Across the Øresund

A narrative case study of the connections between national
borders and national sentiments in a European cross-border region

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Abstract

Within the field of border studies, a common theoretical assumption is that national borders and national sentiments are interconnected. Some even argue that national boundaries are a precondition of national sentiments (Anderson & O'Dowd, 1999; Paasi, 1998 (b)). If one instead looks toward cross-border regions, an equally accepted theory is that national borders create regional asymmetries motivating people to move across borders (Löfgren, 2008; Anderson & O'Dowd, 1999). From this perspective, borders have an integrating rather than separating effect. Thus, there seems to be a theoretical contradiction between how national borders and national sentiments generally are experienced in the nation-state, and how they are experienced in the borderlands. By utilizing the concrete methodological structure provided by the narrative policy framework, this thesis sets out to analytically investigate *how regional narratives of institutionalized cross-border actors in the Øresund area challenge national perspectives on the connections between borders and national sentiments*. Focusing on the Øresund narrative, as it has been communicated by the cross-border organization Greater Copenhagen during the Covid-19 pandemic in the years 2021, and early 2022, the study explores how nationally formulated territoriality, sentiments, and enabling as well as restricting aspects of the border are narratively understood and experienced in the Øresund region. The thesis concludes that the regional Øresund narrative, communicated by Greater Copenhagen, rarely mentions national sentiments and therefore, makes no connection between national sentiments and national borders. However, this should probably not be understood as a criticism of the nationally formulated connection between the phenomena. Rather, it should be understood as a competing cross-border narrative with different prioritizations and ideas of what the border should mean. In this competing narrative, the enabling, rather than the separating aspects of borders are for example highlighted.

Keywords: Cross-border, National Sentiments, Narrative Policy Framework, Regional narratives, Borders, Cross-border integration, Territoriality, Øresund, Greater Copenhagen

Content

1   Introduction

1.1   Problem area, research aim, and an analytical question

Borders (national, regional, local, and others) constitute complex phenomena with several dimensions, meanings, and definitions, as well as connections to other equally complex phenomena such as, for example, nations, ethnicities, identities, and/or international relations. Professor of geopolitics David Newman and professor of geography Anssi Paasi (1998, p. 194) claim that boundaries and identities are inherently interconnected and entangled concepts. Sociologist Liam O'Dowd and geographer James Anderson (1999, p. 596), on the other hand, argue that clear national borders – both in a geopolitical and a socio-psychological sense – form the base of *national sentiments*. According to all these scholars, it is with the help of, and references to borders that ideas of a group's cultural hegemony and state control may be both verified and contested. In other words, an important part of the formation of national sentiments takes place with conceptions of, and references to, as well physical, discursively articulated, and imagined borders.

Presumably, the most intuitive understanding of borders is as lines on a map, separating one territory from another, usually accompanied by the existence of some official physical border crossings. Thus, borders are understood as a divider between different territories, states, and nations. Anderson and O'Dowd (1999, p. 596) claim that it is by the borders that the separating aspect of a nation's particularity tends to be most tangible, as opposed to the more commonly associated unifying function of the nation. The reason is that in the peripheries of societies, borders are experienced in people's everyday lives (Newman & Paasi, 1998, p. 194). Such a conclusion is strengthened by the researchers Henk van Houtum, and Martin van der Velde, who argue that national sentiments, as well as physical and discursive separations between nation-states, may generally function as one of the main reasons behind limited cross-border mobility. This seems especially true for international cross-border labor market mobility. Feelings of national belonging can be especially strong in communities living close to the border as such areas often are seen as important locations for the formation of a strong national identity (Houtum & Velde, 2003). This is not to say that borders have solely a dividing function. Borders, both physical and symbolic, can also function as a mediator of contact between communities. Boundaries often create a set of rules for interaction between communities as well as for border-crossing, exchange of goods, and for mobility of people etc. (Newman & Paasi, 1998, p. 194). It is therefore perhaps unsurprising that there can be a particular duality concerning the roles and functions of borders as they both contribute to international and interregional integration, and a divergent separation of us versus them, images of our territory versus theirs.

The Øresund region is a European *cross-border region* located in the south Swedish region Skåne and the Danish island Seeland, separated by the Øresund strait. In the year 2000, it was connected by a large bridge. As the bridge was inaugurated in July 2000, there were high hopes of an integrated cross-border region as well as of the possible developments of a regional Øresund identity, relevant for strong and successful cross-border integration (Löfgren & Nilsson, 2010). In 2017 this region was raised as a good example of border crossing, international integration, and cooperation by the European Commission (2017). In 2021 there were about 18 000 cross-border commuters in Øresund, a lot more than 2000 when the bridge was opened but slightly less than the record year of 2008 when 19 805 people crossed the bridge (Region Skåne, 2022; Øreundsinstitutet, 2021).

Following the brief theoretical discussion above, particularly O'Dowd's and Anderson's ideas on national borders as fundamental for national identity, one may assume that patterns of national identifications among the cross-border commuters in Øresund should generally have remained strong. Generally, they did. However, while reading local and regional news articles, looking at information from the cross-border organization Greater Copenhagen and scrolling through different Facebook groups for cross-border commuters, I have noticed an interesting criticism coming from the regional level towards the national one. Instead of finding strong articulations of national identity and/or national differences, one may rather see many examples of critique towards national (Swedish and Danish) decision-makers. Their lack of understanding of the importance of Øresund regionalism and lacking interest in facilitating and simplifying cross-border commuting seems to be particularly criticized. Furthermore, this critic seems to have been articulated as a result of the border restrictions imposed during the Covid-19 pandemic. Those experiencing the border regularly, both individuals and groups, also are among the most important actors in verifying and contesting the border and the national identity. Therefore, this criticism could be seen as a way of contesting an aspect of the theoretically assumed importance of borders in the formations and reproductions of national identity and national sentiments.

1.1.1   Research Aim and Question

The research purpose of this thesis is to look closer at the role of *cross-border institutionalized policy actors* in verifying and/or contesting the relations between (a) *national borders* and (b) *national sentiments*. This will be done by focusing on the Øresund region, in particular on press-releases and debate articles by the cross-border organization Greater Copenhagen mainly published during the Covid-19 pandemic. Specifically, the study will analytically zoom in, and elaborate on the *criticism articulated by the institutionalized policy actors in the regional Øresund level, directed towards Swedish and Danish, national-level decision-makers*. Thus, the thesis aims to investigate how national perspectives on borders and national sentiments are challenged by *narratives* of institutionalized cross-border actors in the Øresund region. The aim is however not to elaborate on regional and national identities, but rather to focus on the articulated criticism. The research question the thesis seeks to answer is: *how do regional narratives of institutionalized cross-border actors in the Øresund area, challenge national perspectives on the connections between borders and national sentiments?*

2   Literature Review

From the brief theoretical discussion above and based on the research aim and question of this thesis, it should come as no surprise that the main theoretical field of relevance in this study is *border studies*. Historically, the research field has viewed the external boundaries of nation-states as fixed and static entities who's meaning solely changes due to conflicts between said entities (Paasi, 1998 (b), pp. 69-70). With the fall of the Soviet Union, the end of the cold war, increased *globalization*, and the progress of postmodernist thinking, however, some scholars, for example, Ash Amin (1997) and Anthony Giddens (2003), began to question this state-centric approach. Some even went as far as to question the relevance of *borders* and national territories altogether (O'Brien, 1992; Ohmae, 1990; Ohame, 1995; Fukuyama, 1992). Professor Anssi Paasi represents a more balanced approach. In the article "Boundaries as social processes: Territoriality in the world of flows" Paasi writes: "instead of simply accepting rhetorical comments on how boundaries are disappearing in the 'world of flows', boundary scholars should be more sensitive to the changing meanings of boundaries." (1998 (b), p. 83). In a different article, he accepts that borders in many instances have lost their "dramatic role in distinguishing territories" (1998 (a), p. 678) but challenges the notion that borders, and nation-states have grown irrelevant. *Territoriality* and *nation-states* are still closely related phenomena, and people are still socialized into a national cultural space. Borders keep their relevance since they symbolize this space and the sovereign state (Paasi, 1998 (a)). However, researchers must develop theoretical approaches that make the multidimensionality of borders visible. That borders should be understood as a multidimensional phenomenon has since been acknowledged and the debate on the disappearance of borders has been put to rest. The idea that borders are more than divisive lines between territories has been developed though, for example by scholar Chris Rumford. He claims that borders no longer can be understood as solely located along the edges of a community. Instead, they are dispersed throughout society. Furthermore, Rumford believes that the general shift to a more diversified understanding of borders has not encompassed the understanding that other than state actors are participating in the creation of borders. He argues that borders to an equal degree are created, recreated, and contested by citizens. Rumford calls the process by which regular citizens create and recreate borders, *borderwork* (2008, pp. 4-8). In the introduction to a thematic edition of *Regional Studies*, Anderson, and O'Dowd (1999) further develop the notion of the changing meanings of borders. They claim that borders and border regions are characterized by contradictions and asymmetries, continuities and discontinuities that need to be considered when studying borders.

When focusing on *cross-border regions*, a dual function of confirmation and contestation of borders appears. Paasi in a co-written article with researcher Eeva-Kaisa Prokkola (2008), believes many scholars simply assume that the aim of cross-border cooperation is the removal of borders. However, they show that this is not necessarily the case and that the, at once integrating and separating function of the border is particularly visible in cross-border regions. By investigating

cooperation between Sweden and Finland in the Tornio Valley, they show that the border is repeatedly manifested and contested in the contexts of people's everyday lives. Dorte Jagetic Andersen and Ingo Winkler (2020, p. 67) reached the same conclusion as they studied how cross-border commuters along the Danish-German border integrated with the boundary they crossed daily. They claim that the meaning of borders among cross-border commuters is volatile and fast-changing. In one moment, the border is considered important, in the next, it is made irrelevant. Orvar Löfgren (2008) focuses on the integration of cross-border regions in Scandinavia. Upon comparing cross-border integration in Øresund, Svinesund, and the Tornio valley, he concludes that narratives of cross-border integration typically are constructed around national unity and a strong *national identity*. Thus, Scandinavian narratives of cross-border integration maintain a sense of difference, rather than one of similarity, which functions as a rationale for crossing the border. Anderson and O'Dowd (1999, p. 596) are following the same line of argument. They claim that the separating aspect of the border tends to be more visible than its unifying function in border communities. This, they claim is because the border is more present in everyday life in communities along the border. Now that the general field of border studies has been introduced the next chapter will delve deeper into the theoretical assumptions and concepts that are particularly relevant for this study.

3 Research Design

The question of how institutionalized cross-border policy actors in the European cross-border region of Øresund, challenge national, Danish, and Swedish, perspectives on national borders, as well as macro-level perspectives on national sentiments, will be investigated by utilizing a particular *case study design*. Utilizing professors Jan Teorell's and Torsten Svensson's definition, a case study constitutes an in-depth study of a single or a few cases[1] (2007, pp. 83-84). The concern of this thesis falls into the category of a single case study, that of the European cross-border region of Øresund. Furthermore, it is analytically centered around the articulation of criticism towards Danish and Swedish national-level decision-makers. Following the reasoning of Teorell and Svensson, the methodological objective of a *descriptive case study*, relevant to the present thesis, is to interpret and uncover the underlying meanings and representations within the chosen case by analyzing relevant texts that are seen as representative of the chosen case and specific problem area (2007, pp. 98-99). For this purpose, the methodological framework of *narrative policy analysis* will be introduced further down. For a case study to be meaningful within a scholarly context, Teorell and Svensson (2007, pp. 82, 98-99) argue that it is important to anchor the analytically centered issue of the study in existing knowledge, assumptions, and theories. Theories bring forward certain analytical concepts which have a dual function. First, they direct the analytical focus towards researchable factors, elements, and actors within the case. This leads to the second function, it connects the description of the issue of the specific case study to a more general scholarly, theoretical debate allowing the study to contribute to, and develop the existing knowledge, assumptions, and theories. The issue which this thesis is centered around is how local and regional institutionalized policy actors in the Øresund region are verifying and/or contesting the relationship between a) borders and b) national sentiments.

The first part of this chapter is dedicated to the key theoretical concepts steering the analytical attention toward key researchable factors, elements, and actors, as well as towards the underlying theoretical assumptions. In the second part of the chapter, the methodological framework Narrative Policy Analysis is introduced. Narrative Policy Analysis will structure the study, guide the interpretations, and uncover the underlying meaning and representations of the material. Lastly, the selection of material, and texts, will be described and discussed.

