, which provides different kinds of support to people that are exposed to social deprivation, such as for example, homeless people, and/or people suffering from drug addiction and/or mental illness. The reason for choosing the VSOPP-collaboration between Region Skåne and Stadsmissionen will be discussed in chapter 5.

What does the accountability structure look like in a compact governance context and how can it be explained?

This main research question will be answered by the following sub-questions:

Who is accountable to whom in the VSOPP-collaboration between Region Skåne and Stadsmissionen?

For what is the one or the other accountable?

Through what processes is accountability manifested?

And, why are some accountability relationships and accountability mechanisms more prevalent than others?

These sub-questions build upon “the grammar of accountability”, which can be seen as providing the basic structure of accountability (Mashaw 2006). Whereas Mashaw poses questions such as who is accountable to whom, about what, through what processes, by what standards and with what effects (ibid:118). Bovens and his colleagues (2014) resonate in a similar way: “who is accountable to whom, for what, by which standards, and why?” (ibid:10). Thus, “the grammar of accountability” has inspired and guided the sub-questions of this thesis, which then are adapted to the thesis’ specific purpose.

Finally, and as a result of studying the accountability structure in a compacting governance context, the thesis aims at making both empirical and theoretical contributions. The empirical contribution has to do with the fact that the accountability literature and research has tended to be abstract rather than empirical, and theory-light, or at best, middle range theoretical (see for example Bovens et al. 2014; Klijn and Koppenjan 2014; Jarvis 2014). And this thesis will bring forward and analyse new empirical findings from text documents and from interviews with representatives of the two organizations in the VSOPP-collaboration. The theoretical contribution is a threefold one. First, the thesis aims at providing theoretical building blocks to make it easier to analyse the accountability structure. This will be done by disentangling the concepts of formal and informal accountability, and moreover, by analysing the accountability structure in relation to accountability relationships and mechanisms. Thus, the aim is to modify and advance the theoretical framework concerning the accountability structure. This will be done already in chapter 4. Second, the aim of this thesis is to countervail the very often “theory-light” accountability literature (Schillemans 2013) and assume a deductive theoretical approach, using four existing theories. Third, and lastly, the aim is to contribute to some kind of theory development within the research field of public accountability. This will be done by incorporating governance theories, which assume horizontal relations, in contrast to the established accountability theories, such as the principal-agent and the principal-stewardship theories, that assume a traditional and vertical accountability relationship.

1.2 Situating the Thesis – Public Administration

The thesis is situated within the field of public administration as the focus is upon accountability in relation to public service provision, but also as the focus is upon the systemic and structural forms of accountability. These features, i.e. accountability in relation to public service provision but also the systemic and structural forms of accountability, are most often dealt with within in the research field of public administration (Bovens et al. 2014:4). Thus, the empirical and the theoretical contributions of the thesis, mentioned above, will be targeted towards the research field of public administration.

1.3 Disposition of the Thesis

The structure of the thesis is as follows. The next chapter, chapter 2, will outline how the VSOPP-collaboration can be related to the governance context. The chapter also describes the VSOPP-collaboration in relation to public service provision at the Swedish regional and local level. Chapter 3 discusses the concept of accountability. It also focuses upon previous research on accountability in a collaborating governance context. In chapter 4, the theoretical framework will be presented. This chapter is about outlining the accountability structure in where features of both accountability relationships and accountability mechanisms are prevalent. It also presents four theories – the principal agent, the principal stewardship, the governability and the integration theory – that aim in describing and explaining the accountability structure of the VSOPP-collaboration between Region Skåne and Stadsmissionen. The chapter then concludes with an analytical model, in where the features of the accountability structure will be combined with the four theories. Chapter 5 discusses the thesis' descriptive and explanatory case study approach, the methods for collecting qualitative empirical material but also the method for analysing it. The chapter then concludes with a brief discussion about ontology and epistemology. In chapter 6, the analysis of the empirical results is presented. Finally, the thesis ends with a discussion in chapter 7, which mainly focuses on interpreting the analysis of the empirical results in relation to previous research on accountability in a collaborating governance context. In this chapter there will also be a discussion about the analytical model, which can be seen as both the thesis' strength and weakness. Lastly, the chapter gives indications to future research.

2 Collaboration between public sector and nonprofit sector

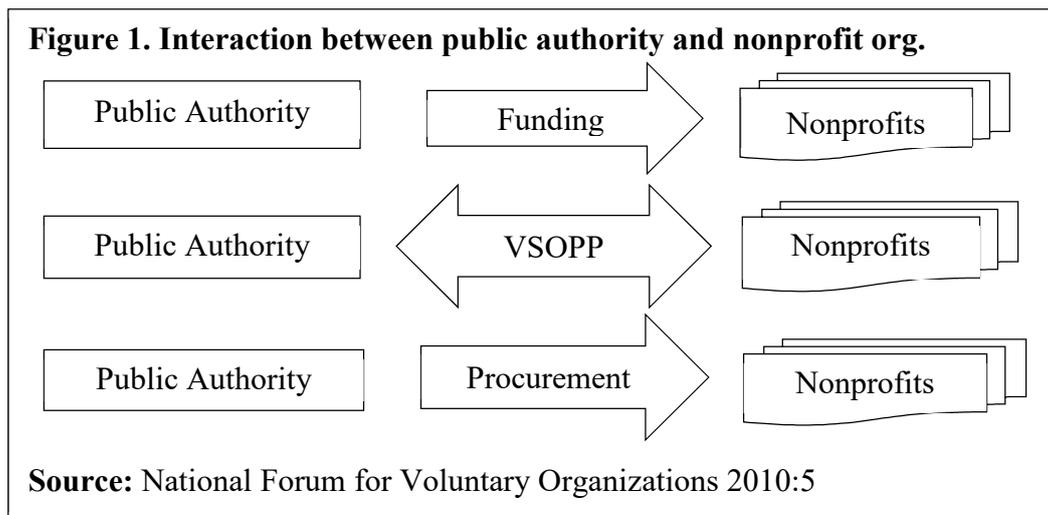
In this chapter it will become clear how the VSOPP-collaboration can be related to the governance context. The chapter also describes the VSOPP-collaboration in relation to public service provision at the Swedish regional and local level.

2.1 Defining the Governance Context

The VSOPP-collaboration between Stadsmissionen and Region Skåne, but also all other VSOPP-collaborations, can be seen as a form of governance collaboration, as these collaborations “describe public policymaking, implementation, and service delivery through a web of relationships between autonomous yet interdependent government, [...], and civil society actors” (Klijn & Koppenjan 2016:11). Klijn and Koppenjan (2016) further define governance collaborations as “more or less stable patterns of social relations between mutually dependent actors, which cluster around a policy problem, a policy programme, and/or a set of resources and which emerge, are sustained, and are changed through a series of interactions” (ibid:11). This definition is quite broad, in relation to for example Sorensen and Torfing (2008a), that narrow it down further. But for now it is enough as it gets us to understand that the VSOPP-collaboration can be seen as a form of governance collaboration. Note however that Klijn and Koppenjan but also Sorensen and Torfing define governance in relation to networks. Sometimes the VSOPP-collaborations are shaped as networks, in where many actors collaborate with each other, and sometimes they take the form of a partnership, in where two organizations are collaborating. I do not believe, however, that this has any implications for the fact that the VSOPP-collaboration can be defined as a form of governance collaboration, as the categories of partnerships and networks can be quite similar. For example, Romzek (2014) place both partnerships and networks under the broad label of collaboration, and in addition, in contrast to contracting. Thus, when talking about a *governance collaboration context* it can refer to a compacting, partnership or a networking context. And when talking about a *governance compacting context* it refers explicitly to the compacting context.

2.2 Public Service Delivery in a Governance Context – From Funding and Public Procurement to Compacts

Traditionally the interaction between public actors and civil society actors concerning public service delivery has been taking place in two forms, through *funding* and *public procurement* or *contracting*. According to the National Forum for Voluntary Organizations (2010), an umbrella organization for the nonprofit organizations working within the social sphere in Sweden, these two forms of interaction might pose a risk to the independency of the nonprofit organizations, as the public authorities dictate the rules for the interaction (ibid:2). Since around 2010 there is a third form of interaction, i.e. the VSOPP-collaboration. This form of collaboration stems from the *national agreement*, mentioned in chapter 1, and is built on an idea of compacting between the public authorities and the nonprofit organizations where both parties should be treated as equals. The three forms of interaction, and their main differences and similarities concerning who dictates the rules for the interaction, are sketched out in the figure below.



In relation to a governance perspective, the development of public service delivery, in where the public authority once was the main provider, can be seen as a development “from governance by authority to governance by contract” (Van Slyke 2007:158), and now, governance by compact. This development does not mean, however, that funding and public procurement are out of the picture. Present research shows that about 70 percent of the nonprofit organizations’ total incomes come from funding and allowances (Johansson et al 2015:346f.).

As from the last update of present VSOPP-collaborations in June 2016 (National Forum for Voluntary Organizations 2016), there exist 38 local and regional collaborations in Sweden (see Appendix 1 for a compilation of the VSOPP-collaborations). All of the agreements should be built upon the following: that they

are initiated by the nonprofit organizations, there is no market or competitive situation to nurture, that both parties are involved in financing the activities (either through money or other operations) and that the partnership is not regulated in detail by the public authority (National Forum for Voluntary Organizations 2016).

Most of the VSOPP-collaborations are to be found in the local level, and the majority of them, both at local and the regional level, are concentrated to the areas of the three major cities of Sweden (Stockholm, Göteborg and Malmö). The agreements regulate a whole different range of activities, from suicidal prevention and running shelters for women or EU-migrants to integrating people into the labour market and providing aid to refugees being damaged from war and torture (National Forum for Voluntary Organizations 2016). What almost all of the VSOPP-agreements have in common, is the fact that they are involved in some kind of public service delivery. Thus, it has to do with providing services for “public goods, e.g. services which provide shared benefits to all and which cannot be withheld from those who do not pay for them” (Romzek (2014:309), in where for example public health and social services are included. In the case of the VSOPP-collaboration between Stadsmissionen and Region Skåne, the aim is to provide health and dental care to people that are exposed to social deprivation, such as for example, homeless people, and/or people suffering from drug addiction and/or mental illness (VSOPP 2013).

3 Accountability in a Compact Governance Context

This chapter aims at outlining in what way accountability will be approached in this thesis. Hence, it is about defining the concept of accountability. It is also about developing an understanding of previous research on the topic and in what way it contributes to this thesis, as for example by outlining two assumptions.

3.1 What is Accountability All About?

An all-encompassing definition states that accountability is basically about demonstrating “that institutions are doing their jobs effectively and to show that they are open and responsive to the public” (Mathews 2011:vii). This definition could probably fall into any of the four categorizations of accountability, that Romzek and Dubnick (1987) have distinguished – *bureaucratic*, *professional*, *legal* and *political*. In where, bureaucratic has to do with hierarchical structures between a public official and a superior, professional refers to expertise within the agency, legal refers to an external party that can impose legal sanctions, and political refers to the relationships between an elected and a voter. The categorization has been developed in relation to governance collaborations in different ways (see for example, Klijn & Koppenjan 2014; Koliba et al 2011). This thesis will adhere to Koliba, Zia and Mills’ (2011) categorizations, and in where they view bureaucratic and professional accountability as representing an administrative frame that focus on the “processes, procedures, and practices that are employed in the administration and management of formally organized social networks” (ibid:213). This means that this thesis will focus on the internal accountability structures of a collaboration, and not the external ones, as in relation to voters or potential stakeholders.

Furthermore, this thesis is concerned with *public accountability*, as the aim of the thesis is to study accountability in a governance perspective, in where the public authority collaborates with a nonprofit organization regarding public service delivery. According to Bovens and his colleagues (2014) “public accountability is accountability in, and about, the public domain” (ibid:7). *Public* refers to openness and transparency, which means that the account is open and rendered to the general public. It also refers to the fact that the “object of account-giving”, in this case the social and health care provision, is a matter of public concern (ibid). The thesis is

therefore concerned with public accountability, and not with for example corporate or other forms of private accountability. The reasoning about public accountability can be interlinked to Behn's (2001) reasoning about accountability for finances and for fairness, which he recognizes are what we are referring to when talking about holding people accountable. Accountability for finances is about ensuring that the money was wisely spent, whereas accountability for fairness is about ensuring that government pays careful attention to democratic standards, such as treating citizens by fairness and equity (ibid:6ff.).

3.2 Previous Research on Accountability in a Governance Context

As the aim of this thesis is to study accountability in a compacting governance context, the literature review's focus will be on the same topic, i.e. accountability in relation to collaborating governance. The research that has been conducted on accountability from a governance perspective, is mainly from different contractual or partnership context. Research concerning accountability from a compacting governance perspective is scarce, as far as I have been able to see.

Van Slyke (2007) has been studying how public administrators manage contracting relationships with nonprofit organizations. He found out that both formal accountability mechanisms, as explained by the principal-agent theory, and informal accountability mechanisms, as explained by the principal-stewardships theory, were used in managing the contracting relationships. Since the public managers saw their role as funders or byers there was a great focus on control, compliance and hierarchical authority. These results make it possible to assume a hierarchical accountability relationship between Region Skåne and Stadsmissionen, as the previous one contribute with the financing of the VSOPP-collaboration and thus can be seen as a costumer. Whereas the latter provides the actual public services and thus can be seen as a provider. However, and as the intentions of the VSOPP-collaborations builds upon reciprocity and respect for each other (National Forum for Voluntary Organizations 2016), there might be situations that entail horizontal accountability relationships.