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[1] They argue that case studies have the ambition to thoroughly describe one issue or to explain a single issue by comparing strategically chosen cases, which often are analytically centered around a specific topic (2007, pp. 83-83).

3.1 Theoretic Remarks and Assumptions

3.1.1 Borders and National Sentiments

The understanding of the theoretical relationship between borders and national sentiments is significant to this thesis. One of the main underlying assumptions of the research question is that there, from a nation-state level, exists a close connection between the formation of national borders and feelings of national belonging. In the introduction, it was stated that borders constitute complex phenomenon with several dimensions, meanings, and definitions, as well as connections to other, equally complex phenomena, for example, nations, ethnicities, identities, and/or international relations. One such connected phenomenon is territoriality. *Territoriality* is defined by professor Anssi Passi as a spatial strategy aiming to affect, influence, and control people and groups as well as resources, by controlling a geographical area. Territoriality and *nation-states*, he argues, are in their turn, closely related phenomena because people are socialized into a geographical and national cultural space. In this context, *borders* are also relevant since they are symbolizing the national cultural space and the sovereign state. Paasi continues by arguing that narratives surrounding the border are produced, reproduced, and practiced in for example maps, schools, books, and norms. These socializing mechanisms result in *border narratives* becoming an integrated dimension of a network of social power. A social power that politically legitimizes and culturally integrates the national territory (1998 (a); 1998 (b)). Thus, it is apparent that narratives of borders are closely integrated with narratives of *national sentiment* and a culturally unified geographical territory. In a different article, Paasi and his colleague Eeva-Kaisa Prokkola (2008, p. 14), argue that nationality usually takes the form of a territorial ideology and is used to create a hegemonic cultural space. At the national level, the hegemonic culture will likely take on the form of national sentiments[2]. According to Paasi and Prokkola, nationality thus motivates the existence, and underlines the importance of borders, since it is necessary to geographically as well as socio-psychologically mark the boundaries of the national space of influence, control, and culture. As such, the connection between nationality, territory, and border is once again underlined. Since a nationality, following Paasi and Prokkola (2008), constitutes a *territorial strategy* aiming to control people, groups, and resources, by creating a sense of national and cultural belonging within a bounded geographical area, it also makes sense to view the territorial nation-state as the main actor behind it. Professors James Anderson and Liam O'Dowd (1999, pp. 594-597) are following a similar line of argument. They claim that borders carry physical and geopolitical meanings, as well as symbolic, socio-psychological, and discursively imagined ones. Like Paasi and Prokkola, they argue that borders mark the physical and geopolitical limits of society, and consequently, provide the foundation of national sentiments. This further underlines the interconnectedness of borders and national sentiments. It also strengthens the relevance of the research question as it highlights the importance of the physical and social border to the formation of hegemonic national attitudes.

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[2] Similar sentiments of cultural belonging may can occur at the regional or local level. One may in this context think about Catalonia in Spain or Scotland in the United Kingdom.

In his book *We, the people of Europe?* professor of philosophy Étienne Balibar (2004, pp. 1-3) presents the thesis that borders treat people and goods differently depending on for example, who they are and where they are from. This thesis has been further developed by, among others, Professor Chris Rumford. Rather than understanding borders as divisive boundaries that create national spaces of state control and cultural hegemony, separating people, goods, and things on each side of the border, Rumford argues that borders should be seen as *asymmetric membranes* (2008, p. 3). This implies that borders, physically and socially, are constructed to let the desirable through (for example, skilled labor, legal goods and products, citizens) while keeping the undesirable out (illegal migration, drugs, and smuggling goods for example). Following this, borders are an unequal phenomenon. For some people, borders equal restrictions, and insurmountable barriers that cannot be passed. For others, borders are a mere formality, a gateway to opportunities. Borders are asymmetric membranes allowing the free flow of some things while restricting others. They are simultaneously enabling cross-border mobility and restricting it, depending on what the main narrative of borders deems as desirable (Rumford, 2008, pp. 1-4). This way, borders are simultaneously limiting for some and enabling for others. Anderson and O'Dowd (1999) follow the same line of argument as Rumford. They claim that borders and *border regions* are characterized by contradictions and asymmetries, continuities and discontinuities that need to be considered when studying borders. They argue that the recent intensification of *globalization* has resulted in an increased need for mechanisms, institutions, and governance of border crossings. The flow of desired goods, information, capital, and labor must be facilitated to enhance economic development and cultural enrichment. However, while some increased flows are desired, globalization has also resulted in national territorial borders being more porous to undesired flows, for example, drugs, criminality, and terrorists. Again, cross-border movement of people and goods is simultaneously desired, due to its positive economic and cultural effects, and undesired. Anderson and O'Dowd claim that problems and contradictions surrounding the border arise when preventative measures to stop the undesirable to cross the border, clash with the facilitation of the desired. Thus, borders have a simultaneously integrating and separating function.

3.1.2   Cross-Border Regions and the European Union

The previous section explored the connections between a geographical area, national sentiments, and borders, as the interconnectedness of these presents an important underlying assumption to this study. However, following the research question; *How do regional narratives of institutionalized cross-border actors in the Øresund area, challenge national perspectives on the connections between borders and national sentiments?*, it is also apparent that a second important assumption is that cross-border regions differ in this regard. Cross-border regions, specifically European and Nordic cross-border regions such as the Øresund area, are the focus of this thesis. Therefore, the following section focuses on cross-border regions and integration. However, before diving deeper into the theoretical discussion on cross-border regions, an integral assumption of the importance of these regions must be addressed. While national-level state actors typically have been the focus of academic border studies it is crucial to remember that other actors, groups, and individuals, are active and significant in producing, reproducing, and contesting the physical and social meanings of

borders (Anderson & O'Dowd, 1999, p. 594; Paasi, 1998 (a), p. 670; Paasi & Prokkola, 2008, p. 14; Rumford, 2008, pp. 1-2).

Researchers Anderson and O'Dowd (1999, p. 595) state that a *cross-border region* spans a territorial national border. Furthermore, cross-border regions can occur for mainly two reasons. The first reason is *cultural unity* among people, stretching across the border and thus forming a regional cross-border cultural identity. The second reason is asymmetries that create motivation for people to cross the national territorial border in search of opportunities on the other side. The notion that *regional asymmetries* caused by the national border motivate cross-border integration is underlined by Löfgren (2008). He similarly claims that regional and international asymmetries create *tilting bridges*. These tilting bridges motivate people to cross the border to utilize the different conditions across the border. Following this, it seems like a cross-border region, as opposed to a region within a national territory, is centered around, as well as motivated by, and dependent on the national-territorial *border* dividing the region into two different countries and nations. The border thus acts as a restricting force in that it separates the region into two countries and nations, while simultaneously enabling economic and/or cultural integration across it. Due to the separating and restricting qualities of borders, Paasi and Prokkola (2008) believe many scholars simply assume the aim of cross-border cooperation to be the removal of borders. However, they show that this is not necessarily the case and that the, at once, integrating and separating function of the border is particularly visible in cross-border regions. They show that borders are repeatedly manifested and contested in the contexts of people's everyday lives. They conclude three things of relevance for this thesis:

1. In the social practice of institutionalized cooperation, borders can simultaneously be renegotiated, contested, and even strengthened.
2. While the institutionalized cross-border cooperation proceeds to contest the border, social practices of individuals can at the same time reinforce it.
3. Individuals can actively cross the border in the context of one social practice while differences are maintained in another aspect of life.

Dorte Jagetic Andersen and Ingo Winkler (2020, pp. 56, 67) reached the same conclusion. They argue that borders should be understood as an everyday phenomenon as it becomes present through the everyday practices of the people who experience them regularly. Borders become "very real" as ordinary people experience them often, either by physically crossing them or by encountering them discursively. This causes individual citizens to have a crucial role in the spreading, elimination, maintenance, and establishing of meanings regarding the borders. Furthermore, they claim that the meaning of borders among cross-border commuters is volatile and fast-changing. In one moment, the border is considered important, in the next, it is made irrelevant. Sometimes they are reinforcing the interpretation made by the nation-state, at other times they are turning against the state. Thus, borders exist in several ways, also in other ways than the national state would like it to. Based on this, competing narratives of the border may be especially prominent among border, and cross-border communities. Furthermore, actors in these communities seem to shift between different narratives as they see fit for the situation. Anderson and O'Dowd (1999, p. 596) are following the same line of argument. They claim that, in border communities, the separating aspect of the border

tends to be more visible than its unifying function since the border is more present in everyday life in communities along the border. Löfgren (2008) argues that narratives of cross-border integration in Scandinavia typically are constructed around strong national identities and unity. Thus, Scandinavian narratives of cross-border integration maintain a sense of difference, rather than one of similarity, which functions as a rationale for crossing the border. While borders in cross-border communities can be simultaneously confirmed and contested, the conclusion of Löfgren suggests that the separating qualities of borders and the national identity of border communities remain strong. Paired with Anderson's and O'Dowd's theory it could even be particularly strong in those communities. Cross-border regions and the people living there are thus important to study academically as they are shaping the geopolitical and social-psychological meaning of the border by questioning its limiting and enabling elements of it. Paasi follows the same argument. He claims that borders (social and geopolitical, enabling, and restricting) typically are created as a hegemonic discourse at the political and administrative center of nation-states. In border regions, however, Paasi argues, there are usually several competing discourses surrounding the meaning of the border and national sentiments (Paasi, 1998 (b), p. 670). Balibar (2004, pp. 1-2), similarly states that differences between national territories are more visible in its peripheries, that is, along its borders, as this usually is where the meaning of the border in question is negotiated. The national state level may be where the meaning of the border is formulated and decided, but it seems it is mainly in cross-border and border regions that the meaning of the border and its interconnectedness with national sentiments are upheld, renegotiated, and contested. The reason is that the similarities and differences between the national territories divided by the border are experienced at these locations. Anderson and O'Dowd (1999, pp. 594-597) agree, claiming that border regions should be understood as peripheries of societies characterized by infiltration, transition, and separation. Within these peripheries, the ideals of the nation-state, such as cultural homogeneity and centralized political control, are simultaneously confirmed and challenged. They also argue that the dividing aspects of the nation-state are highlighted in border regions in a way that they are not within the territory of the nation-state.

The Nordic Council and European Union both support cross-border regions[3]. Professor James Wesley Scott (2009, pp. 653-654), argues that the EU views cross-border cooperation on the local and regional level, especially the Interreg-programs, as an important tool to build a transnational regionalism and simultaneously facilitate European integration between member states. Based on this, it seems likely that the Nordic Council views cross-border regions and cooperation in a similar way to the EU, as a tool to facilitate further integration. This is strengthened by the vision of the Nordic Council: that the Nordic Region should become the most sustainable and integrated

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[3] The Nordic council supports the work of twelve cross-border committees, representing twelve Nordic cross-border regions (Nordic Co-operation). These cross-border committees are of varying size, both in terms of scope, staff, and geography – ranging from the Greater Copenhagen Committee in the south which encompasses an urban area with the Danish capital Copenhagen in the center to Nordkalottrådet (Cap of the North) in the very north of the Nordic countries located above the arctic circle (Greater Copenhagen; Nordkalottenrådet). The EU also supports cross-border cooperation in several ways, among others through the Interreg programs and European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC). Interreg, the main instrument of economic support for cross-border cooperation, is according to the European Commission aimed at tackling common challenges across borders, enhancing the growth potential in cross-border regions, and contributing to "the overall harmonious development of the Union" (European Commission). EGTCs:s have according to the European Parliament been set up to facilitate cross-border, transnational, and interregional cooperation between member states on a local and regional level (European Parliament, 2022).

region in the world by 2030 (Nordic Co-operation, 2019). Following the arguments above, it seems like local and regional cross-border actors, as well as individuals in cross-border regions striving to create a more integrated region, have an ally in the EU and the Nordic Council. To sum up, borders and national sentiments are indeed experienced differently at the border and in cross-border regions. The duality of borders, the differences, and similarities are experienced as borders are lived in the everyday lives of actors in the region, and the dividing function of the nation-state is more apparent than the more typical unifying function. This causes actors in cross-border regions to be more active in negotiating and challenging the centrally established meaning of borders and national communities.

3.1.3   Narratives and their functions

Having introduced the theoretical and analytical assumptions regarding borders, borders' interconnectedness with national sentiments as well as cross-border regions it is time to introduce another core concept – *narratives*. It has already been stated that the methodological approach that will be used to analyze the research question is the narrative policy framework. It is a methodology accompanied by several theoretical assumptions. While the methodology chapter, further down, is focused on the methodological tools and strategies this chapter is zooming in on the, for this thesis, relevant theoretical assumptions. Starting with a definition of the concept, of narrative, the most basic understanding is a story. Analytically this is not a very useful definition so, professors Luc Herman and Bart Vervaeck (2019, pp. 12-13) define narrative "as the representation of meaningfully related events". Researchers Molly Patterson and Kristen Renwick Monroe (1998, pp. 315-316) approach the task of defining narrative with a more actor-centered approach, writing that a narrative is the way actors connect different facts, events, and experiences into a coherent understanding of the world. This brings us to the main assumption concerning narratives in this thesis. Narratives are representations of, or constructions of reality in which actors connect facts, events, and experiences in meaningful ways to make sense of the world around them. Thus, the Øresund cross-border narrative on borders, studied in this thesis, is important to analyze since it represents the way borders are understood by the cross-border actors of the region. Professor Lars-Christer Hydén (1997, pp. 16-17) follows the same argument. He argues that people use narratives for different conscious and unconscious functions and that telling stories, and creating narratives, can be seen as a social activity by which the storyteller perceives and give form to the physical and social world. As such, studying narratives and the representations of reality that are communicated by them can help scholars understand how individuals, groups, and institutions make sense of the world[4]. Thus, the Øresund cross-border narrative on borders, studied in this thesis, is important to analyze since it represents the way borders are understood by the cross-border actors of the region.

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[4] As narratives function as representations and constructions of a view of the world it also provides people and groups with a common position and understanding of the world. However, if the representation and understanding of the world are questioned or even challenged by a competing narrative, they can also turn into places of cultural conflict and challenge the groups understanding of their position in the world, of who they are, and where they are going (Patterson & Monroe, 1998, pp. 315-316, 322).

3.1.4   Institutionalized Policy Actors

In the introduction, it was stated that the interest of the research question is how cross-border institutionalized policy actors verify and/or contest the relationship between national borders and national sentiments that have been established by nation-state actors. Essentially the interaction between regional and national levels is an integral part of the research question. Since its introduction the term institutionalized policy actors have been mentioned frequently without an explanation or definition, it is time to remedy that. *Institutionalized policy actors* will be understood as a formalized official organization with a common framework of meaning, rules, and processes regulating the functioning of the organization as well as its interaction with other institutions and actors. Furthermore, institutionalized policy actors will also be understood as an actor engaged in a policy debate or question. The decision to limit the actors of concern within the thesis to institutionalized policy actors, as defined above, is motivated by how focusing on the same form of actors rather than different kinds of actors, comparison between different spatial levels of society (local, regional, national, transnational, and supranational) will be easier. As such the decision to limit the concern of the thesis to a specific type of actor enables me to capture the interaction between local and regional cross-border institutionalized policy actors and national state-level institutionalized policy actors. Involving more types of actors would result in the comparison of actors being more complex and requiring careful methodological and theoretical considerations. Furthermore, the comparability would still have been questionable.

3.2   Methodological Tools

As the theoretical assumptions have been introduced the methodological tools and instruments must be presented. The methodology chosen for investigating the research question is a narrative analysis and the analytical tools will mainly be derived from the *narrative policy framework*. The research question of this thesis could be answered with the help of several methodological perspectives; *discourse analysis* and narrative analysis being particularly relevant. However, since discursive analysis is considered to constitute a methodological framework intrinsically connected to the concept of *power* as well as to the postmodern, philosophical paradigm (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, pp. 11-12), the narrative analysis is deemed more appropriate[5]. Thus, methodologically, the analyzed 'voices' will, in this thesis be treated as narrative articulations.

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[5] The institutionalized cross-border actors constituting the analytical focus of this thesis cannot be considered to possess enough power to profoundly shape the socio-political world and regulate what is possible or not within particular frameworks and limits (compare: Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, pp. 11-12). Studying statements and perspectives of institutionalized cross-border actors as narratives, rather than discourses means that the narratively articulated messages and meanings do not need to be analytically related to the way people understand the world, and an analysis of narratives is not bound to a focus on how actors exercise power.

3.2.1 Narrative Policy Framework

The narrative policy framework is a methodology accompanied by several theoretical assumptions. Within this thesis, the methodological tools and strategies will be utilized while most of the theoretical assumptions only will have a limited and supporting role. It means that narrative analysis is used primarily as a concrete methodological tool, without deep elaborations of the more abstract epistemological and theoretical dimensions[6]. According to Jones et al. (2014), a narrative policy framework is a relevant background and tool for analyzing the contents and form of policy narratives. *Policy narratives* are defined as strategically constructed narratives aiming to reach a certain goal. Thus, they function as the connection between action taken towards this goal, and the communication of the goal. Hence, the communication around the actions taken to achieve a particular goal is an integral part of reaching said goal (Jones, et al., 2014, p. 15). Within the narrative policy framework, the structure of the narrative is separated from its content. The structure, or *form*, of the narrative, constitutes the methodological part of the narrative policy framework and is made up of *narrative elements*. Jones et al. (2014, pp. 4-5) argue that narrative elements exist and make up the structure of all narratives. The narrative elements include, but are not limited to, the categories *setting*, *characters*, *plot*, and *the moral of the story*. By mapping and categorizing the elements of a narrative, its structure is laid bare, and it becomes easier to see different articulated patterns. Narrative elements will be further introduced further down as the tools and instruments of the thesis are operationalized.

3.2.2 Levels of Analysis

There are at least two different spatial levels built into the research question, the cross-border regional level whose narrative is the focus of the thesis, and the national level whose perspectives are assumed to be challenged. Paasi (1998 (a), p. 670) writes that borders gain meaning at different spatial levels and that both the national governments and individuals are participating in the production of meanings of borders. The narrative policy framework introduced by Jones et al. (2014, p. 10) is also concerned with different spatial levels. Narratives are assumed to simultaneously operate on and interact between three different levels. The different spatial levels, illustrated in *table 1*, are *micro-level*, represented by individuals, the *meso-level*, represented by groups and coalitions in society, and finally, the third, *macro-level*, represented by culture, norms, and institutions in society. The analytical focus in this thesis is directed toward institutionalized

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[6] While the form of the narrative is assumed to exist in similar ways in all narratives, the content of policy narratives is relative to each case and heavily intertwined with its context. To understand the formation of the narrative content Jones et al. (2014, pp. 7-8) introduce the term policy object. They claim that within a policy narrative, meaning is assigned to policy objects. However, the assigned meaning will likely vary between different contexts. It is also possible for different actors within the same context to assign different meanings to the same policy object. Thus, it may be difficult to generalize the narrative of one actor to other actors within the same context. However, while the meaning assigned to policy objects within a policy narrative may vary Jones et al. (2014, pp. 7-8) argue that it is not random. By applying what they call a belief system theory, the possible variations of meaning are tied to an overarching context explaining the variations and enabling generalizations.

actors. Thus, the spatial level of concern, seen from a narrative policy perspective, is the meso-level. However, to be able to capture the interaction between cross-border actors and national level actors, the meso-level will be divided into local, regional, national as well as transnational, and supranational levels. By doing this, the focus on how local and regional cross-border actors are interacting with the national, transnational, and supranational levels of society will be maintained.

Table 1: The spatial levels of this thesis

Micro-level	Individual-level
Meso-level	Local level
	Regional level
	National level
	Trans-and supranational level
Macro-level	Cultural and institutional level

While the main analytical focus of the thesis is directed towards cross-border local and regional actors' interaction with the national level both the individual level and trans- and supranational level could provide interesting insights.

3.2.3   Narrative Elements

As the general methodological concerns have been introduced and discussed it is time to operationalize the concrete, main, structuring, and analytical tools of the thesis – *narrative elements*. They will contribute to the uncovering of structure and identification of patterns and articulations within the material. Furthermore, they provide a tool for detecting similarities and differences between the selected texts. The narrative elements: setting, characters, plot, and morals, have been collected based on Jones et al's suggestions (2013; 2014, pp. 6-7). They argue that these elements form a foundation, however, other possible elements may be identified. Therefore, two more narrative elements have been added: policy problem and policy goal. Next, each narrative element will be operationalized.

Policy problem
Jones et al. (2013; 2014) argue that all policy narratives are directed towards and centered around a policy problem. The policy problem will, in the analysis, be articulated as the main issue, present in all, or most, of the texts and structuring the overarching story of the narrative.

Policy Moral
According to Jones et al (2013; 2014, pp. 6-7), policy narratives usually offer a solution to the policy problem. The offered solution to the issue will thus be understood as the moral of the story in the analysis.

Policy Goal

Following Jones et al. (2013; Jones, et al., 2014, pp. 15-16), policy narratives at the meso-level, which is the spatial level of concern in this thesis, are always aimed toward reaching a particular policy goal. Thus, it constitutes both the overarching goal of the narrative, and of the author of the narrative.

Setting

Policy narratives are concerned with specific issues and are directed towards a specific goal. However, these issues and goals do not exist in a void but are products of a certain context. This context is generally accepted by most actors within the narrative and will face no, or little, contestation. The narrative setting is thus comprised of for example facts and rules that most agree on, legal regulations, and characteristics of a specific geographical area, such as borders and demography (Jones, et al., 2014, p. 6; Jones, et al., 2013). The setting is the stage as well as the backdrop to the story, as such the analysis of it will not exclusively be concerned with the selected texts of the material but will include other materials to better build an understanding of the more general context of the narrative.

Characters

Every narrative has characters. Generally, they take on the form of individuals or groups in society. However, they may also adopt a more abstract and general form by taking on the form of for example the environment or liberty, using examples from Jones et al. (2014, pp. 6-7). Narratives have different characters. Jones et al. (2014) identify three.

1. *Heroes* –the characters offering a solution to the problem of concern within the narrative. It is not uncommon for policy actors to identify themselves as the hero in texts they have written.
2. *Villains* –the characters causing the problem and inflicting harm, intended or not.
3. *Victims* – the characters that are harmed, or negatively affected, by the problem within the policy narrative.

Plot

A plot is an integral part of any narrative. Furthermore, it is a device that connects the different narrative elements so that the final product forms a story. Jones et al (2013, pp. 458-459; 2014, pp. 6-7). state that a plot typically consists of a beginning, a middle, and an end, connecting characters, to the setting and the moral of the story. In this thesis, *causal mechanisms* will be included in the plot. Jones et al. (2013, pp. 458-459) do however treat the elements separately. A causal mechanism is introduced as the tool indicating the source of the problem. Four different causal mechanisms are introduced:

1. *Intentional* – an actor is purposefully causing an intended harmful outcome
2. *Mechanical* – an actor is unintentionally causing an intended outcome, harmful or not.
3. *Inadvertent* – an actor is guided by good intention, but the outcome is unintendedly negative.
4. *Accidental* – the outcome is not the product of intended action by any actor.

In this thesis, all of the narrative elements introduced here will be analytically utilized when identifying the plot of the narrative.

3.3   Material

The material, to be analyzed using the methodological framework and theoretical assumptions presented above, consists of a mixture of strategically chosen press releases and debate articles, mainly written by the cross-border *institutionalized policy actor*, Greater Copenhagen. Greater Copenhagen is a cross-border organization encompassing the Øresund region and represented by local and regional high-level politicians and public administrators (Greater Copenhagen (a)). Thus, they can be assumed to represent the general cross-border interest in Øresund. There are a few other cross-border actors in the Øresund region, such as Medicon Valley Alliance and the Øresund bridge. However, they typically deal with more specific topics and do not have the same representation of high level local and regional politicians and administrations. While all texts in the material represent the views of Greater Copenhagen, some are written by Greater Copenhagen politicians, for example the text by Bertel Haarder and Carl Johan Sonesson (2021), and some are written in collaboration with other regional institutionalized policy actors (Haarder & Sonesson, 2021; David Bak & Eriksson, 2021; Greater Copenhagen, Dansk industri, Sydsvenska industri-och handelskammaren, 2022). This all agrees with the argument made by Jones et al. (2014, pp. 10, 15), who recommend sources such as written texts, speeches, and videos for analyzing policy narratives. Furthermore, they claim that narratives are constructed, and circulated by a variety of actors (interest groups, scientists, elected officials, agency personnel, media, businesses, and high-profile citizens). Therefore, it is not considered a problem that other actors than Greater Copenhagen have participated in the formulations of some of the texts.