This dual assumption of the accountability relationships in the VSOPP-collaboration aligns with Conteh's (2016) definition of accountability as "*a series of relational and procedural mechanisms, formal and informal, by which actors sharing authority and responsibility for a given policy or program are obliged to render accounts to another*" (ibid:228). The definition stems from the fact that he has been studying complex horizontal network delivery systems and how they adapt to conventional constructs of accountability. Conteh means that he does not intend to replace the more traditional approach to accountability, but instead to complement its construct with a more dynamic approach. I interpret this as the

hierarchical structure can be prevalent, but that it does not have to be the case. Which means that in some instances the actors might be equal, or that in some instances one actor is the principal whereas in another situation that same actor is the agent. This reasoning corresponds to my thoughts about the accountability relationships in the VSOPP-collaboration, as outlined above.

Finally, and as already touched upon in the introduction chapter, the accountability literature identifies that collaborating governance contexts pose either a threat to traditional, vertical accountability structures or that other forms of horizontal and informal accountability might appear (Klijn & Koppenjan 2014). Willems and Van Dooren (2011) studied accountability in a governance perspective, but instead with for-profit organizations. Their results indicated that traditional notions of accountability were weakened, such as for example direct political control. And even though other accountability mechanisms appeared, they did not counterbalance the eroded traditional notion of accountability. Also Koliba, Zia and Mills (2011) studied collaborative accountability, but in emergency management situations. They recognized challenges to accountability, due to the “problem of many hands”. Since formal accountability mechanisms were not clearly defined it led to failure in clarifying the collaborating actors’ roles and responsibilities. One of the conclusions in their study was that failures in accountability lead to failures in performance. Other researchers found out that the collaborating governance context did not only signify a threat to accountability but instead that accountability can be developed in other directions. Romzek, Blackmar and LeRoux (2012) studied accountability in relation to nonprofit network actors and their expanded roles in social service delivery. Their results indicated that informal accountability mechanisms, such as for example informal norms and expectations, facilitated collective action and promoted some kind of reciprocal accountability.

4 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework is divided into three parts. The first one treats the accountability structure, discussing the features of both accountability relationships and accountability mechanisms. The second part discusses four theories that will help describe and explain the accountability structure of the VSOPP-collaboration between Region Skåne and Stadsmissionen. In the last part, the analytical model of the thesis will be outlined, in where the features of the accountability structure will be combined with the four theories. As will be obvious in the analysis, chapter 6, the sub questions of the thesis are tightly interlinked with the whole theoretical framework. The first and second questions - *who is accountable to whom and for what* – are interlinked with the features of the accountability relationships. Whereas the third question – *through what processes* – can be answered by looking closer into what accountability mechanisms that are prevalent. And the fourth and last *why*-question, is answered with the help of the four theories.

4.1 The Accountability Structure – Theoretical Building Blocks

The accountability structure in this thesis refers to the accountability relationships, on the one hand, and to the accountability mechanisms, on the other hand. The accountability relationships tell us something about the “nature of accountability” in terms of to whom accountable behaviour is established. The relationships can be either vertical or horizontal (Klijn & Koppenjan 2016:224). The accountability mechanisms refer to the “procedures, instruments, and arrangements by which account is given” (ibid.), and they can be either formal or informal (Romzek 2014). The way this thesis handles the accountability structure differs from previous research. Many refer to the whole accountability structure as being for example formal/informal or vertical/horizontal, without explicitly making the distinction between relationships and mechanisms (see for example, Romzek 2011, 2014; Schillemans 2011). I do believe, however, that the distinction between relationships and mechanisms makes it a bit easier to comprehend the so called “tangled web of accountability”, which contains mixed aspects of accountability (Romzek 2011:23). According to Romzek (2014) formal accountability mechanisms are most often to be found in vertical accountability relationships. So far so good, with the previous dual, and quite simple, distinction. But since formal accountability mechanisms and

vertical accountability relationships are not exclusively tied to each other, it means that formal accountability mechanisms can be found in horizontal relationships and informal mechanisms can be found in vertical relationships (ibid:308). It then feels more appropriate to make the distinction between relationships and mechanisms. In the next, we will look more closely into the vertical and horizontal accountability relationships, but also into the formal and the informal accountability mechanisms.

4.1.1 Vertical Accountability Relationships

Vertical accountability relationships indicate that there is one or several superiors higher in the hierarchy in relation to the subordinated ones, and to whom accountable behaviour is to be established (Klijn & Koppenjan 2016:224). One of the most common way to think about this vertical relationship is to proceed from the citizens who delegate authority to representative politicians who decide upon a specific policy direction, and who in turn delegate authority to the “street-level” bureaucrats who are responsible for implementing the policy (Jarvis 2014:405). As a result, these vertical accountability relationships are very much prevalent in public organizations. Often vertical accountability relationships, be it in the public sector or not, are described, explained and predicted by a principal-agent or principal-stewardship theorizing (Gailmard 2014), which will be discussed later on in this chapter. As already mentioned in chapter 3, it could be assumed that there might be a vertical accountability relationship in the VSOPP-collaboration, in where the public organization adopts a superior position towards the non-profit organization. This is due to the fact that the collaboration might be based upon some kind of customer-provider relationship, since previous research has shown that if public managers see their role as funders/byers hierarchical authority will be prevalent (Van Slyke 2007), as is the case in a funding or public procurement context (Romzek 2014:311).

4.1.2 Horizontal Accountability Relationships

In a setting where horizontal accountability relationships are prevalent there is no hierarchy between actors. Instead of establishing accountable behaviour towards a superior it is established equally towards and among all actors in the collaboration (Klijn & Koppenjan 2016:224). Horizontal accountability relationships are prevalent, in for example, partnerships and networks where joint production of services is customary (Romzek 2014:313ff.). It could be assumed that the VSOPP-collaborations are striving for horizontal accountability relationships as some of the guiding principles for the VSOPP-agreements state that the collaboration should be governed by reciprocity and trust, but also that the actors that collaborate should be independent (National Forum for Voluntary Organizations 2016). As the theorizing of horizontal accountability relationships is quite scarce, this thesis will make use

of a theorizing from an adjacent research field which treats horizontal relationships, i.e. the governance research field. It will be developed later on in this chapter.

4.1.3 Formal Accountability Mechanisms

When accountability is explicitly manifested in written agreements or contracts, it is the formal accountability mechanisms that are in play. According to Koliba and his colleagues (2011:211) these mechanisms “provide stable parameters used to structure coordinated action”. For example, formal accountability mechanisms stipulate about *reporting relationships*, *performance expectations*, *monitoring*, and, *rewards and sanctions* (Romzek 2014:308). First, the *reporting relationships* say something about the actors’ roles, responsibilities and obligations. In some agreements it is stated explicitly what the relationships and roles will look like, as for example who is accountable to whom. But also what the responsibilities and performance expectations are in relation to the actors’ different roles. Second, the *official performance expectations* stipulate about the goals of the interaction, and they can be specified as inputs, outputs or outcomes. Most often outputs are preferred, as these can be developed to measurable objectives. Third, *monitoring* is often equated to some form of external auditing, in where measurable outputs and summary assessments are in focus. However, when it comes to complex service delivery it can be difficult both to specify and measure performance. Fourth, the consequences of performance result most often in either *sanctions or rewards*. For example, if one collaborating actor fails to meet its responsibilities the other actor can choose to collaborate with another, i.e. partner option. A potential reward could be shared return on investment (ibid:308ff.). However, when it comes to sanctions, research indicates that there is a tendency to not impose sanctions even though collaborations fail to meet performance expectations. This has been explained by the difficulty to monitor the collaboration properly or due to lack of political will (Romzek 2011:32). Lastly, and according to Romzek (2011), the prerequisites for formal mechanisms are enhanced if agreements are clearly articulated in advance. It could be difficult, however, to write clear and explicit agreements, and especially when it comes to those concerning social services as clients may have complex and interdependent needs. These kind of agreements often require renegotiation after a while, when the actors have some more experience of the collaboration (ibid:31).

4.1.4 Informal Accountability Mechanisms

According to Romzek, LeRoux and Blackmar (2012) formal structures of accountability only provide a partial picture of the mechanisms that are in play in collaborations. Informal accountability mechanisms are important complements to the more formal ones. The authors state that the informal mechanisms “provide the interorganizational “grease” that enables collaborations to work (ibid:451). In

contrast to formal mechanisms, informal mechanisms are more difficult to map, as they are embedded in the collaboration itself and emerge when collaborating actors recognize a need for interdependencies and mutual accommodation in order to achieve shared expectations (ibid:444). Furthermore, research suggests that informal accountability mechanisms develop over time (Van Slyke 2007; Romzek 2011).

Romzek and her colleagues (2012) distinguish between the following informal mechanisms, among others; *unofficial performance expectations*, *shared norms*, *facilitative behaviours*, *informal monitoring* and *informal sanctions and rewards*. First, the informal and *unofficial performance expectations*, i.e. the unspoken goals, among the collaborating actors concern organizational and individual working relationships but also administrative practices. These are not stipulated in any agreements, and they might be multiple and conflicting as the actors come from different institutional settings (Romzek 2014:309). Second, *shared norms* and *facilitative behaviour* act as informal codes of conduct that, in the end, can foster reciprocal accountability. Thus, if these features are prevalent in the collaboration the possibility increases for some kind of shared accountability among the collaborating actors. The relationship between shared norms and facilitative behaviours are “cyclical and reinforcing” in the sense that “shared norms lead to facilitative behaviours, and facilitative behaviours reinforce commitment to shared norms” (Romzek et al 2012:445). *Shared norms* refers to for example *trust*, *reciprocity* and *respect*. *Trust* among collaborating actors is seen as pivotal when it comes to joint service delivery. Not only does trust increase the possibility for mutual accountability, but it also fosters productive working relationships (ibid). Trust is also one of the most important prerequisites when it comes to selecting the “right” collaborator. Mansbridge (2014) further states that if a selection process is based upon trust, a trust-based accountability emerges in where the need for monitoring and sanctioning decreases (ibid:58ff.). *Reciprocity* has to do with individual, voluntarily actions “to benefit another without expecting any immediate payment or reward but trusting that the recipient will return the favour at some later time if needed” (Romzek et al. 2012:445). The last shared norm, *respect*, is mainly about having respect for each collaborator’s institutional territory. When it comes to *facilitative behaviours*, it has to do with for example *frequent and sustained communication*, through phone calls, e-mails and meetings, and *information sharing*, of anything that facilitate the collaboration (ibid:446). Third, *informal monitoring* is less about controlling and measuring, as in formal monitoring. Instead it is more about “improving the performance of the partnership through negotiation and learning” (Romzek 2014:314). Finally, the *informal rewards and sanctions* refer to reputation, among other things. For example, an informal reward signifies enhanced reputation. But it can also contribute to enhanced opportunities for future collaboration or public recognition. Instead formal sanctions are manifested through diminished reputation and loss of opportunities (Romzek et al 2012:447ff.).

4.1.5 In Sum: The Accountability Structure

In the table below a short recapitulation is presented of the key characteristics of the vertical and horizontal accountability relationships, and the formal and informal accountability mechanisms.

Table 1. Characteristics of accountability relationships and accountability mechanisms

Vertical ties	Horizontal ties	Formal mechanisms	Informal mechanisms
Superior-subordinate	Interdependency	Official performance expectations (measurable inputs, outputs, outcomes)	Unofficial performance expectations (unspoken goals)
Delegation	Equal network actors	Formal monitoring (external control, measurable outputs, summary assessments)	Informal monitoring (negotiation and learning)
		Formal rewards and sanctions (ex. partner options)	Informal rewards and sanctions (reputation)
		Reporting relationships (roles, responsibilities, obligations)	Shared Norms (trust, respect, reciprocity) and Facilitative behaviour (frequent and sustained communication, info sharing)

4.2 The Accountability Structure from a Theoretical Point of View

It does not exist any overarching accountability theory that can help us understand complex accountability linkages or relationships (Mansouri & Rowney 2014:46). In a reputable and recent anthology of accountability, the theorization of accountability is presented as a twofold one, in where the principal-agent (PA) theory is to be found at one end of the spectrum and the social contingency model at the other (Bovens et al. 2014). The PA-theory is the most widely acknowledged theory in the research field and it is often used to describe and explain public accountability (Gailmard 2014; Schillemans & Busuioc 2014). The social contingency model has been promoted as an alternative or complement to the PA-theory, as voices were raised concerning the need for a theory or a model that captures some of the more informal features of accountability through intra-personal cognitive processes (Bovens et al. 2014:13f.). However, I believe that the way the social contingency model is sometimes portrayed (as for example by Mansbridge 2014) confuses more than it clarifies. At first glance it seems to be a

contrasting model to the PA-theory, but when looking closer into the model, it could be questioned. The social contingency could have been a contrasting model if we were settled in making a dual and quite simple distinction of the accountability structure, as being either formal/informal or vertical/horizontal. But as this thesis is making a distinction between accountability relationships and accountability mechanisms, it becomes clear that in some parts the social contingency model is contrasting to the PA-theory but in others it is not. It is a contrasting model when it comes to the accountability mechanisms, as the social contingency model emphasizes informal mechanisms whereas the PA-theory emphasizes formal ones. But since the reasoning about principals and agents echoes loudly also in the social contingency model (Bovens et al. 2014; Mansbridge 2014), both of the theories presume a vertical accountability relationship. And as the social contingency model seems to be in its infancy, but also a bit vague, and as it exists an already established accountability theory that captures both vertical accountability relationships and informal accountability mechanisms, it seems more suitable to proceed from that one, i.e. the principal-stewardship (PS) theory. Therefore, this thesis will proceed from the PA and the PS theories, in line with previous accountability research (Mansouri & Rowney 2013; Schillemans & Busuioc 2014; Van Slyke 2007).