Jones et al. (2014), also claim that narratives encompass the idea that communication is an integral part of effective actions to reach a *policy goal*. With this in mind, the decision was made to focus the selection of material on texts that can be said to represent an effort of external communication and opinion building. The topic of the opinion building texts is, following the research question and theoretical discussion, of course, national boundaries in a cross-border region. More specifically the decision has been made to focus on the recent, nationally imposed border restrictions. Since border restrictions inflict on the daily life in border regions it is assumed that they have triggered narratives discussing the meaning of the border in the borderlands. Most of the texts are concerned with border restrictions that have been introduced as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic. However, one press release is focusing on the proposal of the Swedish government to reintroduce the ID controls at Copenhagen Airport, following the war in Ukraine (Greater Copenhagen, Dansk industri, Sydsvenska industri-och handelskammaren, 2022). The decision to focus the selection of material around border restrictions following the corona pandemic is motivated by the assumption that national and regional, as well as cross-border, views on borders are particularly emphasized in times of crisis. This is supported by a common theoretical assumption, that national sentiments grow stronger in times of crisis (Özkirimli, 2017).

With only five texts selected to be analyzed as the material of this study, it may be argued that the conclusions that can be drawn are limited. While it is true that five texts provide a limited sample, the chosen texts are considered to be representative of the cross-border organization Greater Copenhagen. They, in turn, represent the views of the Danish and Swedish local and regional administrations as well as the overarching cross-border interest in the region. As such, the material is still considered highly relevant for an initial study of the research question.

4 Analysis – Narrative Elements

After the theoretical assumptions and the methodological framework have been introduced and critically discussed, emphasizing the meaning and strategies of narrative analysis as a method, it is time to apply them to the material. The thesis aims to investigate *how local and regional institutionalized policy actors in the Øresund region question, contest and challenge the nationally produced (Swedish and Danish) perspectives on the interconnectedness of national borders and the national communities.* Both the concrete physical meaning of the border as well as the social-psychological and discursively imagined meaning will be analytically considered and elaborated. The analysis is structured by the methodological *narrative policy framework*, specifically by the concepts presented as *narrative elements*. Previously, it was stated that narrative elements are the building blocks of all policy narratives. By identifying them it is possible to compare the different texts and draw general conclusions about the material as a whole. The theoretical concepts surrounding *borders*, *territoriality*, and *cross-border regions* introduced earlier, are applied to further explore and investigate the narrative of the material. Informative boxes are used to give an overview, to compile and analytically compare the different texts forming the material of the thesis. Quotes, on the other hand, are utilized to closely examine and exemplify the arguments that are made.

4.1 Policy Problem

The narrative element of morality was previously introduced as the solution offered to the specific *policy problem*. This definition is following the explanation offered by researchers Michael D. Jones, Mark K. McBeth, Elizabeth A. Shanahan, and Ross R. Lane (2013; 2014). To analytically identify the moral dimension (further down), it is essential to first critically examine the policy problem. According to Jones et al., policy narratives are directed towards and structured around a particular issue that is recognized as the policy problem (2014). *Table 2* presents a summary and an overview of the concept as it is identified in each text of the material. The table is used to give the reader a better indication of how the concept appears in the different texts and thus, how the generalization between the texts has been done. In four out of the five texts, the main policy problem is narratively represented by new border restrictions[7].

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[7] The exception is the text" DEBATT: Omstart med bro som aldrig stängs" (David Bak & Eriksson, 2021) where the main policy issue is presented as a lack of national interest and investments in the cross-border region. However, despite that border restrictions are not the main policy problem in this particular text, the issue is still brought up, for example in the following quote: "During the last decade this development has stagnated, the border barriers have been lowered and the money for the development of the region has dried up" (David Bak & Eriksson, 2021). This tells us that even when border restrictions are not at the center of the narrative, it is still an important enough issue to bring up.

Table 2: Policy problems, narratively suggested in the texts

Analyzed text	Policy Problem
" Greater Copenhagen: Skab en fælles dansk-svensk 'Corona task force'" (Greater Copenhagen, 2021)	Ad Hoc and quickly changing *restrictions for border crossings* negatively affects the commuters
" Aktuella frågor: "Tillsätt en dansk-svensk task force"" (Haarder & Sonesson, 2021)	New limitations to the freedom of movement/ New *border restrictions*
" DEBATT: Omstart med bro som aldrig stängs" (David Bak & Eriksson, 2021)	Lacking interest and competition between Stockholm and Copenhagen negatively affect the economic competitiveness of the region
" Greater Copenhagen: Grænselukning og PCR-test er ikke løsningen" (Greater Copenhagen, 2021)	*Border restrictions* that make border crossings so complicated for commuters that the border might as well have been closed
" Den nya svenska ID-kontrollen kommer att orsaka stor skada" (Greater Copenhagen, 2022)	Proposed *reintroductions of ID controls* by the Swedish government which negatively affect commuters, the integrated labor market, and the Danish and Swedish economy

The narratively expressed policy problem is new border restrictions that negatively affect commuters and the Øresund region by making it more complicated to move between the two countries, Denmark, and Sweden. Consequently, it undermines cross-border mobility and integration in the region. Using the perspective of professor Anssi Passi (1998 (b)), what is experienced as problematic is increased *territoriality* - meaning expanded control and influence of national governments over the territorial space. An increase of influence and control over the territory necessitates better control over the boundaries separating it from other national territories. This results in a more restrictive and closed Øresund border. In the material, the policy problem is for example communicated in a co-written text by Greater Copenhagen, Danish industry, and the South Swedish chamber of industry and commerce. There they declare that they "fear the consequences of a future introduction of border controls and encourage the Swedish government to withdraw the legal proposal" (Greater Copenhagen, Dansk industri, Sydsvenska industri-och handelskammaren, 2022). The feared consequences are increased territoriality resulting in a more strictly controlled border. This, in turn, leads to diminished cross-border mobility and integration. While further scrutinizing the policy problem it is evident that several aspects and dimensions of the border restrictions are narratively referred to as problematic. One such dimension is exemplified by the president of the Nordic council, Bertel Haarder[8], and the chairman of Greater Copenhagen Carl Johan Sonesson, who are critical of border restrictions being used as "the simple solution" whenever a crisis strike:

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[8] Haarder is also an experienced national politican in the Danish parlimanet.

> The simple solution in the political toolbox during the crises of the last years has often been
> to come up with new border restrictions sometimes without looking backward or even
> having a look around. This can be blamed on too quick actions, fear of the unknown, press
> from media, or a public opinion demanding quick fixes.[9]
> (Haarder & Sonesson, 2021)

In the quote just presented, Haarder and Sonesson believe that "the simple solution in the political toolbox", border restrictions or stronger territoriality, is implemented too frequently and with limited reflection and foresight. It suggests that they believe other, perhaps better, options are forgotten, or not considered seriously in the national governments' quest to show power of action. Following this, the perceived issue is in fact how stronger territoriality has become the 'go-to' solution whenever a crisis strikes. This is further exemplified in another statement by Haarder and Sonesson describing the main issue as "[f]rom one day to another the governments created new obstacles" (2021). Thus, the policy problem is *how* stronger territoriality is used and implemented rather than territoriality as such. A complimentary picture appears when researcher Chris Rumford's (2008, p. 3) illustration of borders as *asymmetric membranes* is applied. The meaning, as was previously introduced, is that the desirable is let through while the undesirable is prevented from passing. As the degree of territoriality increases in the Øresund region, so does the number of things and people who are deemed undesirable to allow across the national border. This, of course, is problematic in a region straddling the border. The metaphor - borders as asymmetric membranes - thus captures the essence of the narrative since the national and cross-border regional/local level disagrees on what should be seen as desirable to allow across the border. Two more problematic dimensions of how new border restrictions have been introduced can be found in the following quote: the lack of information, as well as the local and regional level, not being consulted before the introduction of new rules and restrictions that inevitably will affect them:

> The problem is the many ad hoc solutions that we need to read about in the press. It
> certainly does not make it easier for us […] that we must read about new changes in the
> newspaper. It is difficult to understand why we constantly must relate to changed rules
> from both governments without being asked for advice.[10]
> (Greater Copenhagen (a), 2021)

In the statement, it is exemplified by the words: "we must read about new changes in the newspaper" and "we constantly must relate to changed rules from both governments without being asked for advice"[11]. In the theory chapter, it was argued, following Paasi (1998 (b), p. 670) and

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[9] "Den enkla lösningen i den politiska verktygslådan under de senaste årens kriser har ofta varit att hitta på nya gränshinder. Ibland utan att titta bakåt eller ens se sig om. Det kan skyllas på alltför snabba åtgärder, rädsla för det okända, press från medier eller en allmän opinion som kräver *quick fixes*." (Haarder & Sonesson, 2021)

[10] "Problemet er de mange ad hoc løsninger, som vi skal læse om i pressen. Det gør det bestemt ikke nemmere for os at hjælpe de fortvivlede mennesker, som tager turen over Øresund for at udføre deres arbejde, at vi skal læse om nye ændringer i avisen. Det er svært at forstå, hvorfor vi hele tiden skal forholde os til ændrede regler fra begge regeringer uden at blive taget med på råd." (Greater Copenhagen (a), 2021)

[11] The latter dimension of the problem can have serious consequences, as demonstrated by Haarder and Sonesson: "[t]he last months they have made it difficult for the people of Bornholm to travel through Sweden, to and from the rest of Denmark" (2021). The example given by Haarder and Sonesson arose when the Swedish government introduced

Professor Étienne Balibar (2004, pp. 1-2), that the physical, as well as the discursively imagined meaning of *borders*, are created in the political and administrative center of a territory. When Greater Copenhagen complains about not being informed or consulted regarding the new border restrictions it might be argued that they are questioning the procedures of the national decision-makers. Simultaneously, they are suggesting a larger role for themselves. They should be asked for advice before new restrictions are introduced since they are the ones who best understand the consequences the restrictions will have on the local and regional border community. Interestingly, the border's physical and social existence is never questioned in a way that would suggest its removal. In fact, border restrictions imposed by national authorities are even acknowledged as potentially necessary under certain circumstances:

> 'I acknowledge the necessity of keeping the coronavirus and the south African variation
> down. And that restriction might be necessary. Sadly, it once again affects the cross-border
> commuters that are so crucial for the running of the economy in the capital'[12]
> (Greater Copenhagen (a), 2021)

At first sight, it may seem strange that local and regional *institutionalized policy actors* are not aiming to remove the national border in the cross-border region. However, recalling the theoretical discussion, it is less surprising. Paasi and Eeva-Kaisa Prokkola (2008), as well as Dorte Jagetic Andersen and Ingo Winkler (2020), argued that borders in cross-border regions are more complex than that. According to them, borders are simultaneously confirmed in some contexts while contested in others – both at an individual and meso-group-level. Following this, what the border should entail is indeed questioned, its existence is not. Furthermore, following researchers Orvar Löfgren (2008) as well as James Anderson and Liam O'Dowd (1999), many benefits of cross-border regions such as the Øresund region exist due to them being separated into two countries by a national border. The different national systems create what Löfgren calls *tilting bridges* or *regional asymmetries* and they motivate people to travel across the border to access the benefits on the other side. Considering this, to argue for the removal of the national border in Øresund would be to argue against the reason for the existence of the cross-border region. This emphasizes the dual, and contradictory function of borders. Stronger territoriality, and control of the border, resulting in restrictions on cross-border mobility and integration, are perceived as the policy problem. Whereas in other contexts and forms, territoriality and borders dividing the region, are the reason for the existence of border regions. With this in mind, it is interesting to further consider what exactly is being represented as the policy problem. Essentially what is being criticized is stronger territoriality resulting in such control over the national boundaries that cross-border integration is negatively affected. The *national sentiments* of people are, however not questioned, and neither is a regional cross-border identity suggested. Thus, to Greater Copenhagen, there seems to be no connection between the national border and national sentiments. Hence, the theoretically assumed connection,

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restrictions limiting foreigners (including Danes) access to the country. The national authorities in Sweden did not consider the people living on the Danish island of Bornholm who are using Sweden as a transit route to access the rest of Denmark. The consequences of the restrictions were heavily criticized by local and regional actors and by the Danish government (News Øresund, 2022).

[12] "Jeg erkender nødvendigheden af, at vi skal holde coronasmitten og den sydafrikanske variant nede. Og at restriktioner kan være nødvendige. Desværre går det endnu engang ud over grænsependlerne, der er så afgørende for at økonomien i hovedstaden kan holde sig kørende." (Greater Copenhagen (a), 2021)

where borders function as the basis for national sentiments is not made by local and regional policy actors in Øresund. However, neither is it being challenged.

4.2   The moral of the narrative

In the previous chapter, new border restrictions, depicting a stronger idea of *territoriality* which resulted in more control of the *border*, were presented as the main *policy problem*. However, it was concluded that borders and territoriality are not necessarily seen as problematic issues in all contexts. Rather, it is territoriality and restrictive borders leading to *failed cross-border mobility and integration* that are perceived to be the problem. This chapter will focus on the suggested solutions to the policy problem - the *moral* of the narrative. In *table 3*, summarizing the moral of the different texts, increased cooperation, a bilateral forum, and common solutions between Sweden and Denmark are suggested as solutions to the issue (three out of the five texts[13]).

Table 3: Morality, narratively suggested in the texts

Analyzed text	Moral
"Greater Copenhagen: Skab en fælles dansk-svensk 'Corona task force'" (Greater Copenhagen, 2021)	A common Danish and Swedish '***Corona task force***'
"Aktuella frågor: "Tillsätt en dansk-svensk task force"" (Haarder & Sonesson, 2021)	Create ***bilateral forums*** where ***common solutions*** can be found/ a 'Danish-Swedish task force'
"DEBATT: Omstart med bro som aldrig stängs" (David Bak & Eriksson, 2021)	Resumed and ***increased cooperation*** between national leaders and regional decision-makers
"Greater Copenhagen: Grænselukning og PCR-test er ikke løsningen" (Greater Copenhagen, 2021)	A corona passport or a quick test
"Den nya svenska ID-kontrollen kommer att orsaka stor skada" (Greater Copenhagen, 2022)	Draw back the proposal

By scrutinizing a couple of quotes from the material, the more precise meaning of the moral can be illustrated. In the following quote, a bilateral forum is narratively suggested as the answer to the policy problem.

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[13] The two texts forming the exception are instead suggesting concrete measures to the specific issue of the text, for example utilizing a corona passport or quick test rather than a more time-consuming PCR-test (Greater Copenhagen (b), 2021). Another solution forming an exception is to draw back the Sweish governments suggestion to impose new ID-controls upon arrival at the border (Greater Copenhagen, Dansk industri, Sydsvenska industri-och handelskammaren, 2022).

> We propose the establishment of a Danish-Swedish Øresund Task Force with the political
> leaders from Greater Copenhagen, representatives of the business community, and the
> Danish and Swedish states. The working group must quickly and efficiently ensure that tax
> rules and legislation, infrastructure projects, and our way of managing society connect
> companies and people instead of pulling us apart. Through our common strength in the
> Nordic region - cooperation - the working group will ensure that we create joint Danish-
> Swedish growth and development.[14]
> (David Bak & Eriksson, 2021)

Based on the quote the bilateral forum should also be a multilevel forum with the participation of both the Swedish and Danish governments and the involvement of local business actors and politicians. By gathering national decision-makers with local representatives, the many dimensions of issues with stronger territoriality for the cross-border regional community can be pointed out and discussed. Thus, the bilateral forum is meant to remedy the lack of information and the problems originating from new border restrictions that have been imposed without asking the local and regional levels for advice. Furthermore, by inviting the governments to the discussion table, the creators of the narrative ensure that they are active actors, saving a spot at the table for themselves. As was previously stated by Balibar (2004, pp. 1-2), and Paasi (1998 (b), p. 670), the original meaning of borders is created at the administrative and political center of the territory, by the *territorial nation-state*. The proposal by local and regional policy actors to create a forum where they are invited, and where they can participate in a discussion on what the border should mean can be seen as a way to challenge the nationally created narrative of borders. Previously, it was similarly argued, that the criticism towards national decision-makers, derived from the local and regional levels not being asked for advice, could be seen as a narrative critique of the procedures of implementation for border restrictions used by Denmark and Sweden. This is supported by both Balibar (2004, pp. 1-2) and Anderson and O'Dowd (1999, pp. 594-597) who all view border regions are important locations for the contestation and renegotiation of borders. Using the formulation of Paasi (1998 (b), p. 86), the *institutionalized policy actors* in the Øresund region represent a *competing narrative* – an overlapping space of dependency and constellation of power that attempts to be heard and acknowledged. A competing cross-border narrative challenging the nationally sanctioned network of social power and cultural integration as well as political legitimization. We must however remember that the material not often reveals a notion of criticism towards national sentiments, nor is a regional identity suggested. As such, there is no suggestion that national borders function as the foundation of national sentiments, but then again, neither is the notion challenged.

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[14] " Vi föreslår att man inrättar en dansk–svensk Öresund Task Force med de politiska ledarna från Greater Copenhagen, företrädare för näringslivet samt danska och svenska staten. Arbetsgruppen måste snabbt och effektivt se till att skatteregler och lagstiftning, infrastrukturprojekt och vårt sätt att sköta samhället knyter samman företag och människor istället för att dra isär oss. Genom vår gemensamma styrka i Norden – samarbete – ska arbetsgruppen se till att vi skapar gemensam dansk–svensk tillväxt och utveckling." (David Bak & Eriksson, 2021)

Cooperation between Denmark and Sweden is further underlined in the following statement:

> Government officials and other politicians are expected to make fast decisions and show
> efficiency. But rather than showing determination within one's national borders we
> recommend them to lift their gaze, take a deep breath, and look across the borders to find
> common solutions.[15]
> (Haarder & Sonesson, 2021)

A dimension that is especially clearly put in this quote, is the need for common solutions. Since the article is centered around the new restrictions on freedom of movement in the Øresund region, it might be assumed that it specifically is new border restrictions that require common solutions. Together with the statement from the previous quote: "The working group must quickly and efficiently ensure that […] our way of managing society connect companies and people instead of pulling us apart" (David Bak & Eriksson, 2021), an interesting picture of cross-border integration takes form. Common solutions that connect people rather than pull them apart are needed. *Territoriality* was previously defined by Paasi as a spatial strategy to control and influence a geographic area enclosed by borders (1998 (b)). Based on this, what is narratively suggested, s that the two nation-states, Denmark, and Sweden should identify a specific form of territoriality for the Øresund region that may overlap with the nationally Danish and nationally Swedish territoriality. It is not narratively suggested that such an overlapping territoriality should have the same extensive meaning and influence as the traditional national territoriality, rather the cross-border territoriality should ensure the functioning of the Øresund region. Thus, the aim of a *common territorial strategy* is not equal to the abolition of borders or full political integration. As discussed in the theoretical discussion, both Löfgren (2008) and Anderson and O'Dowd (1999) believe that *regional asymmetries* occur when access is granted to two national systems. These asymmetries may be seen as the rationale for the existence of cross-border integration. Once again, the duality of borders is demonstrated. Less friction across the border is desirable to facilitate integration but a complete integration would result in the loss of the rationale behind integration.

While the two quotes presented above both suggest increased cooperation to make life easier for the cross-border commuters, the following quote suggests that cooperation also is important for economic development:

> If we are hoping to match these cities, we need a lot more cooperation. A strong Stockholm
> and a strong Øresund region are each other's prerequisites for business development,
> growth, and innovation. The rivalry between Denmark and Sweden should end on the
> handball field.[16]
> (David Bak & Eriksson, 2021)

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[15] "Ministrar och andra politiker förväntas fatta snabba beslut och visa på effektivitet. Men istället för att visa beslutsamhet innanför sina nationella gränser rekommenderar vi dem att lyfta blicken, ta ett djupt andetag och se över gränserna för att hitta gemensamma lösningar." (Haarder & Sonesson, 2021)

[16] "Om vi hoppas kunna matcha dessa städer måste vi samarbeta betydligt mer. Ett starkt Stockholm och en stark Öresundsregion är varandras förutsättningar för affärsutveckling, tillväxt och innovation. Rivaliteten mellan Danmark och Sverige borde stanna på handbollsplanen." (David Bak & Eriksson, 2021)

The quote is interesting because apart from suggesting the need for more cooperation between the national governments for the sake of the Øresund region, it is also suggested that increased cooperation between Denmark and Sweden will strengthen the national economic competitiveness. Strengthening economic competitiveness is, as we shall see in the next section, an important policy goal in the narrative, and this topic is put in the analytical focus of the following section.

4.2.1   Policy Goal

In the methodology, the *policy goal* was introduced as the overarching aim of the policy actors. The main objective that could be achieved provided that the morality was fulfilled, and the policy problem was solved (Jones, et al., 2013; Jones, et al., 2014). *Table 4* summarizes the policy goal of the different texts, and it is obvious that the economy is at the center of the stage. This implies that the cross-border integration in the Øresund region is driven by the overarching aim of utilizing regional economic asymmetries to create growth and development. Once again, the theoretic assumption that *cross-border asymmetries* are the driver of integration, as proposed by Löfgren (2008), as well as Anderson and O'Dowd (1999, p. 595), are useful. Furthermore, it underlines the importance of *borders* and the special opportunities they create for the cross-border region. This, of course, is under the condition that the border can be traversed in a way that enables the utilization of said benefits, which is not the case following the *policy problem*. Thus, the dual function of borders is an aspect narratively present in the *policy goal* as well.

Table 4: Policy goal, narratively suggested in the text

Analyzed text	Policy Goal
"Greater Copenhagen: Skab en fælles dansk-svensk 'Corona task force'" (Greater Copenhagen, 2021)	Keeping the regional *economy* running
"Aktuella frågor: "Tillsätt en dansk-svensk task force"" (Haarder & Sonesson, 2021)	Create economic development and growth. Make Øresund an economic powerhouse
"DEBATT: Omstart med bro som aldrig stängs" (David Bak & Eriksson, 2021)	Make the Øresund region an *internationally competitive* region.
"Greater Copenhagen: Grænselukning og PCR-test er ikke løsningen" (Greater Copenhagen, 2021)	Keep the *economy* going
"Den nya svenska ID-kontrollen kommer att orsaka stor skada" (Greater Copenhagen, 2022)	The common and integrated labor market in Øresund and the *economic benefits* this will lead to

That the regional economic development and competitiveness of the Øresund region is the policy goal is exemplified in the following quotes:

> Freedom of movement for people has always been a determining condition for development and growth. It has brought wealth, new ideas, and inspiration. But today the freedom of movement is threatened […].[17]
> (Haarder & Sonesson, 2021)

> The organization Greater Copenhagen was created to realize the dream and vision of an economic powerhouse characterized by freedom of movement across the border with lots of commuters, trade, and common initiatives. Those who thought so also build a bridge across Øresund, both psychologically and physically.[18]
> (Haarder & Sonesson, 2021)

They illustrate how freedom of movement, absence of border restrictions, is viewed as a prerequisite for economic development and growth. When physical and social bridges are built, people (commuters, tourists, entrepreneurs, investors, etc.) can move freely across the Øresund border and, new ideas and inspiration, create wealth and an economically competitive region. Thus, the interconnectedness of the policy problem, morality, and policy goal of the narrative is underlined. Since the policy problem hinders the achievement of the policy goal the increased territoriality around the Øresund border needs to be managed. Preferably by *common territoriality* in the Øresund region and with the consultancy of the local and regional levels. Thus, local and regional actors in the cross-border region represent a *competing narrative* that challenges the national network of social power. With reference to the dual function of borders, they are at the same time perceived as an obstacle and prerequisite to obtaining the policy goal. With regard to the policy problem, moral, and policy goal one may conclude the following. The Øresund cross-border narrative challenges the nationally created meaning of borders when it starts to interfere with the cross-border integration and mobility that is necessary to utilize the *regional asymmetries*. Instead, the authors of the narrative propose an *overlapping territoriality* that takes into account the particular conditions and needs of cross-border regions so that the policy goal can be achieved. The debate article, "Omstart med bro som aldrig stängs", is particularly concerned with the economic development of the Øresund region. The following quote informs us that the policy goal is to create a cross-border metropolis that is internationally competitive.

There is fierce competition between the metropolitan regions for talent, investments, and companies. But Stockholm and Copenhagen should not compete. Instead, they should support each other and compete with technology cities such as Boston and Singapore.