Furthermore, the reason for including the PA and the PS theories has to do with the prevailing accountability discourse with its question of “who is accountable to whom”, which implies a relationship between a superior and a subordinated (Mansouri & Rowney 2013:46; Schillemans & Busuioc 2014:194f.). But also since it could be assumed that a vertical accountability relationship is prevalent in the VSOPP-collaboration because of the indications of a customer-provider relationship. However, and because of the compacting governance context in this thesis, it might seem odd not to include any theories that assume some kind of horizontal accountability relationships. Therefore, two prevailing governance theories will be included in the theoretical framework – the governability theory and the integration theory. These two theories have been used to analyse different governance contexts, such as governance failure and governance regulation (Sorensen & Torfing 2008b) but not, as far as I know, in relation to accountability. I do believe that they can help describing and explaining the accountability structure in the VSOPP-collaboration as the governance theories proceed from a relational core in the sense that they focus upon interactions between collaborating actors (ibid:27), and as these two theories presume a horizontal relationship between collaborating actors, rather than a vertical one. Nevertheless, the governability and the integration theories differ when it comes to their foundations. The governability theory is based upon rationalistic foundation, where self-interested individuals act on the basis of a logic of consequences (Sorensen & Torfing 2008c:28f.). In this sense it resembles the PA-theory. The integration theory, on the other hand, resembles the PS-theory, as it focuses on shared and common rules and norms, in where actors act on the basis of the logic of appropriateness (ibid:29). Before placing the four theories – the PA-theory, the PS-theory, the governability theory and the integration theory – in the analytical model of this thesis, and thus make it

more apparent how they will contribute to the analysis of the accountability structure in the VSOPP-collaboration, each and one of them will be presented. Since the PA- and the PS-theory are already established accountability theories, they will be described more deeply compared to the governability and the integration theories.

4.2.1 The Principal Agent Theory

The principal-agent (PA) theory is widely used to describe and explain vertical relationships between a superior principal and a subordinated agent, in where the latter is authorized to act on behalf of the former (Borowiak 2011:55). Thus, in an accountability perspective, the PA-theory is concerned with the question of who is accountable to whom (Gailmard 2014:91). The principals authorize or delegate the agents to act on their behalf because of the fact that the agents have more time, specific information, expertise or capabilities that the principals lack (ibid). The PA-theory assumes that the actors are autonomous and self-interested utility maximizers that have the capability to pursue their own self-interests over and above anyone else's interests (Rowney & Mansouri 2013:46; Schillemans & Busuioc 2014:194). The agents are presumed to be the problematic ones in the PA-theory, and as the principals are presumed to possess expertise that the principals lack and that they need to know to make the best decision, the agents will deviate from the principals' interests and wishes. This is called *agency loss*, which sometimes is explained as the difference between the best possible outcome for the principals and the actual actions of the agents. If the agents act in accordance with the principals' wishes, agency loss is zero. The more the agents deviate from the principals, the higher agency loss is (Gailmard 2014:92).

Thus, the relationship between the principals and the agents is based on goal divergence. The principals try to induce the agents to share the information through various forms of external monitoring mechanisms, sanctions, rewards and other external incentives, as for example financial ones (Gailmard 2014:92; Van Slyke 2007:162; Mansouri & Rowney 2013:46). Hence, one central problem in the PA-theory is how the principals are to ensure and/or control that the agents to act in the principals' interests (Schillemans & Busuioc 2014:198; Mansouri & Rowney 2013:47). The concern about agency loss, or "drifting agents" as Schillemans and Busuioc (2014) calls it, has been questioned though. Instead their research indicated that rather than having problems with "drifting agents", i.e. that the agents withhold information, serve their own bureaucratic interest, and most often try to escape any demands of accountability, there is a problem of "drifting principals". The researchers mean that this can be explained as a disinterest on behalf of the principals in holding the agents accountable for potential misconducts but also a disinterest in what the agents are actually doing (ibid:192).

A limitation of the PA-theory, which is also its strength in terms of parsimony, has to do with its assumptions of goal conflict and informational asymmetries

(Schillemans & Busuioc 2014; Van Slyke 2007). Schillemans and Busuioc (2014) mean that principals and agents most certainly are of different opinion in some cases, but “on most of the issues, on a given day, there can well be goal congruence between the two (ibid:196). The PA-theory responds to this limitation by emphasizing legitimacy and credibility on behalf of agents. By for example acting in accordance with the principals’ obligations, the agents might gain credibility and resource benefits. Thus, accountability is seen as a “license to operate” (ibid:210). Schillemans and Busuioc (2014) conclude:

agents may balance the additional oversight against gains in terms of reputation, relations, political salience, credibility and even autonomy that comes from increased levels of accountability. In other words, rational public bodies and organizations will not necessarily choose to escape accountability, but to the contrary, it might be in their strategic interest to promote and expand on their accountability. (ibid:210)

4.2.2 The Principal Stewardship Theory

The principal-stewardship (PS) theory was developed in reaction to the classical principal agency theory (Klijn & Koppenjan 2016:178), as it was seen to be too one-sided in just focusing upon the self-interested agent and the need for external control and motivators in order to govern the agent (Mansouri & Rowney 2013:50f.). In the accountability context, it is a quite new theory. For example, in 2007 the theory was still acknowledged but not applied on empirical findings (Van Slyke 2007:165). Van Slyke (2007) used the PS-theory when he was studying government-nonprofit social services contractual relationships, and meant that the theory could be particularly appropriate for analysing these kind of relations as for example by virtue of their organizational form and specialized social service focus (Van Slyke 2007:164). And as this thesis aims at studying a similar form of social service relationship, i.e. a compacting one between one public authority and one nonprofit organization, the theory seems very much appropriate.

The theory acknowledges that there exists a superior-subordinate relationship. As in the PA-theory the principals are the superior ones, but in contrast to the PA-theory, the subordinated ones are not agents but stewards. Compared to the agents in the PA-theory, the stewards place a higher value on the *common good* and on *goal convergence* than on self-interest. Thus, the PS-theory assumes that the motives of the stewards are aligned with those of the principals. Consequently, success is equated with goal alignment and the absence of financial payoff or maximizing of individual utility (Van Slyke 2007:164). Moreover, the stewards are seen as *service providers*, dedicated at serving the public (Klijn & Koppenjan 2016:178), which corresponds with the research of Schillemans and Busuioc (2014). They identified the subordinated actors in the public sector as long-lasting stewards instead of agents. This was due to the fact that the public sector can be seen as equivalent with quite long time-frames and highly institutionalized values. According to the researchers, it then results in motivated stewards that are “tied to

an institutionalized mission that is likely to transcend their self-interest” (ibid:208). The research of Van Slyke (2007) on contractual accountability, indicated that long-term contractual relationships were based on trust, reputation, collective goals and involvement. These features led to a relational reciprocity between the principals and the stewards, which then led to alignment between the actors and goal convergence (ibid:164).

Another key factor in the PS-theory and in understanding the stewards, is *intrinsic motivation* (Schillemans & Busuioc 2014:209). The stewards are first and foremost driven by intrinsic motivators, as for example education, training, encouragement and inspiration (Klijn & Koppenjan 2016:178). Also they highly value their own reputation, to realize their own missions, and to achieve organizational goals (Schillemans & Busuioc 2014:209). It is through the intrinsic motivators and incentives an internal sense of responsibility is created, which result in accountable behaviours (Mansouri & Rowney 2013:51). If stewards are given sufficient discretion and autonomy they may develop internal controls, such as professional and ethical values, in order to guide “right behaviours” (ibid:52). However, and even though intrinsic motivation is central in the PS-theory, external motivators still play an important role. This means that the PS-theory does not replace the PA-theory, but instead it complements it (Mansouri & Rowney 2013:51f.) The relation between external and intrinsic motivators is a complicated one, though, as formal accountability control mechanisms are important but very easily can “crowd out” intrinsic motivation (Schillemans & Busuioc 2014:209).

Furthermore, Van Slyke (2007), in his research concerning accountability in a contracting perspective, pointed to other ways of increasing goal convergence. He emphasized that if the actors invest time in the outset of the contractual relationship by for example making the contract as explicit as possible, with clear and outspoken responsibilities, expectations and consequences, they would experience higher goal convergence (ibid:163).

4.2.3 The Governability Theory

The governability theory assumes a horizontal relationship, in where autonomous actors interact through different negotiation games. In addition, it assumes that the governance collaboration is based upon, on the one hand, common resources and joint action, and on the other hand, upon mutual trust and institutional design (Sorensen & Torfing 2008a:18). Similar to the principal-agent theory, the governability theory is grounded in a *rationalistic approach* where the focus is merely upon the individuals compared to the collective actors. The individuals are self-interested and strive to maximise their personal utility. Consequently, there is a need to use the “right” kind of incentives, as for example rewards and punishment, in order to facilitate greater cooperation and mutual compliance (ibid:29), and in this case, accountable behaviour. The use of incentives is referred to a so called *logic of consequences*. Furthermore, the governability theory assumes that the

governance collaboration is governed through the interplay between institutional design and meta-governance, which construct the “rules of the games”. Sorensen and Torfing (2008d) distinguish between different forms of “game structuring” through, for example, reminding the collaborating actors that they are acting in the “shadow of hierarchy”. This will make the collaborating actors aware of the fact that if the collaboration, as a whole, does not perform in accordance with the defined intentions the right to self-regulation will be reduced or removed by the meta-governor. Another form of “game structuring” is by imposing formal accountability mechanisms, such as rewards and sanctions. Finally, the governability theory assumes that is the public authority that acts as the meta-governor. (ibid:173f.).

4.2.4 The Integration Theory

The integration theory assumes that a governance collaboration is formed as a result of bottom-up processes, in where collaborating actors identify a need for cooperation (Sorensen & Torfing 2008a:19). The basic foundations of a governance collaboration, according to the integration theory, are to be found in the *common norms and perceptions*. The actors become institutionally embedded in the network over time, which means that they develop a shared normative and cognitive basis “through the construction of solidarity and common identities and frames of reference” (ibid). Thus the identities of the actors become interlinked with the institutional embedded rules, norms and cognitive paradigms. And instead of acting on the basis of a logic of consequences, as in the governability theory, the actors act on the basis of a *logic of appropriateness*. The logic of appropriateness signifies that the collaborating actors interpret the institutionally defined rules and norms of the network, and act appropriately in relation to these (Sorensen & Torfing 2008c:29).

Even in the integration theory meta-governance is seen as a way to enhance the network, but it works quite differently compared to the governability theory. The meta-governance in the integration theory puts a lot of focus upon the actors’ identities and abilities, but also upon the *self-regulating* character of the network. The focus upon the self-regulating character makes it a bit unclear who the meta-governor is. It could be the public authority or somebody or something else. What is clear however, is the fact that meta-governance in this perspective is about facilitating and enhancing the network’s common institutional rules and norms, but also to ensure the possibility of the network actors to act appropriately in relation to these (Sorensen & Torfing 2008d).

4.2.5 In Sum: The Four Theories Explaining the Accountability Structure

In the table below a short recapitulation is presented of the key characteristics of the PA theory, the PS theory, the governability theory and the integration theory.

Table 2. Characteristics of the four theories

PA-theory	PS-theory	Governability theory	Integration theory
Goal divergence	Goal convergence	Rationalistic approach	Common norms/perceptions
Distrust	Trust	Logic of consequences	Logic of appropriateness
Self-interest	Dedicated service providers	Shadow of hierarchy	Self-regulating
Agency Loss	Relational reciprocity		
External Incentives	Intrinsic Incentives		

4.3 An Analytical Model of the Accountability Structure

The model below (figure 2) will be a tool when analysing the accountability structure in the VSOPP-collaboration between Stadsmissionen and Region Skåne. After analysing what accountability relationships and accountability mechanisms are prevalent in the collaboration, it might be possible to position the results in one of the four boxes. To each and one of the boxes, one of the four theories are linked, thus making it possible to understand what theory will explain what results. It is important to understand that this model is an ideal-type, and thus, one box does not exclude one another. It might be that the VSOPP-collaboration moves in different boxes. For example, when it comes to monitoring some parts might be characterized by a vertical accountability relationship and informal accountability mechanisms, whereas other might be characterized by horizontal accountability relationship and formal accountability mechanisms. Below the figure, there is a short reasoning of each and one of the boxes.