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[17] "Fri rörlighet för människor har alltid varit en avgörande förutsättning för utveckling och tillväxt. Den har fört med sig välstånd, nya idéer och inspiration. Men idag är den fria rörligheten hotad […]" (Haarder & Sonesson, 2021)

[18] " Organisationen Greater Copenhagen skapades för att realisera drömmen och visionen om ett ekonomiskt kraftcentrum kännetecknat av fri rörlighet över gränsen med massor av pendlare, handel och gemensamma initiativ. De som tänkte så byggde också en bro över Öresund, både psykiskt och fysiskt." (Haarder & Sonesson, 2021)

> If we hope to be able to match these cities, we must cooperate much more. A strong Stockholm and a strong Øresund region are each other's prerequisites for business development, growth, and innovation. The rivalry between Denmark and Sweden should stay on the handball field.[19]
>
> (David Bak & Eriksson, 2021)

What is of particular interest is the way national governments are referred to. This debate article is the only text in the material of this study, where the consequences of national sentiments among state-level decision-makers are criticized. It is stated that Stockholm and Copenhagen should not compete and, that there should be no rivalry between Denmark and Sweden. What is implied is that the nationalistic competitive, maybe even protectionist relationship between the two countries creates the policy problem. The policy problem, in turn, stands in the way of the economic development of the Øresund region and, the competitiveness of each country. The *national sentiments* seem to hinder possible cooperation between Denmark and Sweden. Instead, there tends to be such *competitive territoriality* between the two countries, that the cross-border mobility and integration, necessary to obtain the policy goal, are hindered. This is perceived as a problem. Following this, the theoretical assumptions of Paasi (1998 (b)) as well as, Anderson and O'Dowd (1999), who claim that borders are the foundation of national sentiments, are narratively contested by local and regional institutionalized actors in the Øresund region. The influence national sentiments have on *territoriality* and *borders* is questioned. Instead, the competing narrative of local and regional institutionalized actors in the Øresund region portray borders as an opportunity for regional, as well as national economic growth and development. It is, however, exclusively in this debate article that the connection to national sentiments is made. Now that the problem, solution, and general goal in the narrative have been identified and analytically scrutinized it is time to have a closer look at the context, and the setting that which the narrative takes place.

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[19] " Om vi hoppas kunna matcha dessa städer måste vi samarbeta betydligt mer. Ett starkt Stockholm och en stark Öresundsregion är varandras förutsättningar för affärsutveckling, tillväxt och innovation. Rivaliteten mellan Danmark och Sverige borde stanna på handbollsplanen." (David Bak & Eriksson, 2021)

4.3   Setting

In the methodology chapter, the narrative element *setting* was introduced as the context of the *policy problem*. Jones et al (2014) state that the setting can consist of for example taken-for-granted facts, unquestioned or unmovable legal parameters, characteristics of the specific geographical area, and rules that most agree on. Some aspects of the setting will be gathered from the material presented in *chapter 3.3*. However, complementary sources will be used to further contextualize and scrutinize the setting and, to understand the background of the overall narrative. The most prominent feature of the setting is simultaneously a geographical and geopolitical characteristic as well as a taken-for-granted fact. Furthermore, it causes unmovable legal rules and regulations. The characteristic is rooted in the fact that the Øresund region consists of two countries, Denmark, and Sweden, and is divided by a territorial border. The *border* is constituted by a narrow stretch of sea forming the Øresund strait. *Figure 1* above illustrates this as well as the full region. The border, dividing the region into Denmark and Sweden, results in the Øresund region having two different sets of rules and regulations as well as distinguished administrative and political systems. The division of the region into two countries can, according to Löfgren (2008) and Anderson, and O'Dowd (1999) be seen as the region's reason for existence. In the previous chapters on *policy problem*, *morality*, and *policy goal* it has been established that the main issue is *stronger territoriality*. Territoriality that leads to such control and restrictions around the border that cross-border mobility and integration are hindered. The core of these problems springs from the Øresund region being divided into two countries, with two spheres of political/administrative power, and two hegemonic cultures underlined by a territorial border.

Figure 1: Map of the Øresund region (google maps)
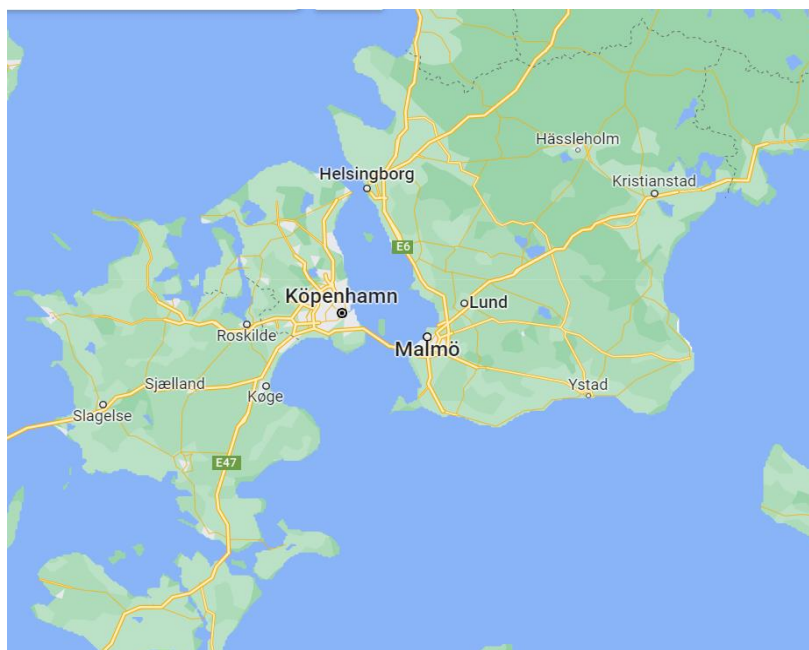
Using the conceptualization of Paasi and Prokkola, the setting may be said to relate to two different administrative and political centers deciding what the border and the national identity should mean (1998 (b); 2008). As such, the border is the main geographical and geopolitical setting of the policy problem. The following quote is one example of this:

> We encourage the authorities to remember the cross-border commuters and the important
> cooperation across Øresund as they introduce new Corona restrictions. For us, in Greater
> Copenhagen, a corona passport or quick test is the right solution.[20]
> (Greater Copenhagen (b), 2021)

Especially the Øresund bridge, connecting the south Swedish city of Malmö with the Danish capital Copenhagen (see *figure 1*) is important for the setting, both from a symbolical and a geopolitical perspective[21]. The symbolic importance of the bridge is embodied in the following quote, where it is suggested that a summit, to restart the region after the corona pandemic, should be held at the bridge:

> We will – as soon as the border barriers are lifted again – invite leaders and decision-
> makers to a summit in the region. What could be a better place to meet to resume the
> cooperation which has previously proved so valuable than at the top of the pylons of the
> Øresund bridge? Who will be first?[22]
> (David Bak & Eriksson, 2021)

In the chapter on theoretic remarks and assumptions Anderson's and O'Dowd's (1999) definition of a cross-border region as one that straddles a border led to the theoretical hypothesis that the border is the center of a cross-border region. The physical and symbolic importance of the border for the setting demonstrated above seems to confirm this hypothesis. It would mean that while the center of the territory at large tends to be in the capital, the center of cross-border regions is along the border. This is unsurprising since the *regional asymmetries* caused by the border, according to Anderson and O'Dowd (1999) as well as Löfgren (2008), motivate the existence of cross-border regions. With the border being such an important aspect of the narrative setting it is important to recall the modern history of the Øresund border. It has been characterized by freedom of movement and abolished border controls since the year of 1954. This is when the Nordic passport union was created and the Øresund border became an internal Nordic border. In 1995 Sweden joined the EU and thus, also the Schengen area, expanding the regional freedom of movement to encompass all the EU (European Parliament, 2019; Sveriges Riksdag, 2021). This changed in the year 2015 as the migration crisis led the Swedish government to impose border controls upon arrival in Sweden (Regeringskansliet, 2015). Since then, restrictions for those who wish to cross the border has been introduced several

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[20] "Vi uppmanar därför myndigheterna att tänka på gränspendlare och det viktiga samarbetet över Öresund när de beslutar om ytterligare Coronarestriktioner. För oss i Greater Copenhagen är coronapass eller snabbtest den rätta lösningen." (Greater Copenhagen (b), 2021)
[21] See also the introduction to *Regionauterna – Öresundsregionen från vision till vardag* for a similar conclusion (Löfgren & Nilsson, 2010, p. 11)
[22] "Vi kommer – så snart gränsbommarna lyfts igen – att bjuda in ledare och beslutsfattare till toppmöte i regionen. Var kan vara en bättre plats att träffas och återuppta det samarbete som tidigare visat sig så värdefullt än på toppen av en av Öresundsbrons pyloner? Vem kommer först tro?" (David Bak & Eriksson, 2021)

times, both by the Swedish and Danish government and with different motivations. It is against this historic setting and background, of a region previously characterized by freedom of movement, that the narrative and its policy problem should be understood.

Another unquestioned characteristic of the geographical area in Øresund is a socio-political character, and it is the commuters who regularly cross the border for work in the neighboring country. In 2021 there were about 18 000 cross-border commuters, a lot more than the year 2000 when the bridge was opened, but less than the record year of 2008 when 19 805 people crossed the border for work. Most of these commuters are traveling from Sweden to their job in Denmark (Region Skåne, 2022; Øreundsinstitutet, 2021; Ørestat). As we shall see further on in the analysis, the cross-border commuters are an important character in the narrative. It has been stated serval times that cross-border integration is motivated by regional asymmetries (Anderson & O'Dowd, 1999; Löfgren, 2008). The fact that most commuters are travelling to Denmark from Sweden suggests some form of *economic asymmetry* motivating people in Sweden to look for employment in Denmark. Having scrutinized the narrative elements; policy problem, morality, policy goal, and setting, the next chapter is concerned with the characters inhabiting the setting and affected by the problem.

4.4   Characters

According to the research methodology Narrative Policy Framework, all narratives have *characters*. The following three characters have previously been introduced: *hero*, *villain*, and *victim* (Jones, et al., 2014, pp. 6-7). Upon closely reading the material and identifying patterns of reference, different actors were categorized as the three characters. In *table 5*, the identified actors have been consolidated into categories of actors and sorted after character to provide an overview[23]. In this section, examples of the interpretations, as well as analytical motivations of why the actors have been interpreted as belonging to a certain character, will be made. As shown in *table 5*, there are several more categories of victims, than villains and heroes. In highlighting the many victims of the policy problem, the issues of border restrictions are underlined. At the same time, the villain is pointed out as the actor responsible for the problems. When pointing out the villain as responsible the authors of the narrative are simultaneously suggesting that they are responsible for solving the issue. This may be seen as a strategic choice in the author's construction of the narrative. According to Jones et al. (2014, p. 15)., this kind of strategic construction and use of policy narratives to reach a policy goal are not uncommon. By constructing a narrative with many victims, the creators of the narrative are attempting to communicate the large scope of the policy problem, in order to create a motivation to solve them, so that the *policy goal* may be reached.

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[23] The full list of actors categorized after character can be found in appendix I.

Table 5: Summary of the characters in the texts

Heroes	Villains	Victims
• The authors of the texts: institutionalized cross-border policy actors, institutionalized regional and local policy actors	• National Governments and decisionmakers	• Cross-border commuters • Others who cross the border (tourists, travelers, etc.) • The cooperation across Øresund and between Sweden and Denmark • The Regional Economy

4.4.1   Heroes

Starting with the *heroes* of this policy narrative, they were at first difficult to identify by looking for patterns of reference. But, as was just mentioned, Jones et al. (2014). claim that policy actors at the meso-level are actively creating and communicating *policy narratives* to reach specific *policy goals*. Following this argument, they claim that it is not uncommon for *policy actors* to occasionally identify themselves as the hero. Assuming that this is the case for the narrative of concern, the heroes are the authors of the material[24]. The material should then be viewed as, following the previously introduced definition of narrative by Herman and Vervaeck (2019, pp. 12-13), a strategic representation of reality connecting events in a meaningful way to convey a strategic message to the villains. Heroes were previously defined as the character offering a solution to the problem which the policy narrative is concerned with (Jones, et al., 2013; 2014). The heroes of the narrative fulfill this role in two main ways:

- First, simply by picking up the pen and writing the texts, the authors are speaking for, and advocating on behalf of the victims of the narrative.
- Second, the authors, as we shall see, are the ones proposing the moral in the narrative. They are the ones suggesting the solution to the policy problem.

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[24] In selecting the texts for analysis, the decision was made to limit the selection to those created by the cross-border committee Greater Copenhagen. In some of the texts in the material, Greater Copenhagen has joined forces with other institutionalized cross-border and/or local and regional actors, the Øresund bridge, the south Swedish chamber of commerce, and the Nordic Council. As such, they are the heroes of the narrative.