Figure 2. An analytical model of the accountability structure

	Vertical accountability relationships	Horizontal accountability relationships
Formal accountability mechanisms	PA-theory (box 1)	Governability theory (box 3)
Informal accountability mechanisms	PS-theory (box 2)	Integration theory (box 4)

Box 1 indicates a *formal vertical accountability structure*, in where *vertical accountability relationships* and *formal accountability mechanisms* are prevalent. The formal vertical accountability structure can be explained by the *principal-agent theory*. Thus, indicating that the actors are self-interested and the key concern in the compacting partnership is to bridge the gap between the principals and the agents with the help of formal accountability mechanisms, such as external control and external incentives.

Box 2 indicates an *informal vertical accountability structure*, in where *vertical accountability relationships* and *informal accountability mechanisms* are prevalent. The informal vertical accountability structure can be explained by the *principal-stewardship theory*. This box will most certainly entail both formal and informal accountability mechanisms as the PS-theory does not deny formal mechanisms, but still put a greater focus upon the more informal ones. Hence, it would indicate that for example trust and internal incentives are important features in explaining goal convergence and relational reciprocity between the principals and the stewards.

Box 3 indicates a *formal horizontal accountability structure*, in where *horizontal accountability relationships* and *formal accountability mechanisms* are prevalent. The structure highlights horizontal and collaborative activities that facilitate the common service delivery, but still there is much focus upon external control mechanisms and external incentives since the actors are self-interested. The governability theory would assume that the logic of consequences and the “shadow of hierarchy” would guide the actors in the right direction, i.e. towards the common goal of the VSOPP-agreement.

Box 4 indicates an *informal horizontal accountability structure*, in where *horizontal accountability relationships* and *informal accountability mechanisms* are prevalent. This structure builds upon a high degree of inter-dependence and trust between the actors. The integration theory would assume that the logic of appropriateness, in a self-regulating way, would guide the collaborating actors towards the VSOPP-collaboration’s goal.

5 Methodology

This chapter discusses the descriptive and explanatory case study approach, the methods for collecting qualitative empirical material but also the method for analysing it. The chapter then concludes with a brief discussion about ontology and epistemology.

5.1 A Descriptive and Explanatory Case Study, with Theory-Building Logic

The research strategy for this study will take the form of a case study design, as the case study design allows an in-depth inquiry of contemporary and context-bound phenomena (Yin 2014:16f.). In addition, a case study design can be advantageous when it comes to examining “new environments and settings” (Yang 2014:161). And since the accountability research in a governance collaboration perspective is still in its infancy and needs further empirical contribution (Klijn & Koppenjan 2014:255), and since no or little research has been conducted on accountability from a compact governance perspective, the case study design seemed to be an appropriate research method. Thus, a case study can help clarifying and describe what the accountability structure looks like in a compacting governance perspective. Moreover, the descriptive ambition of the thesis adheres to the general trend in the accountability literature which unpacks complex institutional arenas (Schillemans & Busuioc 2014:192). The study intended at being explanatory in the sense that the thesis aims at explaining why the accountability structure is structured the way it is. In order to trying to describe and explain why the accountability structure looks the way it does, two existing accountability theories were used – the principal-agent theory and the principal-stewardship theory. But as I assume that these theories might have difficulties in providing the whole picture concerning the accountability structure in the VSOPP-collaboration, there is an ambition in the thesis to contribute to some kind of theory building concerning accountability relationships, and thereby include the two governance theories – the governability and the integration theory – as mentioned in the previous chapter.

5.1.1 A Single Instrumental Case Design – Selecting the Case

In order to fully understand what the accountability structure looks like in a compacting governance context one case – the VSOPP-collaboration between Stadsmissionen Malmö and Region Skåne – were studied in-depth. This goes along with the reasoning of for example Hammersley and Gomm (2000) who state “the fewer cases investigated, the more information can be collected about them” (ibid:2). Furthermore, it can be said to be an *instrumental case study*, as the aim of this study is to provide a general understanding of accountability in a compacting governance perspective. It follows the reasoning of Stake (1995) who states that instrumental case studies allow us to “get insight into the question by studying a particular case” when there is “a need for general understanding” (ibid:3). However, the study was not totally guided by the following question “What compact represents the other compacts?”, but instead it equally focused upon “What compact will best help to understand what the accountability structure looks like in a compacting governance perspective?”. These two questions represent different strategies of selecting the case, with the former question representing the *typicality* strategy (Shofield 2000) and the latter question representing the *maximization of information* strategy (Stake 1995). Some researchers would probably argue that these various strategies of selection are problematic to combine, or at least that one or the other is more or less important in selecting a case. Most often those researchers that strive for typicality (as for example Gomm et al. 2000; Shofield 2000) are not very much concerned with criticality, and vice versa (as for example Eisenhardt & Greabner 2007; Flyvbjerg 2006; Stake 1995). I agree with for example Stake who states that the first criterion for choosing a case is “to maximise what we can learn” (Stake 1995:4). Therefore, the characteristic of *maximization of information* was prevalent in selecting the case. First, in relation to the budget, as the budget of the VSOPP-collaboration between Region Skåne and Stadsmissionen is quite large, in relation to other VSOPP-agreements (see appendix 1). This fact, I suppose, would make actors in the collaboration more careful and responsible about how the money is spent, which is an important feature of accountability (Behn 2001). Second, in relation to the fact that the VSOPP-collaboration between Region Skåne and Stadsmissionen began already in 2013. As the collaboration is one of the oldest ones, there is an expectation to capture both formal and informal accountability mechanisms, as previous research has shown that informal accountability mechanisms develop as time passes (Van Slyke 2007:181; Acar et al. 2008).

Finally, the characteristic of *typicality* was prevalent in the case selection as I also agree with Gomm and his colleagues (2000) who state that, even though researchers claim that they are not interested in making any general inferences, that is most often what happens anyway. And as one aim of this study is to provide some kind of general understanding of what the accountability structure could look like in a compacting governance perspective, it would be unwise not to make a case selection out of *typicality*. Typicality is, according to Shofield (2000), one way to

enhance generalization. It can also be seen as a way to enhance the external validity of the study (Yin 2014:48). The VSOPP-collaboration between Stadsmissionen and Region Skåne is *typical* in the sense that the public organization makes a substantial financial contribution in terms of money, whereas the non-profit organization is responsible mainly for the actual delivery of the public services, which is an important aspect in relation to the PA- and the PS-theories that presume a hierarchical accountability relationship based on delegation. It is also a *typical* case as the VSOPP-collaboration between Region Skåne and Stadsmissionen is concerned with delivering some kind of public services. Moreover, it is a *typical* case when it comes to the number and characteristics of the actors in the VSOPP-collaboration (see appendix 1), since it consists of two actors, whereas one is a public one and the other one is a non-profit organization.

An alternative design of this study could have been to incorporate several cases, in order to capture different aspects of the compacts in relation to accountability, as for example in terms of the numbers of actors, whether the majority are public or non-profits, but also whether the public or the non-profit finance the compacts equally or not. I am thinking about compact 9 and 14 in the appendix, as the former one captures a compacting governance perspective with two public organizations involved and the latter captures this kind of perspective with several actors involved but also where the non-profits contribute more than the public organizations to the financing. But as Stake (1995) puts it: “Even for collective case studies, selection by sampling of attributes should not be the highest priority. Balance and variety are important; opportunity to learn is of primary importance” (ibid:6). Taking into account the learning perspective, along with the fact that “our time and access for fieldwork are almost always limited” (ibid:4) the selection of the VSOPP-collaboration between Stadsmissionen Malmö and Region Skåne feels appropriate.

5.2 Methods for Collecting Qualitative Empirical Material

In order to answer the research question – what the accountability structure look like in a compacting governance context and how it can be explained – different empirical material have been collected, such as documents, interviews, and direct observations. The rationale for using multiple sources of evidence is to be found in the reasoning that several different sources of information will make the case study findings more convincing and accurate, thus increasing the validity of the study (Yin 2014:47), given that they corroborate the same findings (ibid:119ff.). If they are not coherent, it does not mean that one set of data is wrong but instead it indicates that the picture is more complicated than expected and that the results should be treated with caution (Gillham 2000:13). The rationale for using qualitative data corresponds with the rationale for conducting a case study as

mentioned in the previous part, i.e. to examine new environments and settings (Yang 2014:161).

5.2.1 Qualitative Content Analysis

The content analysis was based upon eight documents; the VSOPP-agreement (VSOPP 2013), two annual reports from Stadsmissionen (Stadsmissionen 2014; Stadsmissionen 2015), four meeting minutes from 2015 and 2016 (VSOPP Meeting Minutes 2015a; 2015b; 2016a; 2016b), one document from Stadsmissionen which concern the organizations view on the VSOPP-collaboration (Stadsmissionen n.d.).⁵ The content analysis of the documents mostly revealed information about the formal accountability mechanisms, which comes as no surprise as these mechanisms most often are explicit and written down (Romzek 2011:29). The documents also gave some insight about the accountability relationships. Furthermore, the content analysis of the documents also provided help in designing the interview guide.

5.2.2 Semi-structured Interviews

To be able to describe and explain the accountability structure, and thus to capture the informal accountability mechanisms but also the get a fuller picture of the accountability relationships, semi-structured interviews were conducted. Conducting interviews as a way to capture both formal and informal accountability is a common technique among accountability researchers (see for example Koliba et al. 2012; Romzek et al. 2012; Yang 2014). Objections could be made of how much information interviews actually provide concerning informal accountability mechanisms, such as for example trust and reciprocity, since these features are very much implicit. What this thesis is interested in, though, are the interviewees perceptions of these mechanisms, which, I believe, is possible to find out through interviews. Moreover, trust but also self-interest, can be seen as sensitive concepts in a collaboration. And thus, the interviewees might not reveal what they really experience, as they would risk undermine the whole collaboration. Whether the interviewees revealed what they really experience is impossible to know. But the interview situations felt very much relaxed and I got the impression that the interviewees spoke freely.

Four semi-structured interviews were conducted, which is one more than was originally planned for. I had planned for conducting three interviews with a representative of Stadsmissionen, a public official and a politician from Region

⁵ The VSOPP-agreement is a public document, and the reference list provides information about where to find it. The other documents are internal documents, but they can be handed over to the examiner and the discussant, on request.

Skåne. The reason for interviewing both a public official and a politician has to do with the fact that all decisions regarding whether, in what way, and with whom the public authority should cooperate is taken in the political board and it is the public officials that are responsible for the actual cooperation with the nonprofit organizations. Thus, both the politicians and the public officials are involved in the compacts. When it comes to the politicians, I first contacted the politician that signed the VSOPP-agreement in 2013, i.e. Carl Henrik Sonnesson, from the Moderate Party, who was then the chairman of the Health Care Board. But since he no longer was a member in the political board he recommended me to contact Anders Åkesson from the Green Party, who is the second chairman of the Health Care Board and chairman of the Committee for Primary Care, Psychiatry and Dental Care. Åkesson has also been involved in the VSOPP-process from the beginning. The first interview was made with Åkesson, and thereafter I felt a need to revise the interview and make it even more concrete. And since I was eager to have a politician's view on the more concrete questions I decided to interview another politician. Anders Åkesson recommended me to contact Gilbert Tribo, from the Liberal Party, who had been involved in the VSOPP-process from the beginning. When Region Skåne signed the VSOPP-agreements in 2013, Tribo was a member in the Health Care Board and chairman of the Committee for Primary Care, Psychiatry and Dental Care.

When it comes to the public officials, in Region Skåne one public official is responsible for one VSOPP-agreement. In the VSOPP-collaboration between Region Skåne and Stadsmissionen, Maria Kronogård is responsible. It was then natural to interview her. She has only been involved, however, in the VSOPP-collaboration since May 2016. This did not seem to effect the results in any particular direction, though. The interview with the representative of Stadsmissionen was made with Ann Norén, who is the director of the actual health care delivery, i.e. Stadsmissionshälsan. The interviews were conducted with one person at a time for about one hour, in a semi-structured way, which means that I steered the conversation around specific themes but still allowed it to unfold in whatever direction (Kapiszewski et al. 2015:195).⁶ The interviewees were informed that they could refuse answering certain questions and that they could stop the interview at any time. Also they were asked whether they wanted to be anonymous in this thesis, which none of them wanted.

Furthermore, I recorded all of the interviews and then they were transcribed. The transcription was made in Swedish as the interviews were conducted in Swedish⁷, and the analysis of these was made in English. Translating specific citations is

⁶ The interview guide is to be found in appendix 2.

⁷ It is worth to comment on the fact that accountability has been translated to the Swedish word "ansvarsutkrävande" in the interviews. Whether this word captures what accountability actually means in English, as for example being "accountable, answerable, liable, obliged, etc." (Dubnick 2014:26) or whether it is more of being responsible, is out of the reach of this thesis to figure out.

sometimes a difficult task, as it is impossible to translate them word by word. My ambition has been to translate them as exact as possible. The transcription process took quite some time, but it provided me with a great understanding for the empirical material. Having the interviews on paper also allowed me to work more closely to the material, and thus generating a better and more comprehensive analysis.⁸ Finally, the interviews provided empirical findings concerning the whole accountability structure.