The quotes below are examples of both ways:

> […] instead of showing determination within their national border we recommend them to
> lift their eyes, take a deep breath, and look across the border to find common solutions[25]
> (Haarder & Sonesson, 2021)

> I want to suggest that a joint Danish-Swedish 'Corona task force' is created which can help
> commuters make an unpredictable everyday life easier for the Danish and Swedish
> commuters[26]
> (Greater Copenhagen (a), 2021)

Notice the patterns of reference in the two quotes, "*we* recommend them" and "*I* want to suggest". The formulations both suggest ownership of the policy problem and that the authors take responsibility for the situation by recommending solutions. As we shall investigate further on, "*them*" in the first quote refers to the villains of the narrative; state-level national decision-makers. Another quote that exemplifies the two ways the authors function as heroes is the following by Greater Copenhagen's managing director, Tue David Bak, and the head of the Øresund bridge, Linus Eriksson: "So, Denmark and Sweden: the pylons are ready for a summit with focus on the revival of the Øresund region[27]" (David Bak & Eriksson, 2021). The quote form something of a statement, almost a challenge to the state-level national decision-makers: "Denmark and Sweden", are you ready to take the same responsibility as us (cross-border institutionalized policy actors) and show up for a summit? The pylons referred to are the pylons at the top of the Øresund bridge. Thus, the statement could be narratively interpreted as follows: So, Denmark and Sweden: the (our) pylons – our region, are ready for a summit where you, state-level national decision-makers, take your responsibility to ensure the functioning of our region. By suggesting a solution to the *policy problem* and attempting to keep the *villains* of the narrative responsible for the problems they have caused, the authors of the text show that they are taking charge of the problematic situation. From a theoretical perspective, several conclusions can be drawn based on the analysis above. The first, which confirms Rumford's (2008) thesis, is that individuals, as well as local and regional groups and actors, are equally important for the formation of borders as state-level actors. Following this, the second conclusion is that the heroes can be assumed to represent a *competing narrative* of what the national border in the Øresund region should entail and mean. After all, this is why they are critical of state-level national decision-makers. Using the words of Paasi (1998 (a); 1998 (b)) it may be assumed that the narrative represents an *overlapping territoriality*, space of dependency, and constellation of power. The challenging role of the heroes, local and regional cross-border actors, has further support in the literature. According to scholars Anderson and O'Dowd (1999), border regions, and the actors located there are especially important to uphold, renegotiate and contest the centrally decided meaning of the border. However, their options are limited in terms of what can be

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[25] " […] istället för att visa beslutsamhet innanför sina nationella gränser rekommenderar vi dem att lyfta blicken, ta ett djupt andetag och se över gränserna för att hitta gemensamma lösningar." (Haarder & Sonesson, 2021)

[26] "Jeg vil foreslå, at der bliver lavet en fælles dansk-svensk 'Corona task force', som kan hjælpe med at gøre en meget omskiftelig hverdag lettere for danske og svenske pendlere" (Greater Copenhagen (a), 2021)

[27] " Så, Danmark och Sverige: pylonerna är redo för ett toppmöte med fokus på att återuppliva Öresundsregionen." (David Bak & Eriksson, 2021)

done to challenge the meaning of the border as it is decided on a nationwide level. Local, regional, and cross-border institutionalized policy actors cannot decide that the centrally imposed restrictions for border crossings should be invalid and ignore them. What they can do is make their voices heard and attempt to create a public opinion against the aspects of the border they disagree on. The texts forming the material of this thesis can be seen as an example of this phenomenon, a to some degree overlapping and competitive cross-border narrative. Next, the analysis will examine the patterns of reference surrounding those held responsible for the policy problem, the villains of the narrative.

4.4.2   Villains

The villains and victims have a more direct presence in the narrative and are easier to identify by looking at patterns of reference in the texts. Starting with the *villains,* national governments and decision-makers were pointed out in *table 5* above. These actors are repeatedly referred to critically and as those responsible for the policy problem. Sometimes the villains are called Denmark and/or Sweden, national authorities, or the government, at other times they are simply referred to as 'they'. In the following two quotes, the Danish and Swedish governments, as well as the authorities are referred to as the source of and the responsible actors for the policy problem:

> The Swedish and Danish governments have been responsible for several restrictive
> decisions, often without coordination.[28]
> (Haarder & Sonesson, 2021)

> We acknowledge the necessity for that the health authorities to introduce new actions to
> limit the infection in society, but closing the borders is not the solution.[29]
> (Greater Copenhagen (b), 2021)

Based on the two quotes above it seems like the notion that national decision-makers are portrayed as the villains are confirmed. First, because they are the actor who is responsible for the restrictive decisions, and second because they have imposed these restrictions without coordination. This relates to the discussion of the policy problems and morality of the narrative, where lack of cooperation and coordination was narratively represented as the problem needing to be solved. In the previous discussion of heroes, it was concluded that *heroes* encourage national decision-makers to contribute to solving the policy problem. This argument can be turned around to show why national decision-makers are portrayed as villains. They are considered the source of the *policy problem*, and yet, they do not take responsibility to correct the negative side effects their decision to impose border restrictions has had on the Øresund community. When discussing the policy problem, the fact that stronger territoriality was used as a simple solution to show power of action was seen as an issue. In fact, it was also typically referred to as a rushed decision. In combination with that the heroes have not been asked for advice, the new restrictions "have had some very

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[28] "De svenska och danska regeringarna har stått för många inskränkande beslut, ofta utan att samordna sig." (Haarder & Sonesson, 2021)
[29] "Vi erkänner nödvändigheten av att hälsomyndigheterna inför restriktioner för att begränsa smittan i samhället men att stänga gränserna är inte lösningen." (Greater Copenhagen (b), 2021)

unfortunate consequences that make life difficult for people who live or work in a border region" (Haarder & Sonesson, 2021). It all adds up to a critique where the villains are narratively portrayed as not understanding the special conditions of border regions. Furthermore, they do not take the time or effort to ask local and regional actors for assistance. This, we may conclude, is the main reason why national decision-makers are portrayed as the villains in this narrative. Following Paasi's (1998 (b); 1998 (a)) and Balibar's (2004, pp. 1-2) argument, that the original meaning of the border is formulated by national authorities, it makes sense for local and regional institutional policy actors in the Øresund region to turn to them when they are unsatisfied with the physical and/or social meaning of the border. It is also rather clear that the heroes and the villains have different ideas of what the meaning of the border should entail. It has already been argued that the heroes represent a competing narrative. It should therefore come as no surprise that national decision-makers represent the main narrative that the heroes direct their challenge towards. Looking at the literature this is an expected conclusion. Paasi (1998 (a); 1998 (b)) as well as Anderson and, O'Dowd (1999), claim that the hegemonic narrative on borders forms a network of socializing power. Other interconnected aspects of this socializing power are narratives of cultural integration, legitimizing power, and national sentiments.

4.4.3 Victims

From *table 5* above, we can see that while the heroes and villains of this narrative are made up of one category of actors, the *victims*, on the other hand, are made up of four categories:

1. Cross-border commuters
2. Others who cross the border (tourists, travelers, etc.)
3. The cross-border cooperation and the general cooperation between Denmark and Sweden
4. The cross-border and regional economy.

At the beginning of the discussion on characters, it was mentioned that the many victims are a strategy to underline the negative effects of border restrictions experienced in the cross-border region. In the following section, we will investigate how this is done. One category of actors is most concretely and consistently referred to as the victims in the material. It is cross-border commuters. The following quotes show some examples:

It certainly does not make it easier for us to help the devasted people who travel across
Øresund to do their work[30]
(Greater Copenhagen (a), 2021)

Suddenly businesses who passed the border were considered a risk, a source of infection.
Every government put its country first. In particular, commuters, students, and
entrepreneurs became the victims.[31]
(Haarder & Sonesson, 2021)

[…] new border obstacles. […] have some very unfortunate consequences that make life
difficult for the people who live or have jobs in border regions[32]
(Haarder & Sonesson, 2021)

Demanding PCR-test will be the same as closing the border as it is the everyday life will be
near impossible to be a work commuter in the borderland[33]
(Greater Copenhagen (b), 2021)

They are "devastated people", seen as "a risk, a source of infection" and due to this, they have
become the victims. Furthermore, the policy problem has resulted in "very unfortunate
consequences that make life difficult" and in making the everyday work-life of cross-border
commuters "near impossible". The reason behind the categorization of cross-border commuters as
victims is that they are consistently referred to, as those affected by the border restrictions. To fully
understand the situation of the cross-border commuters, and other people who regularly need to
cross the Øresund border, it is necessary to recall an important aspect of the narrative *setting*. The
narrative is set in a context where, until a few years ago, the Øresund border was characterized by
openness and freedom of movement if you were a Nordic and later EU citizen. This began to
change in 2015 when the migration crisis led the Swedish government to introduce border controls
upon arrival in Sweden (Regeringskansliet, 2015). This development has since been strengthened
by the corona pandemic, which has limited the ability for people to move freely across the Øresund
border between Denmark and Sweden[34]. In the theoretical terms of scholar Chris Rumford (2008)
introduced above, the *asymmetric membrane*, that makes up the Øresund *border*, and other EU
internal borders, has changed. What is deemed desirable and undesirable to let across the border has
changed in the nationally created narrative. For the people living in a cross-border region such as
Øresund however, the new national understanding of what is desirable and undesirable to let across
the border creates problems. Things that were previously enabled by the border, for example daily
commuting across it for work, have become a great deal more complicated, and in periods it has

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[30] "Det gør det bestemt ikke nemmere for os at hjælpe de fortvivlede mennesker, som tager turen over Øresund for at
udføre deres arbejde" (Greater Copenhagen (a), 2021)
[31] "Plötsligt betraktades företag som passerade gränsen som en risk, en källa till smitta. Varje regering satte sitt land
först. Offer blev särskilt pendlare, studerande och entreprenörer." (Haarder & Sonesson, 2021)
[32] "[…] nya gränshinder […]har några mycket olyckliga konsekvenser som gör livet svårt för människor som bor eller
har jobb i gränsregioner." (Haarder & Sonesson, 2021)
[33] "Krav om PCR-test kommer vara detsamma som att stänga gränsen då det i det dagliga i princip blir omöjligt att
arbetspendla i gränslandet." (Greater Copenhagen (b), 2021)
[34] Indeed, the corona pandemic has not only affected the freedom of movement across the Øresund border but in all the
EU.

even been discouraged by the national governments in Denmark and Sweden. This means that the conditions for life in an integrated cross-border region have changed. Other things previously enabled by the Øresund border that changed as the understanding of desirable and undesirable to allow across the border changed are the more abstract victim, cooperation across Øresund and between Denmark and Sweden, as well as the cross-border regional economy. While the previously discussed victims all represent real, concrete people or groups of people, these victims are more abstract. However, following Jones et al. (2014) it is very much possible for characters to take on a more abstract form. In the quotes below, the economy, both the regional and national, are exemplified as victims:

> I acknowledge the need to keep the corona infection and the South African variation down. And that restrictions might be necessary. Unfortunately, it once again affects the cross-border commuters who are so crucial for the economy in the capital to stay afloat.[35]
> (Greater Copenhagen (a), 2021)

> Swedish cross-border commuters are crucial for both the Swedish and Danish economies. We encourage the authorities to remember the cross-border commuters and the important cooperation across Øresund as they introduce further corona restrictions.[36]
> (Greater Copenhagen (b), 2021)

Interestingly, although perhaps not surprising, the negative effects of the border restrictions on the economy are consistently referred to as a consequence of how cross-border commuters struggle to come across the border. Thus, the meaning the narrative conveys, is that when cross-border commuters struggle to come across the border, the economy suffers. As the setting was analyzed it was stated, following Anderson and O'Dowd (1999), as well as Löfgren (2008), that the many Swedes commuting to jobs in Denmark suggests an *economic asymmetry* that motivates cross-border integration. From the two quotes above we can see that economic asymmetry mainly seems to drive labor market and economic integration. This integration is threatened as the policy problem turns the commuters and thus, the economy into victims.