5.2.3 Direct Observations

I participated in one of the following-up meetings between Norén from Stadsmissionen and Kronogård from Region Skåne. During the meeting I was especially observant on their roles, their relationship and specific keywords in relation to the theoretical framework. In addition, I also visited the social and health care centre, Stadsmissionshälsan, to get a greater understanding for what the VSOPP-collaboration is all about in practice. The visit was done quite late in the research process, and in hindsight, it might have contributed even more to the study if it had been done earlier. For example, the interview guide could have been even more concrete if I would have had the understanding for what the health care service actually looks like. The direct observations in this study do not on their own provide any empirical results, but instead they are providing additional information to the research (Yin 2014:114).

5.3 Analysing the Empirical Material – Thematic Analysis

The analysis of the empirical results from the text documents, the interviews and the direct observations was done through a thematic analysis, in where the key characteristics of vertical versus horizontal accountability relationships and formal versus informal accountability mechanisms acted as guiding principles. Thus, the thematic analysis was based on a categorical strategy as my aim was to create a matrix of categories, and place the evidence in the following four categories; formal and informal accountability mechanisms, vertical and horizontal accountability structures, which are interlinked with the theories. This helped me to order and synthesize the qualitative data in a strategic way. And consequently, the thematic analysis was made in a deductive way, where *a priori themes* defined from theory and previous research were used (Teddlie & Tashakkori 2009:252).

⁸ The transcriptions of the interviews can be handed out on request.

5.4 Ontological and Epistemological Reflections

The ontological and the epistemological underpinnings of this study are more towards the social constructivist paradigm, as in contrast to the positivist paradigm. Nevertheless, I would say that this thesis, and even myself as a researcher, adheres to more of a pragmatic stance when it comes to ontology and epistemology. This is due to the fact that I value “the search for practical answers to questions that intrigue the investigator” (Teddlie & Tashakkori 2009:86). Thus, I do *not* believe that ontology and epistemology is “a skin not a sweater” (Furlong & Marsh 2010:184). This means that I do not have any problems in for example speaking about typicality, as a criterion for choosing the case, and in the same time adhering to a social constructivist approach when it comes to collecting and analysing the material, in where interpretations and double hermeneutics are prevalent. Hence, the ontological and epistemological underpinnings can vary during the different stages of the research. And I do not see any problem with this, as long as scientific procedure and production of scientific knowledge are done in a systematic way. But also in relation to public criticism, which relates to common and shared rules and procedures within the specific community that makes the systematic methodological connection comprehensible and criticisable (Jackson 2016:213ff.). Hence, the different meta-theories become less important in relation to the scientific procedure and the production of scientific knowledge.

6 Analysis and Results

The analysis will be guided by thesis following sub-questions: *Who is accountable to whom? For what? Through what processes? And, why?* The first and second questions are interlinked with the features of vertical and horizontal accountability relationships in the theoretical framework. The third question can be answered by looking closer into what formal and informal accountability mechanisms that are prevalent. And the fourth and last question, is answered with the PA, PS, Governability and Integration theories.

6.1 The Accountability Relationships or Who is Accountable to Whom, and For What?

The empirical material reveals a somewhat mixed picture concerning the accountability relationships in the VSOPP between Stadsmissionen and Region Skåne, with elements of both vertical and horizontal accountability ties. However, the vertical accountability relationships, i.e. that there is some kind of superiority and subordination indicating to whom accountable behaviour is to be established, is highly prevalent in the empirical material. And most often, but not always, the public authority is to be seen as the superior one, whereas the nonprofit organization takes the role as the subordinated one. The empirical analysis of the accountability relationships proceeds from the features in the theoretical framework and touches upon elements such as superiority-subordination in a customer-provider relationship, dependency versus interdependency and equivalence. The elements are sometimes closely interlinked to each other. For example, if a customer-provider relationship is identified it also signalizes dependency and inequality between the actors. In this chain it is sometimes difficult to know where one element ends and another one starts, which then also can make it difficult in knowing if it should be categorized as for example in the dependency or the equality categories. There are however features in the VSOPP-collaboration that are more easily identified as one or the other, and therefore I recognize an advantage of analysing the accountability relationship in this way.

6.1.1 A Traditional Customer-Provider Relationship?

Already in the main document that regulates the collaboration, the VSOPP-agreement, it is possible to distinguish an inherent structure indicating a vertical and traditional customer-provider relationship, in where the public authority is the main financier, and thus can be seen as a customer, and the nonprofit organization acts as the service provider (VSOPP 2013). This picture is further confirmed by the interviews. Both of the politicians recognize the nonprofit organizations as providers. Tribo, one of the two politicians, expressed this as, “you get this money and then we expect you to do this and that” (Tribo 2016). He further states that the nonprofit organizations “get payed for this service, because that is actually what we are buying” (ibid). Thus, and in relation to the PA-theory, the public authority can be identified as the principal, whereas the nonprofit organizations could be identified as the agents. It also aligns to previous research, as when public managers view their role as funders or byers, a hierarchical authority will be prevalent (Van Slyke 2007). Also Åkesson, the other ones of the two politicians, refers to the nonprofit organizations as providers, but still he makes a distinction from the “traditional” providers that are regulated in some kind of funding or contracting out context; “Funding is a bit different. It does not ensure relational closeness” (Åkesson 2016). The VSOPPs are different then, since they create opportunities for getting closer to each other. This could be indicative of the fact that the nonprofit organizations are to be seen as stewards rather than agents. Norén, representing Stadsmissionen, conveys a somewhat ambivalent picture concerning their role. On the one hand she is opposing the role as provider: “We should not be providers, because that is not what the VSOPP is about. It is not about... then we could have, I believe, some kind of formal contract” (Norén 2016). On the other hand, she seems to be recognizing themselves in some kind of provider-role as she states that “you are not only a provider since you contribute with something else” (ibid).

This “something else”, or “the added value” is something that all of the interviewees talk about and eagerly come back to during the interviews. The nonprofit organization has the possibility to make things different and they have a closer contact with their clients. Norén explains: “I believe that Stadsmissionen is the one [...] at the bottom, that is in contact with... we are the ones that have contact with these people, if any” (Norén 2016). Åkesson uses the same language in explaining the uniqueness of the nonprofit organizations: “They can contribute with something else” and “They can provide services [...] that are different” (Åkesson 2016). Tribo develops the reasoning about the “added value”:

There are values that can never be created in the public sector nor in the private sector, that can only be created as a result of you being driven by an idea or a thought... something that keeps everything together, and it creates in itself an added value, that we cannot provide in any other way. (Tribo 2016).

The added value of procurement with a company has to do with the fact that they can do it to a lower cost and that they can do it in a smarter way. But the added value within a nonprofit

organization is not that they can do it to a lower cost but that they can do it differently. There you will find a social commitment that creates a feeling of belonging. (Tribo 2016)

Furthermore, and since the aim of the nonprofit organization is to provide support to people that are exposed to social deprivation, such as for example, homeless people, and/or people suffering from drug addiction and/or mental illness, the nonprofit organization comes into contact with people that for different reasons would not choose to get treatment from the conventional hospitals, or that need extra support to fulfil their medical treatments. According to the nonprofit organization, the kind of people that they treat choose not to visit the conventional hospitals because of lack of money or a feeling of stigmatization (Stadsmissionen 2014; Stadsmissionen 2015). Furthermore, the nonprofit organization also has the knowledge and capabilities of treating these kind of people. As for example, many of the people that the nonprofit organization comes into contact with often have anxiety and worry symptoms, and therefore might act and react in affect, and which furthermore means that they are in need of someone who can provide some extra time (Stadsmissionen 2014). Norén confirms this picture as she describes what Stadsmissionen is doing differently, and that is that they put a lot of focus on building a trustworthy relationship with their clients, and instead of just providing their clients with medicines or whatever it might be, Stadsmissionen is trying to empower their clients with the aim of making them independent and self-sufficient (Norén 2016).

The reasoning above, concerning the uniqueness of the nonprofit organization and its specific expertise and capability, could be indicative of either the fact that the nonprofit organizations is an agent or a steward as the it provides something that the principal lacks. Or it could be indicative of the fact that a horizontal accountability relationship is prevalent in where the actors are contributing in different ways to the collaboration, and hence, being equally accountable.

6.1.2 Dependency versus Independency – a Dead Heat?

Another way of analysing the accountability relationship could be done by studying the dependency and/or interdependency of Stadsmissionen and Region Skåne in the VSOPP-collaboration. If one of the actors are more dependent upon the other when it comes to for example resources, thus indicating a vertical accountability relationship, it would suggest that the dependent actor is accountable to the other one, as the latter probably wants to assure that the resources are wisely spent. If the actors are interdependent it will indicate a horizontal accountability relationship.

The identified customer-provider relationship above, in where Stadsmissionen occupies the subordinated position, implies that the nonprofit organization ends up in a dependent position towards Region Skåne, as the former is financially dependent upon the latter. It is not, however, only the financial part that contributes to the dependency. Stadsmissionen seems to be more dependent upon Region Skåne

also when it comes to other forms of resources, such as education or having access to a larger network of contacts. For example, Kronogård, the public official, states that most often it is Stadsmissionen that contacts her because they are in need of help or support. Hence, the contacts that Kronogård mediates is directed from Stadsmissionen to Region Skåne, and not the other way around; “Unfortunately it has never happened, but if Stadsmissionen gets more attention then maybe it would happen” (Kronogård 2016). However, the public official seems to be very much concerned with the question and she has started to think about the possibilities of developing a joint communication plan, in where the aim is to highlight Stadsmissionen within Region Skåne. The representative from Stadsmissionen is very much aware of the situation: “I do understand what the region means with a win-win situation [...], I feel, however, that we need to take a step forward”. She explains this further by saying that Stadsmissionen “needs to get the health care centres and the hospitals to understand what they can gain in collaborating with us, how they could use us” (Norén 2016). The dependency on behalf of the nonprofit organization indicates a vertical accountability relationship in where Stadsmissionen continues to occupy the subordinated position in relation to the superior public authority. It seems to be the case even though Stadsmissionen contributes with other forms of resources, such as facilities and so on (VSOPP 2013; Stadsmissionen 2016, visit), which will become clear in the next part concerning the monitoring aspect.

However, and in contrast to the description of the dependent nonprofit organization, another picture emerges, in where the public authority can be identified as the dependent one. The public official states that: “it is not only us helping them, I would say that they are helping us to a greater extent, vis-à-vis this group of patients” (Kronogård 2016). To what extent the public authority is more dependent upon the nonprofit organization or the other way around will remain unsaid. Nevertheless, the opposing picture of the dependent public authority could be interpreted as an indication of the fact that the two organizations are interdependent. In addition, Kronogård stresses that the VSOPP-collaboration is a “win-win situation”. She recognizes Stadsmissionen as a well-established and independent organization with its own mindset and values. With this in mind, the public official states that Stadsmissionen is able to provide health care services for a group of patients that would normally not get treatment in time and, in a worst case scenario, would end up in the emergency room or not even survive. Seen from this perspective, it is possible to talk about a win-win situation, according to Kronogård (ibid).

The interdependency picture is further more strengthened by, first, the fact that the nonprofit organizations act as a watch-dogs towards the public authority. Åkesson, the politician, states that the nonprofit organizations inform the public authority about good and bad things they experience in the health care system. For example, one representative of a nonprofit organization might come to a public official and say “did you know that our group is dealing with this kind of ill health, and then the public official starts thinking about this and brings it back to us”

(Åkesson 2016). And second, by the fact that it is both the public authority and the nonprofit organization that have the possibility of initiating a change or prolongation of the VSOPP. Most often it is the public authority, and the public officials that handle the prolongation process of the VSOPPs (Kronogård 2016). This could be indicative of interdependency between the two actors, or even a dependency on behalf of the public authority. At least, this means that the nonprofit organization does not have to beg for money, which seems to be the case in a traditional customer-provider relationship (Åkesson 2016).

In conclusion, it seems to be a dead heat between dependency versus interdependency. Both of the organizations are dependent upon each other, but in different ways though. On the one hand and when it comes to resources Stadsmissionen seems to be more dependent upon Region Skåne than the other way around. This is indicative of a vertical accountability relationship in where Stadsmissionen, as the agent or steward, is accountable to Region Skåne, the principal. On the other hand, when taking the win-win situation, as described by Kronogård, and the “added value” into account, it can be indicative of the fact that they are interdependent. But also that preconditions exist for developing a shared or reciprocal accountability, as both actors seem to be equally concerned with the public service delivery. When moving on the question of whether they could be seen as equal actors or not, the picture concerning the accountability relationship might become clearer.

6.1.3 Inequality Wins over Equality

When analysing whether the public authority and the nonprofit organization can be seen as equal actors a quite dominating picture emerges, in where inequality is the most salient one. But the indications of inequality do not totally exclude the indications of equality.

The indications of equality are tightly connected to the reasoning about interdependency above. First, the fact that both Stadsmissionen and Region Skåne have the possibility to initiate a change in the VSOPP-agreement is indicative of them being equal actors. And second, the fact that they contribute in different ways to providing health and dental care to people that are exposed to social deprivation, i.e. the “win-win situation”, could also be seen as an indication of relational equality. Third, the way the nonprofit refers to the public authority in one of the documents, as a “co-financier” and an “actor to consult” in different questions (Stadsmissionen 2015:1), could be indicative of them being equal actors. And fourth, there is an indication of equality as Åkesson means that, signing a VSOPP signifies that the politicians and the public authority have to let go of the traditional steering mechanisms. “You have to dare as a politician, you need to have the courage to believe that the society out there can provide services that are... and sometimes even better [...]” (Åkesson 2016).

Just as the indications of equality were tightly connected to the reasoning about interdependency, so are the indications of inequality. First, the above identified customer-provider relationship, resulting in a resource dependency on behalf of the nonprofit organization, creates a reporting relationship in where Stadsmissionen has to report upwards to Region Skåne (see for example Stadsmissionen 2015; Kronogård 2016). And this reporting relationship can be seen as a one-way communication from the nonprofit organization to the public authority, but not the other way around (Norén 2016). Thus, the two organizations are not equal, since only one of them has to report to the other. Some might argue that it is quite obvious that is the nonprofit, as the social service provider, that should report to the public authority, as the main financier, about what they have been done during the year. But still, if a horizontal accountability relationship had been prevalent, one could have imagined that the actors did some kind of mutual and joint evaluation. Or at least that the actors made a common decision about the format for the evaluation. At present time, it is the public authority, and more precisely the public official, that decides what the format of the following-up should contain (Kronogård 2016). The previous years Stadsmissionen has handed over their annual reports to Region Skåne, as a way to show what they have been doing during the year. But this year, for example, the public official decided differently: “I know that you have an annual report [...] and I want some material to be able to produce some basis for decision. So I did not request it this year. Then maybe we should do it again next year” (Kronogård 2016). When it comes to the annual reports it should be noted, though, that Stadsmissionen has the authority to frame them as they wish. However, Norén has expressed a wish that Region Skåne specifies more explicitly what they are interested in knowing from the reporting reports (VSOPP Meeting Minutes 2016a).

Furthermore, the public authority does not only decide what the format of the following-up should look like. In some part, Region Skåne has the authority to decide upon the whole VSOPP-structure. The VSOPP-agreement between Stadsmissionen and Region Skåne contains an additional part, which concerns Stadsmissionen’s activities of helping EU-migrants that live in poverty and homelessness. These activities are part of the VSOPP-collaboration, but still not since the financing is handled separate and for one year at the time. Norén is not pleased with this solution, as it means that the long-sightedness gets lost and she can only plan her organization for one year at the time (Norén 2016:4). Also Kronogård expresses that she recognizes the worth of handling the VSOPP as a whole (Kronogård 2016). However, and since the public authority holds the power to decide upon the entire VSOPP-structure, it also indicates that the nonprofit organization and the public authority are not equal actors. And consequently, it also indicates for what and in what way the public authority wants to be accountable toward the wider citizenry.

Finally, the relational inequality between the actors can further be strengthened by the fact that they do not view themselves as equally responsible for the VSOPP-collaboration. What is interesting though, is the fact that all of them view their organization as the outmost responsible one:

If anything would go wrong, it would be on our responsibility, as we are financed from taxes, and since they are providing this service on our behalf. (Tribo 2016)

[...] the politicians are utmost responsible, since we have signed the agreement. We have to make sure that they are followed-up. “We have to make sure that the tax-payers get value for the money. (Åkesson 2016)

I believe that it rests on the political board, since they sign and decide upon the agreement. (Kronogård 2016)

It is us together. Or if it us... [...] I actually believe that it rests more on us. (Norén 2016)

Both of the politicians and the public official view Region Skåne, and more specific the political board and its chairman, as accountable for the VSOPP-collaboration. The responsibility Tribo feels also stems from the fact that he views himself, in his role as a politician, as one of the innovators of the VSOPPs in Region Skåne: “when you, as a politician, has launched something like the VSOPP and testing the limits, then you are particularly responsible for it” (Tribo 2016). Norén, on the other hand, feels that Stadsmissionen is the utmost responsible for the VSOPP-collaboration. Hence, the empirical material does not explicitly state who bears the utmost responsibility for the collaboration. However, no one seems to escape the responsibility either. And the fact that both of the organizations seem to be willing to assume the responsibility for the VSOPP-collaboration could be interpreted as though the unequal features balance each other. Thus, indicating some kind of equality between the two of them, and in the longer run, some kind of potential reciprocal accountability.

6.1.4 In Sum: A Vertical Accountability Relationship with Horizontal Elements

When taking into account all of the theoretical features of superiority-subordination in a customer-provider relationship, dependency versus interdependency and equality versus inequality, it becomes quite clear that a vertical accountability relationship is highly prevalent in the VSOPP-collaboration between Stadsmissionen and Region Skåne. And thus, the sub-questions of *who is accountable to whom* and *for what* are answered in the following way. Stadsmissionen can be seen as accountable to Region Skåne in the VSOPP-collaboration, and this mainly has to do with financial accountability. Thus, Region Skåne wants to make sure that the money is wisely spent. This means that we place the VSOPP-collaboration between the two actors in either box 1 or box 2 in the analytical model, which further on means that the PA or PS-theory can help describe and explain the accountability structure. It also means that my initial assumptions of the VSOPP-collaboration were met concerning a vertical accountability relationship. The results can be explained mainly by the fact that the VSOPP-

collaboration is dealing with some kind of customer-provider relationship, in where financial resources and thus a vertical reporting relationship are prevalent. However, horizontal accountability features are visible as well in the VSOPP-collaboration. When it comes to the question of who is utmost responsible for the collaboration it seems almost as though the accountability relationship can be said to be horizontal. But most often when the horizontal accountability features are distinguished in this analysis, they seem to pave the way for some kind of reciprocal and shared accountability instead of actually demonstrating that a horizontal accountability relationship actually exists. Thus, the VSOPP-agreement holds the potential for having horizontal accountability relationships, which becomes even more clear as we dive into the accountability mechanisms. Moreover, the accountability mechanisms will disclose whether the accountability structure of the VSOPP-collaboration is to be found in box 1 or 2.

6.2 The Accountability Mechanisms or Through What Processes is Accountability Manifested?

If the analysis of the accountability structure above indicated that the vertical accountability relationship seems to be most salient in the VSOPP, the empirical results concerning the accountability mechanisms seem to point toward a preponderance of informal accountability mechanisms, or at least a strive towards these mechanisms, even though the formal accountability mechanisms are apparent. As in the analysis of the accountability relationships, the analysis of the accountability mechanisms is based upon the theoretical building blocks in the theoretical framework, i.e. official and unofficial performance expectations, shared norms and facilitative behaviour, formal and informal monitoring, and lastly, formal and informal sanctions and rewards. After discussing and analysing the empirical results in relation to these building blocks, a short summary will be done of what accountability mechanisms are prevalent in the VSOPP-collaboration, answering the question *through what processes is accountability manifested*.

6.2.1 Official and Unofficial Performance Expectations

The official performance expectations in the VSOPP-collaborations are to be found in the VSOPP-agreements. In the case of Region Skåne and Stadsmissionen the official performance expectation, or the aim, of the VSOPP-collaboration is quite straightforward as it is to provide health and dental care for people that suffer from social deprivation (VSOPP 2013). The VSOPP-agreement also makes it clear, as mentioned in the previous part, that Stadsmissionen is the health and dental care provider. Furthermore, the agreement identifies Stadsmissionen's ability to provide

treatment at an early stage and thereby strengthen the patient group's health status and prevent severe illness but also to increase their visibility and their needs (ibid:3). Still, the VSOPP-agreement does not explicitly state that Stadsmissionen *should* provide treatment at an early stage nor to what extent Stadsmissionen should provide care and treatment. What is stated explicitly in the VSOPP-agreement is the fact that Stadsmissionen should obey the laws concerning health and dental care, and patient safety, but also that both Stadsmissionen and Region Skåne should contribute with resources to the VSOPP-collaboration. It is stated that Region Skåne should contribute with around 92 percent of the resources, mainly through financing, and Stadsmissionen with the rest (ibid:6). According to Norén, Stadsmissionen is contributing mostly with facilities and material resources, such as medical equipment (Stadsmissionen 2016, visit). All of the interviewees confirm these official performance expectations, which can be seen as a first indication of the fact that they strive towards a common good. The picture concerning a strive towards a common good is further strengthened when it comes to the unofficial performance expectations, i.e. expectations that are not written down.

When identifying and analysing the unofficial performance expectations, one was very much salient. This unofficial performance expectation is at a much more abstract level in contrast to the official performance expectations above. It concerns the "added value", which was mentioned in the previous part of the analysis of the accountability relationships. The two politicians and the public official expect the nonprofit organization to provide the health care services differently in comparison to the traditional health care services (Kronogård 2016; Tribo 2016; Åkesson 2016), as the nonprofit organizations have a specific knowledge about interpersonal values and they also understand what it means being a voice carrier for someone else (Åkesson 2016). Tribo states that: "to me, that is important, because you create a belonging in society in another way" (Tribo 2016). Another unofficial performance expectation regards the fact that Stadsmissionen expects Region Skåne to listen to them, as the nonprofit organization is a voice carrier for a group people that have difficulty in making their own voices heard. Furthermore, Stadsmissionen expects Region Skåne to forward the information to concerned parties, may it be the political board, a specific health care centre or other parts of the public organization that Stadsmissionen comes into contact with (Norén 2016). The one to forward the information, and hence, being the nonprofit organization's voice carrier is the public official. During the meeting between Stadsmissionen and Region Skåne, Kronogård defined her role as a "facilitator" (VSOPP-meeting 2016). And during the interview she explained that she paves the way for the nonprofit organization, so that they can solve potential problems, by for example, contacting and informing different kind of personnel within Region Skåne: "My position gives me other possibilities to raise questions and pull a few strings [...], and to develop better contacts between Stadsmissionen and Region Skåne" (Kronogård 2016). Her role towards the politicians is to prepare political errands and to represent the nonprofit organization to the political board. For example, when Kronogård receives the debriefing from Stadsmissionen she compiles it, in order to hand it over to the

politicians. The compiling can be about putting it into a larger context, like what the implications would be for Region Skåne, that Norén might have difficulty in pin-pointing (ibid). Åkesson summarizes the chain of voice carrying from a political point of view, in where it might start with one representative of a nonprofit organization that comes to the public official and say “did you know that our group is dealing with this kind of ill health, and then the public official starts thinking about this and brings it back to us” (Åkesson 2016). And Norén confirms the expectation as she states that they report back “what they see, what they discover here and in what parts we can collaborate” (Norén 2016).

When analysing the empirical results concerning the official and the unofficial performance expectations it becomes apparent that both Stadsmissionen and Region Skåne seem to be striving towards a common good. The identified unofficial performance expectations can be seen as facilitators for achieving the official performance expectation, which both of the actors identify as an important task. This means that the common good, in line with the PS-theory and the integration theory, is very much prevalent in the VSOPP-collaboration. Whereas, the agency loss and self-interest, in line with the PA-theory and the governability theory, are less prevalent.

6.2.2 Shared Norms and Facilitative Behaviour

In the VSOPP-agreement it is explicitly written that the collaboration between the public authority and the nonprofit organization should be built upon the following: “respect of each other’s different preconditions, openness and transparency, dialogue, reciprocal trust, responsiveness, acceptance of critique, and continuity” (VSOPP 2013:4). These features are identical to the informal accountability mechanisms, and especially the shared norms and facilitative behaviour, in the theoretical framework of this paper. The empirical results from the interviews confirm that the VSOPP-collaboration between Stadsmissionen and Region Skåne is characterised by many of these informal features, in line with the PS-theory and the integration theory.

One emergent and recurrent *shared norm* during the interviews was *trust*. All of the actors being interviewed expressed that they experience great confidence in each other. For example, Åkesson states that “we have a strong confidence in them” (Åkesson 2016) and Kronogård says that the VSOPP-collaboration “builds upon [...] a mutual exchange and trust”, but that the trust would diminish if the actors did not fulfil their commitments (Kronogård 2016). Tribo means that the public authority experiences great confidence in the nonprofit organizations because of their professionalism and since they are well-established organizations (Tribo 2016). Another, much explicit, indication of trust being a central feature in the VSOPP-collaboration has to do with the fact that the public authority only concludes a VSOPP-agreement with nonprofit organizations in whom they experience a great confidence. Thus, the public authority makes an informed

decision about with whom they should collaborate and an agreement will not be concluded with any random nonprofit organization. Before initiating some kind of collaboration with a nonprofit organization, “it needs to have good types of statutes and processes for how the association should work” (Åkesson 2016). There was, for example, one nonprofit organization that wanted to conclude a VSOPP-agreement with the public authority, but where the public authority said no because they did not have enough confidence in the organization (ibid). Also Tribo expresses that they have to be careful about what nonprofit organization they are collaborating with. The VSOPP-collaborations in Region Skåne only includes well-established nonprofit organization, with whom they collaborated before, for example through funding or public procurement. In addition, Tribo means “that it would be more difficult if there was an organization... [...] a completely new one, since it had not been tested before”. Tribo continues: “I mean Stadsmissionen was already professionalized and they had already quite a big and well-established organization to be able to provide these kind of services” (Tribo 2016). And according to Norén, Stadsmissionen was very much known to the public authority since they had been collaborating with each other in different ways, for 16 years (Norén 2016). The fact that Region Skåne only collaborates with nonprofit organizations with whom they experience a great amount of trust, corresponds well to the accountability literature about the selection process and a form of selection-based accountability (Mansbridge 2014).

Among other identified *shared norms* was *respect*. For example, one of the politicians emphasized the importance of understanding each other and of having respect of each other’s missions: “Just as they need to understand the public organization, we must understand them, how the third sector works [...]”. In addition, the same politician states that “Just because we have signed this agreement with them, they did not become more accommodative, and that is not something I want anyway” (Åkesson 2016). Furthermore, the same politician believes that it is the VSOPP-agreement in itself that creates opportunities for understanding each other (ibid). The fact that the public authority does not want the nonprofit organization to become accommodative is once again indicative of the fact that the latter are seen more as stewards than as agents. Lastly, another identified *shared norm* was *long-sightedness*. Both representatives of the public authority and the nonprofit organization express that long-sightedness is an important feature in the VSOPP-collaboration (Kronogård 2016; Norén 2016; Åkesson 2016). First of all, the long-sightedness is an important feature that distinguishes the collaboration between the public authority and the nonprofit organization, from other forms of collaboration, such as funding and contracting out (Åkesson 2016). And second, the interviewees identify that the *long-sightedness* creates opportunities for the nonprofit organization to develop its health and dental care services. Norén even recognizes that one of the things that makes them want to continue the VSOPP-collaboration with the public authority, has to do with the long-sightedness, as it makes her being able to make a long-term planning for the public service provision. She also stresses that the long-sightedness creates continuity and security for the

patients (Norén 2016). Thus, the long-sightedness seems to ensure that the common good will be sustained. When it comes to the *shared norm of reciprocity* it could be questioned whether it permeates the VSOPP-collaboration or not. In one document from the nonprofit organization in where they develop their thoughts on the collaboration, it is explicitly written that the actors need to develop their interaction when it comes to reciprocity (Stadsmissionen n.d.). This aligns with the analysis in the previous part concerning accountability relationships in relation to dependency versus interdependency, in where the following citation was made: Stadsmissionen “needs to get the health care centres and the hospitals to understand what they can gain in collaborating with us, how they could use us” (Interview Norén 2016)

Moreover, and when turning our eyes to *facilitative behaviours*, two features are very much salient in the VSOPP-collaboration, i.e. *frequent and sustained communication* and *information sharing*. The *frequent and sustained communication* is obvious since the actual collaboration, in where the nonprofit organization and the public authority interact with each other, contains at least two following-up, and face to face, meetings every year, and in between and if necessary, they have contact with each other through phone or e-mail (Kronogård 2016; Norén 2016). Norén explains: “If I notice anything then I call, and vice versa” (Norén 2016). When it comes to *information sharing*, which can also be interpreted as *extending favours*, it was already touched upon in the previous part of the analysis when discussing official and unofficial performance expectations. It concerns the fact Kronogård helps with for example providing different kinds of facilities. She also contacts different persons within the public authority, if Norén experiences any difficulty in the collaboration. Then Kronogård explains who Stadsmissionen is and why they want and should come into contact with the public authority (Norén 2016).

Finally, this part has shown that the informal accountability mechanisms in the VSOPP-collaboration between Stadsmissionen and Region Skåne are highly salient. When proceeding to the monitoring aspect of the collaboration it will become clear that the informal features continue to be salient.

6.2.3 Formal and Informal Monitoring

The monitoring aspect in the VSOPP-collaboration is dominated by informal monitoring mechanism, as it is hardly regulated at all. In the VSOPP-agreement it only says that: “Every year the association makes a plan of activities and by the end of the year, an annual report that explains what has been done during the year. The plan of activities should contain a description of activities and the aim of these. The association hands in reports on a regular basis, based upon a joint decision. Region Skåne will come back about the format of these. The parties agree upon following-up meetings” (VSOPP 2013). A potential result of this vague description about evaluation and following-up in the agreement in combination with the vague

formulation of the official performance expectations, probably contributes to the fact that a more informal way of monitoring is more prevalent. As we will see, there are also other factors that contribute to the informal monitoring feature. This vague and informal monitoring could be indicative of the fact that the nonprofit organization is identified as a steward, which does not need to be monitored since the principal has such a great confidence in them and in the common good of the collaboration. It could also be indicative of the fact that the actors have such a great confidence in the whole VSOPP-collaboration, that is allowed to become self-regulating as described by the integration theory.

As is already clear from the previous part in this chapter, it is the public authority that monitors the nonprofit organization and its provision of health and dental care to people that suffer from social deprivation. And as is also already clear from the previous part in the analysis, it is the public official that decides upon the format. Kronogård means that the public authority is interested in knowing what Stadsmissionen has done during the year, whether the visits have increased or decreased, why they believe that the activities are important and should continue receiving financing, (Kronogård 2016:3). Then Norén writes an annual report, in where she explains what has happened, and “what I have seen during this year” (Norén 2016). The annual report also contains information about changes within the patient group, what treatment is carried out and to what extent (Stadsmissionen 2015). Thus, it is not only her perceived experiences in the report. However, she seems to be quite free to highlight whatever she wants in the annual report (Norén 2016). A number of reasons are put forward to maintain this kind of vague and informal monitoring. First, representatives of the public authority experience that they have a great confidence in Stadsmissionen, and their professionalism. As already mentioned in the previous part of the analysis, the great confidence they experience has to do with the fact that the nonprofit organization is a well-established and well-known organization. Therefore, there is no need to monitor them more closely (Kronogård 2016; Åkesson 2016), which once again correspond to the accountability literature (Mansbridge 2014). Second, from a public authority perspective the VSOPP-collaboration with Stadsmissionen concerns quite a small activity with a relatively low cost, which seems to be a reason for not putting too much attention on monitoring (ibid). “It is quite small agreements and they are no venture capitalists” (Åkesson 2016). Tribo says that if they start regulating the VSOPPs and clarifies who is responsible to whom and about what, it would entail higher costs because of legal counselling. And, third, there would also be a risk losing what is so special about the nonprofit sector, i.e. the added value.

First, we would have to pay more for the services since their legal experts would be involved and second, we would not get the added value. They would be as any other company, except for being stamped as nonprofit organization (Tribo 2016).

Also Åkesson emphasizes the fact that there is a risk of crowding out the motivation of the nonprofit organization. In addition, he recognizes a risk of “losing them” as

the nonprofit organizations are free to leave the agreement whenever they want (Åkesson 2016). Another reason has to do with the fact that it is difficult to measure this kind of public service provision: “homeless people’s visits to the doctor is more difficult to follow up” (Tribo 2016). And lastly, a more informal kind of monitoring could also be used as a way to ensure intrinsic incentives, according to Tribo (ibid). All of the above reasons that were put forward correspond to the accountability literature, as mentioned in the theoretical framework.

Nevertheless, the empirical results from some of the interviews (Norén 2016; Åkesson 2016) and of a document (VSOPP Meeting Minutes 2016) indicate a wish and a need of having more explicit and concrete performance standards. Åkesson states that if the VSOPPs are to expand and become fully legitimized, the monitoring aspect might be improved and enhanced. This is however where Åkesson and Tribo differ, as Tribo does not want the VSOPPs to be more formalised. Tribo expresses a resistance towards monitoring and he also states that: “In this country we put too much faith in monitoring” (Tribo 2016). He believes that we must proceed from the fact that people want to do good. He also believes that trust should dominate these kind of relationships, and when it does it will reduce the need of monitoring: “We give too much attention to administration that it becomes almost impossible for people to do good” (ibid). Also the public official shows a bit of resistance towards monitoring, which has to do with the fact that she recognizes that shared norms, such as trust, permeate the collaboration. And instead of focusing upon monitoring, the public official rather spends her time on developing the collaboration further: “I do not believe that more monitoring is necessary. And I do not know to what it would contribute” (Kronogård 2016). Furthermore, she says that: “Just the fact that individuals keep coming to them speaks for it itself” (ibid). Thus, the informal monitoring mechanisms are very much prevalent in the VSOPP-collaboration, which corresponds with the accountability literature which states a trust-based accountability decreases the need for monitoring (Mansbridge 2014).

6.2.4 Formal and Informal Sanctions and Rewards

The consequences of performance in the VSOPP-collaboration, at least in terms of sanctions, are written in the VSOPP-agreement. The agreement clearly states that if one of the actors does not fulfil its obligations or the conditions for the VSOPP, the other actor could insist on negotiations or terminate the VSOPP (VSOPP 2013:7). The VSOPP-agreement does not say anything about formal rewards. During the interviews it became apparent that both informal sanctions and rewards are highly prevalent in the VSOPP-collaboration. The informal sanctions had to do with *bad reputation*. In a what-if-situation, i.e. what if any of the actors would fail in fulfilling its commitments, one of the interviewees explained that they would probably lose their confidence in the other actor. For example, Kronogård explains that in such a situation the public authority would no longer trust the nonprofit

organization and it “would make it difficult to collaborate with them in the future” (Kronogård 2016). Hence, some kind of mismanagement could contribute to the fact that an organization gets a *bad reputation*, which means that it could risk losing other forms of collaboration, and not only this specific collaboration. Furthermore, Tribo recognizes that the entire format for the VSOPP-collaboration could risk being denigrated if any of the parties would mismanage in some kind of way: “And of course, if someone violates it, then the whole VSOPP’s fundamental basis would risk being questioned” (Tribo 2016). In contrast to the formal and informal sanctioning approaches just mentioned, the same politician also implies a non-sanctioning approach, which corresponds to the accountability literature and the problem of “drifting principals” (Schillemans & Busuioac 2014):

If it would fail in any part, for example if they have a doctor that doesn’t do his job, then we should not start blaming Stadsmissionen. Instead if they fail in any part, then we should say that, well yes of course it is their responsibility to check that this person is licensed, that is not our responsibility, but maybe we should support Stadsmissionen in some kind of way and make sure that have properly functioning routines and so on. Because it is not easy for a nonprofit organization to have these kind of routines. Even Region Skåne fails in checking licences, so why would Stadsmissionen not fail in doing this [...]. If it had been a for-profit company then we would have blamed them and said that you need to have properly functioning routines, and you have to do better... but it is not that easy with the nonprofit organizations, I think (Tribo 2016).

Hence, the public authority, as the principal, would not impose any sanctions even though the VSOPP-collaboration would not meet the performance expectations. In this case it probably has to do with the fact that the formal mechanisms would crowd out the “added value”, as mentioned in the previous part about formal and informal monitoring. In addition, or actually in contrast to the vertical accountability relationship, the non-sanctioning approach could also be interpreted as relational reciprocity, in where the public authority and the nonprofit organization recognize the importance of supporting each other and thus, contributing to some kind of self-regulation within the collaboration.

When turning to the informal reward, taking the shape of *good reputation*, it became apparent as the representative of the nonprofit organization discussed what the VSOPP-collaboration has meant for Stadsmissionen. For example, Norén explains that the VSOPP-collaboration has contributed to a development of Stadsmissionen’s network: “we have ended up on a completely different platform, we are into a completely different interplay”. She further explains that “belonging to the region is quite big” (Norén 2016). And in addition, the public official states that the nonprofit organization has increased its legitimacy through the VSOPP-collaboration. All of these factors can be seen as indications of *good reputation*. Furthermore, it is recognized that the VSOPP-agreement has meant that the nonprofit organization has easier access to the public authority and the decision processes within the public organization (Norén 2016; Åkesson 2016). One of the politicians explains:

Decisions within the public authority most often emerge slowly, and the nonprofit organizations have never had any explicit access. But now they do not need to knock on the door that heavily, they do not need to put the axe in the door to get in. Now they are able to walk [...]. Now they are welcome to have a dialogue with the public officials, and our public officials even visit them in another way. (Åkesson 2016)

On behalf of the public authority, Åkesson recognizes that the VSOPP-collaboration with Stadsmissionen has contributed to a strong organizational development, as the user perspective has become more prevalent (Åkesson 2016). Consequently, and finally, the informal mechanisms once again seem to be highly salient in the VSOPP-collaboration.

6.2.5 In Sum: Informal Accountability Mechanisms Take the Lead

The VSOPP-collaboration between Stadsmissionen and Region Skåne clearly contains a lot of informal accountability mechanisms, in contrast to the quite few formal ones. The sub-question of this chapter – *through what processes is accountability manifested* – is answered in the following way then. Accountability is mainly manifested through informal accountability mechanisms, of which *shared norms* in terms of *trust*, *facilitative behaviour* in terms of *communication* and *info sharing*, *informal monitoring*, and finally, *informal sanctions and rewards*, are the most salient ones. This means that we place the VSOPP-collaboration between Stadsmissionen and Region Skåne in either box 2 or box 4 in the analytical model, which means that either the PS-theory or the integration theory can help describe and explain the accountability structure. The fact that the empirical results indicate that box 2 best describe and explain the accountability structure, will be developed further on in the next part. For now, we focus on the informal accountability mechanisms. The prevalence of these can be described as a result from the fact that the sensation of and the strive towards a *common good*, is highly prevalent in the VSOPP-collaboration between Stadsmissionen and Region Skåne, but also that *trust* seems to permeate the collaboration.

6.3 Summing It Up – What Does the Accountability Structure Look Like in a Compact Governance Context and How Can it be Explained?

The accountability structure in the VSOPP-collaboration between Stadsmissionen and Region Skåne is characterized by a prevalence of vertical accountability relationships and informal accountability mechanisms. Thus, the accountability structure is placed in box 2 in the analytical model. The structure can be seen as a

result of the customer-provider relationship, in where financial resources and a reporting relationship, when it comes to monitoring, are highly salient. Hence, the fact that the nonprofit organization contributes with something that the public authority, i.e. the principal, lacks, is a crucial explanative feature. And since the *goal convergence* and *trust* seem to be highly salient, the nonprofit organization can be seen as a steward instead of an agent. However, it could be noted that the PA-theory probably would explain this as though the nonprofit organization acted in accordance with the principal's obligations as a way to gain credibility and resource benefits. But since, there is such a great preponderance of informal accountability mechanisms in where for example the nonprofit organizations can be seen as a dedicated service provider, the reasoning of the PA-theory seems less likely. Furthermore, and in contrast to the PA-theory, is the fact that drifting principals, and not drifting agents, seem to be prevalent in the VSOPP-collaboration.

7 Discussion

The analysis of the empirical results showed that the accountability structure in the VSOPP-collaboration between Stadsmissionen and Region Skåne is characterized by a prevalence of vertical accountability relationships and informal accountability mechanisms. The prevalence of vertical accountability relationships and informal accountability mechanisms did not exclude either formal accountability mechanisms nor horizontal accountability relationships, however. On the one hand, the fact that vertical accountability relationships were more prevalent than the horizontal ones could be interpreted as though the traditional aspects of accountability are still in play, and thus not weakened. On the other hand, the fact that informal accountability mechanisms were more prevalent than formal accountability mechanisms can be interpreted as though the traditional aspects of accountability were weakened. This means that the accountability structure of the VSOPP-collaboration operates in a grey area. It becomes clear as nobody really knows who is utmost accountable for the VSOPP-collaboration. But the question is if that really matters since both the nonprofit organization and the public authority seem to be willing to be accountable for the collaboration. It seems as though, both of the organizations have too much to lose in not being accountable. I am mostly thinking about the reputation on behalf of the nonprofit organizations and the citizen's trust on behalf of the public authority.

The implications of the results both correspond and do not correspond to previous research on accountability in a governance context. It does not correspond to previous research which states that accountability in a governance context leads to accountability deficits (Koliba et al. 2011; Willems & Van Dooren 2011), in where no one is willing to take responsibility. It can probably be explained by the fact that we are dealing with a nonprofit organizations and a public authority that have strong incentives in contributing to the common good, may it be out of external motivators, such as for example gaining extra votes in an election, or internal motivators, such as for example enhanced reputation or just the fact that you are a dedicated service provider. As this theoretical framework does not focus on external or internal motivators in depth it could be something to focus on in future research. In addition, it could also be interesting to investigate if these results are exclusive for Stadsmissionen and Region Skåne, or if all nonprofit organizations and public authorities in the VSOPP-collaborations strive for a common good and if that has to do with the reasons as just mentioned. Most likely the results of such a study would point in the same direction as this, since the nonprofit organizations are driven by a value-based logic and the public authorities are driven by a democratic

logic. Thus, it would be interesting to study how the different organizational spheres of the nonprofit sector and the public sector affect the accountability structure.

Furthermore, the implications of the results correspond to previous research in the sense that collaborating governance can bring about other forms of accountability that are more horizontal and informal (Romzek et al. 2012). The informal aspects of accountability are quite obvious from the analysis of the empirical results. And a possible explanation to why the informal accountability mechanisms are so predominant in relation to the formal accountability mechanisms, is probably connected to the grey area of the VSOPP-collaboration. Since not much is regulated concerning the accountability structure the informal accountability mechanisms are free to exist and expand. On the one hand, it could be assumed that if the VSOPP-collaboration becomes more regulated the informal accountability mechanisms would be crowded out, as the accountability literature suggests (Schillemans & Busuioac 2014). On the other hand, it could be assumed that if the accountability structure in the VSOPP-collaboration became regulated, it could have implications for the fact that the accountability relationships could be more horizontal, as the research of Conteh (2016) indicates. As for example, if all of the collaboration actors are willing to be utmost accountable, it could be regulated in the VSOPP-agreement. Consequently, the grey area of the VSOPP-collaboration seems to be a recurrent factor in explaining the accountability structure.

As the analysis of the empirical results indicated a prevalence of vertical accountability relationships, which also corresponded to my initial assumption about the accountability relationship of the VSOPP-collaboration, the analytical model could be questioned, I suppose. As of “what is the point in including horizontal accountability relationships if not even a compact aiming at being horizontal can be placed in box 3 or box 4?”. Even though I had some initial assumptions I was not completely sure about the fact. And I still believe that the analytical model could be used to study different aspects of accountability, as for example, the monitoring process could be placed in box 2 and described with the help of the PS-theory, whereas the question, or rather the answer of, who is utmost accountable for the VSOPP-collaboration could be placed in box 4 and described with the integration theory. I also believe that the analytical model could be useful when analysing the accountability structure in other forms of collaborations, and not only the VSOPP-collaborations, as it captures different elements in the accountability structure in a comprehensive way.

In addition, and when it comes to the analytical model, as it captures the whole theoretical framework, I am aware of the fact that it is a complex one, containing a lot of different elements. It can probably be seen as both the thesis' strength and weakness. Strength in the sense that it can be seen as an attempt to disentangle the tangled web of accountability. Weakness in the sense that it does not provide any deep analysis of any of the elements. Another limitation of the thesis and the theoretical framework is the fact that the theories first and foremost were used to describe the empirical material. Thus, they did not explain the results, as I thought they would do.

In conclusion, I believe that the thesis most important contributions to the accountability research field is to be found in its empirical aim in studying a compact governance context but also in its descriptive aim of disentangling the tangled web of accountability and thereof, the analytical model.

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Appendix 1
Compilation of VSOPP-collaborations

VSOPP	Nonprofit Organization(s)	Public Organization	Activity	Time (from-)	Financing
1	Fontänhuset i Malmö	Region Skåne	Psychosocial rehabilitation	130101-	671 000/year (mainly public)
2	Fontänhuset i Lund	Region Skåne	Psychosocial rehabilitation	130101-	300 000/year (mainly public)
3	Fontänhuset i Båstad	Region Skåne	Psychosocial rehabilitation	130101-	528 000/year (mainly public)
4	Fontänhuset i Helsingborg	Region Skåne	Psychosocial rehabilitation	130101-	528 000/year (mainly public)
5	Stadsmissionen Malmö	Region Skåne	Health & dental care for homeless or other vulnerable people	130101-	4 100 000/year (mainly public)
6	Röda Korset (Red Cross) - centre for refugees and asylum seekers	Region Skåne	Centre for refugees and asylum seekers, damaged from war and/or torture	140101-	8 100 000/year (mainly public)
7	RFSL/RFSU	Region Skåne	Sexual therapeutic services	130101-	1 200 000/year (mainly public)
8	Röda Korset (Red Cross) - volunteers at hospitals	Region Skåne	Practical support for patients, relatives and visitors in the health care sector	140101-	790 000/total? (mainly public)
9	Röda Korset (Red Cross) - children's activities	Region Skåne	Centre for child refugees and asylum seekers, damaged from war and/or torture	160101-	1 070 000/year (mainly public)
10	Nätverket Idéburen Sektor Skåne	Region Skåne	Societal and business development	160101-	1 960 000/year (public)
11	Psoriasisförbundet om ljusterapi	Region Skåne	Light therapy	160101-	5 397 200/year (public)
12	Röda Korset (Red Cross) - centre for refugees and asylum seekers in Göteborg	Västra Götalandsregionen	Centre for refugees and asylum seekers, damaged from war and/or torture	150501-	7 500 000/year (mainly public)
13	Röda Korset (Red Cross) - centre for refugees and asylum seekers in Skövde	Västra Götalandsregionen	Centre for refugees and asylum seekers, damaged from war and/or torture	?	?
14	Framtidsspår	Västra Götalandsregionen	Provide education (upper secondary level) for young adults	140801-	1 300 000/total (shared)
15	Röda Korset (Red Cross) - centre for refugees and asylum seekers	Uppsala läns landsting	Centre for refugees and asylum seekers, damaged from war and/or torture	150101-	?
16	Stadsmissionen	Västerås Stad	Activities for people with drug addiction and/or psychiatric problems	120301-	3 100 000/year (mainly nonprofit)
17	Brottsofferjouren (BOJ)	Västerås Stad	Provide support for young and adult crime victims, witnesses and relatives	150101-	1 320 000/year (mainly public)
18	Föreningen Kvinnohuset	Västerås Stad	Provide information about and support for women exposed to violence	150701-	1 400 000/year (mainly public)
19	Bräcke Diakoni, Frälsningsarmén, Göteborgs Stadsmission, Göteborgs Räddningsmission	Göteborgs Stad	Support for EU migrants	150101 (131115) -	?
20	Bräcke Diakoni, Rädda barnen, Röda korset, Räddningsmissionen, Individuell Människohjälp, Skyddsvärnet i Göteborg, FC Gole och Reningsborg	Göteborgs Stad	Activities for unaccompanied refugee children	150501-	Mainly public resources
21	Hyresgästföreningen (Partnerskapsgrupp Kryddan)	Göteborgs Stad	Leisure services for children	150901-	?
22	Karriär-Kraft	Göteborgs Stad	Suicidal prevention	150528-	25 000/total (public)
23	Frivilligcentralen Pärlan	Göteborgs Stad	Provides open, voluntary and participatory meeting places	140101-	300 000/year (mainly public)
24	Frivilligcentralen Knuten	Göteborgs Stad	Provides open, voluntary and participatory meeting places	140101-	250 000/year (mainly public)
25	Jordens Vänner	Göteborgs Stad	Activities for youths concerning climate change	140917-	150 000/total (public)

26	Kooperativet Fjället	Göteborgs Stad	Leisure services for children and youths	140701-	1 725 000/year (public)
27	Friskvårdsklubben	Göteborgs Stad	Provides health care/wellness activities for people suffering from mental illness and/or mental disability	150325-	300 000/total? (public)
28	AW Stödcenter	Göteborgs Stad	Provides support for ex criminals	141001-	2 520 000/year (public)
29	St. Gabriel Församling	Göteborgs Stad	Provides open, voluntary and participatory meeting places (with a focus on Syrians)	150101-	150 000/year (mainly public)
30	Lärjeåns Kafé & Trädgårdar	Göteborgs Stad	Activities concerning urban farming & café	150601-	200 000/year (mainly public)
31	Alla kvinnors hus (Kvinnojouren)	Sigtuna kommun	Provides a women's shelter	150701-	550 000/year? (public)
32	Nyby Vision	Uppsala kommun	Activities concerning integration	?	?
33	Stadsmissionen	Linköpings kommun	Provides sleeping facilities for EU migrants	141101-	965 000 (public?)
34	Boost by FC Rosengård (FC Rosengård 1917)	Malmö Stad	Provides labour market initiatives, aiming at self-sufficiency	150901-	1 400 000/year (mainly public)
35	Hassela Helpline	Malmö Stad	Provides labour market initiatives, aiming at self-sufficiency	150901-	At least 3 200 000/year (shared)
36	Malmö fotbollsförening (MFF)	Malmö Stad	Provides labour market initiatives, aiming at self-sufficiency	150701-	2 360 000/year (mainly public)
37	Yalla Trappan	Malmö Stad	Provides labour market initiatives, aiming at self-sufficiency	160101-	1 500 000/year (mainly public)
38	Internationella Kvinnoföreningen	Malmö Stad	Provides labour market initiatives for women born outside Sweden	150901-	800 000 (mainly public)

Appendix 2 –
Interview Guide

- Profession and job title?
 - For how long have you had this job?
 - Where did you work before?
 - For how long have you been involved in the VSOPP?
 - Do you have any experience of the development process of the VSOPP? Who was involved? Who decided upon the structure and content of the VSOPP-agreement?
 - What is your role in VSOPP-collaboration?
- Describe the VSOPP-collaboration in practice during a year. Where, when, about what do you interact? Who interacts? What are your roles/tasks when you interact? What type of reporting is done and how? Who initiates a change or prolongation of the VSOPP-agreement? What does the decision process look like (who takes decision and about what?). What kind of steering instruments are used?
- How do you perceive that the VSOPP-collaboration works?
 - What do you think is especially important to make the VSOPP-collaboration work? What could have been developed in order to improve the collaboration?
 - Do you experience any kind of territorial thinking or self-interest? If yes, in what sense? If no, what do you think is the reason for that?
- Except, for the official objective of the VSOPP, are there any other objectives? If yes, which are they?
 - If the goals are not fulfilled, what are the consequences? For you personally, for your organization, for the VSOPP?
- What is Region Skåne responsible for in the VSOPP? What is Stadsmissionen responsible for?
 - Do you have any shared responsibilities? If yes, which are they and how is it handled in practice?
 - To whom are your organization accountable? Can Region Skåne be seen as accountable to Stadsmissionen, and/or the other way around?
 - Who is ultimately accountable for the VSOPP?
- What motivates you and your organization to actually fulfill your commitments in the VSOPP?
 - How would you and your organization act if the other collaborating actor did not fulfil its commitments?
- How is the VSOPP followed-up? What do you experience as the strengths and weaknesses of the current following-up process? How could it had been done differently? Who decides upon the following-up structure?
- What does the VSOPP-collaboration signify for your organization?