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[35] " Jeg erkender nødvendigheden af, at vi skal holde coronasmitten og den sydafrikanske variant nede. Og at restriktioner kan være nødvendige. Desværre går det endnu engang ud over grænsependlerne, der er så afgørende for at økonomien i hovedstaden kan holde sig kørende" (Greater Copenhagen (a), 2021)
[36] "Svenska gränspendlare har en avgörande betydelse både för den danska och svenska ekonomin. Vi uppmanar därför myndigheterna att tänka på gränspendlare och det viktiga samarbetet över Öresund när de beslutar om ytterligare Coronarestriktioner." (Greater Copenhagen (b), 2021)

The cooperation across Øresund and between Denmark and Sweden is also referred to as a victim, the following two quotes exemplify this:

> Greater Copenhagen calls for the health authorities' solutions not to cause a de facto
> closing of Denmark's borders and thus create yet other obstacles to our already pressed
> cooperation across Øresund[37]
> (Greater Copenhagen (b), 2021)

> We will - as soon as the border barriers are lifted again - invite leaders and decision-makers
> to a summit in the region. Where can be a better place to meet and resume the collaboration
> that previously proved so valuable than on top of one of the Øresund Bridge's pylons. Who
> will come first?[38]
> (David Bak & Eriksson, 2021)

The relationship between new border restrictions and problems for cooperation is more direct than that between border restrictions and the economic development in Øresund. The closing of the border is a direct obstacle to cooperation. In the debate article, which the second quote above has been collected from, the whole theme is how the lack of cooperation, indeed the rivalry between Copenhagen and Stockholm, ends up harming the economic development and well-being of the Øresund region (David Bak & Eriksson, 2021). Thus, the lack of interest for cooperation, and sometimes even rivalry, between the two nation-states leads to negative consequences for cross-border regions like Øresund. This can be seen as an example of the dividing aspect of *territoriality* and *national sentiments*, and it once again underlines the dual function of borders for cross-border regions. It is at once the rationale for its existence, and the reason behind many of its problems – in this case, lack of interest in cooperation from the administrative and political center of the national territory.

4.5   Plot

In the previous chapters of this analysis the different *narrative elements* have been identified and theoretically scrutinized. In the methodology, the *plot* was defined as typically having a beginning, a middle, and an end and connecting the narrative elements, *problem*, *moral*, *setting*, and *characters* to each other in time and causally so that the narrative makes up a story (Jones, et al., 2014; Jones, et al., 2013). In the following chapter, these connections will be explored. *Figure 2* below illustrates the main connections between the narrative elements.

---

[37] " Greater Copenhagen uppmanar hälsomyndigheterna att säkra att restriktionerna inte leder till en de facto stängning av Danmarks gränser och därmed ännu en käpp i hjulet för det på förhand pressande samarbetet över Öresund."
(Greater Copenhagen (b), 2021)
[38] " Vi kommer – så snart gränsbommarna lyfts igen – att bjuda in ledare och beslutsfattare till toppmöte i regionen. Var kan vara en bättre plats att träffas och återuppta det samarbete som tidigare visat sig så värdefullt än på toppen av en av Öresundsbrons pyloner? Vem kommer först tro?" (David Bak & Eriksson, 2021)

Figure 2: The main connections between narrative elements.
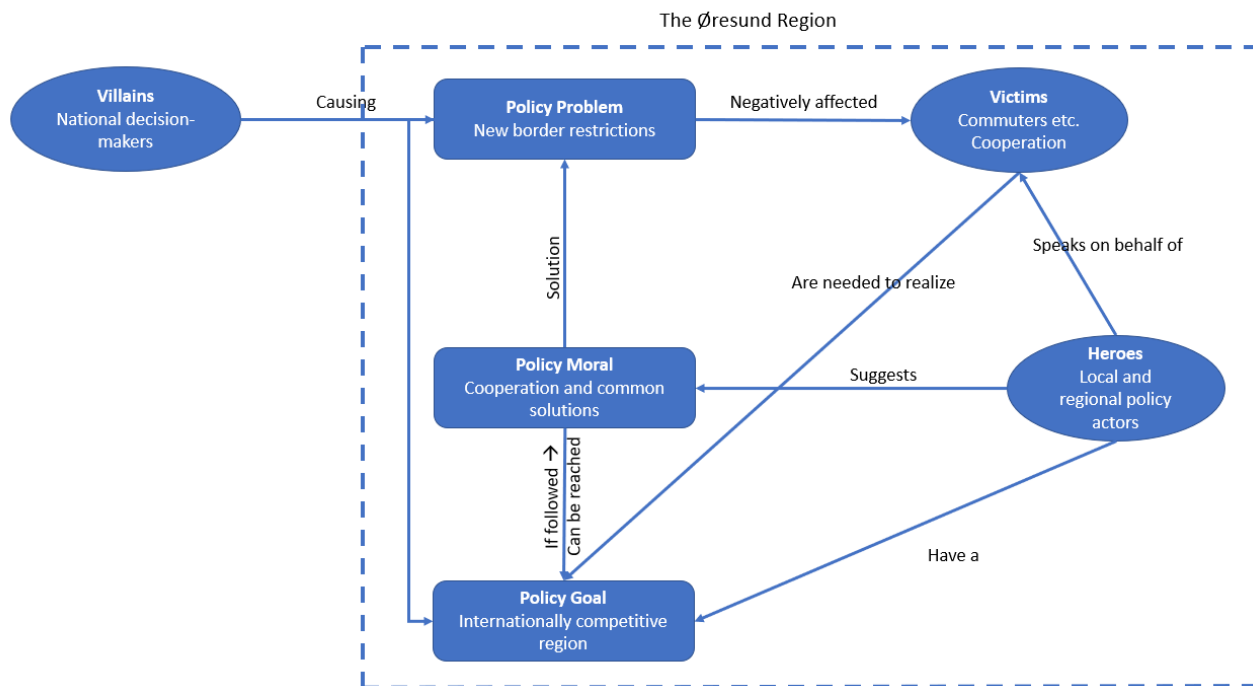
The plot begins with national decision-makers deciding to implement new border restrictions as a response to a perceived crisis. This causes the policy problem, new border restrictions. By applying Paasi's (1998 (b)) definition of *territoriality* as a geographical strategy of control and influence, it can be concluded that the issue is an increase in *national territoriality*, particularly manifesting itself by changing the meaning of the *border*. In the theory section, it was argued, following Anderson and O'Dowd (1999), that borders are simultaneously enabling and limiting. The more restrictive meaning of the border, a consequence of increased territoriality, caused problems for the *victims* of the narrative whose everyday life was built around what the border previously enabled and now limits – freedom of movement between Sweden and Denmark.

> [C]losing the border is not the solution. We have been saying this for almost two years, and
> we fear that today's announcements from the Danish health authorities will lead to a real
> closure of the Danish borders or such strict control and test requirements that it is again the
> job commuters and the Danish-Swedish cooperation that are hit by the consequences.[39]
> (Greater Copenhagen (b), 2021)

The quote illustrates the argument above. The Danish health authorities announce new control and test requirements, equaling more control of the border which alters its enabling aspects. The strict control and test requirements to enter Denmark, negatively affect job commuters and Danish-Swedish cooperation by restricting the freedom of movement. While the quote demonstrates how

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[39] "[A]tt stänga gränserna är inte lösningen. Det har vi sagt i snart två år och vi fruktar att dagens budskap från de danska hälsomyndigheterna leder till en reel stängning av de danska gränserna. Alternativt att de leder till så stränga kontroll-och testkrav att det återigen är arbetspendlarna och det dansk-svenska samarbetet som får betala priset." (Greater Copenhagen (b), 2021)

changes in what the border enables is a policy problem, it does not illustrate how the restrictions are presented as an issue. For this purpose, we will revisit a quote previously presented in the chapter on a policy problem. It captures several dimesons that are referred to as problematic: the rapidness with which new restrictions are introduced, lack of sufficient information and not being asked for advice.

> The problem is the many ad hoc solutions that we need to read about in the press. It certainly does not make it easier for us to help the devasted people, who make the trip across Øresund to do their job, that we must read about new changes in the newspaper. It is difficult to understand why we constantly must relate to changed rules from both governments without being asked for advice.[40]
> (Greater Copenhagen (a), 2021)

The rapid changes in what is enabled and limited by the border, with insufficient communication from the national decision-makers, create confusion as to what and who is currently allowed across the border, for what purposes, and with which requirements. Once again, the initial plotline is underlined. National governments are guilty of imposing restrictions on the freedom of movement which causes the policy problem that creates issues in the everyday life of those who is dependent on crossing the border. Furthermore, the authors criticize that they have not been asked for advice regarding the new border restrictions. It is suggested that the national governments do not understand the specific conditions of cross-border regions. Thus, new restrictions result in limitations on essential aspects of people's life. This is further exemplified in the following quote where the Managing Director of Greater Copenhagen explains the concrete consequences of the new border restrictions.

> 'In practical terms, the changes that come into force on Wednesday will mean that Swedes must be tested on Friday to be able to return to work on Monday. They must then test themselves again on Monday, Thursday, and again on Sunday next week to be able to show up on Monday morning. As the commuters are tested in Denmark upon entry, this will mean that they must be tested three times a week and often use their weekend to be able to live up to the requirements. For ordinary people with family life and obligations, it is almost impossible to live up to - not to mention the unpleasantness of having three weekly sticks stuck in your nose'[41]
> (Greater Copenhagen (a), 2021)

Paasi (1998 (b)) and Balibar (2004, pp. 1-2) both argue that the initial meaning of the border is produced by the political and administrative center. Cross-border regions are, however, particularly keen on confirming, renegotiating, and contesting its meaning. The criticism against how the new

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[40] "Problemet er de mange ad hoc løsninger, som vi skal læse om i pressen. Det gør det bestemt ikke nemmere for os at hjælpe de fortvivlede mennesker, som tager turen over Øresund for at udføre deres arbejde, at vi skal læse om nye ændringer i avisen. Det er svært at forstå, hvorfor vi hele tiden skal forholde os til ændrede regler fra begge regeringer uden at blive taget med på råd." (Greater Copenhagen (a), 2021)

[41] "Helt lavpraktisk vil de ændringer, der træder i kraft på onsdag, betyde, at svenskere skal lade sig teste på fredag for at kunne møde på arbejde igen mandag. De skal så teste sig igen mandag, torsdag og igen søndag næste uge for at kunne møde ind mandag morgen. Da pendlerne bliver testet i Danmark ved indrejse, vil det betyde, at de skal testes tre gange om ugen og ofte tage deres weekend i brug for at kunne leve op til kravene. For helt almindelige mennesker med familieliv og forpligtelser, er det nærmest umulige vilkår at leve op til – for ikke at tale om det ubehagelige i at få tre ugentlige pinde stukket i næsen" (Greater Copenhagen (a), 2021)

border restrictions have been implemented can be read as a contestation of how the national governments and authorities have a monopoly on deciding on what the border should enable and what it should limit. Despite that it is communities in the borderlands who end up victims of them. This is where the moral of the narrative is brought into the plot.

The moral of the story involves the creation of a 'task force' to support cooperation and coordination between Denmark and Sweden as well as the identification of common solutions across the border:

> We propose that the Swedish and Danish governments meet with the Nordic Council and Greater Copenhagen and draw up guidelines for new Danish-Swedish cooperation. Its first task may well be to solve the tax problems that Øresund commuters are currently struggling with. Afterward, the members of the forum can also talk about how a new fixed link across the strait can be created, so that Greater Copenhagen can continue to be a driving force for growth and development in the Nordic region.
>
> Our proposal is not only about solving the current crisis, but also about creating a forum for each border area that can handle future crises in the border area concerned. One lesson from the corona pandemic is that closing the border is not a future-proof solution. [42]
> (Haarder & Sonesson, 2021)

The proposed solution to the policy problem strengthens the previously made argument: that the policy problem involves a degree of contestation of national governments' monopoly on deciding what the border should enable and limit. By suggesting a forum meant to handle crises in border areas, where the local and regional level is represented, they are suggesting an adjustment of the national decision-monopoly described by Paasi (1998 (b)) and Balibar (2004, pp. 1-2). The proposed task force would perhaps not result in local and regional actors participating in the original formulation of the meaning of the border. However, it gives them an official space for voicing their views on desired changes. Yet another thing that is suggested in the quote above is guidelines for cooperation, finding a common solution to problems across the border. Essentially it is suggested that a degree of the power and influence, usually associated with national territories, should be specific to the cross-border regions. A limited *territorial strategy* specifically for the Øresund region. The statement above also exemplifies the policy goal: "so that Greater Copenhagen can continue to be a driving force for growth and development in the Nordic region". The *policy goal* is further demonstrated by revisiting the following quote which was analyzed in the previous chapter on policy goals:

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[42] " Vi föreslår att den svenska och danska regeringen träffar Nordiska rådet och Greater Copenhagen och drar upp riktlinjer för ett nytt dansk-svenskt samarbete. Dess första uppgift kan lämpligen vara att lösa de skatteproblem som Öresundspendlarna just nu kämpar med. Därefter kan medlemmarna i forumet också tala om hur en ny fast förbindelse över Öresund kan skapas, så att Greater Copenhagen även i framtiden kan vara en drivkraft för tillväxt och utveckling i Norden. Vårt förslag handlar inte bara om att lösa den nuvarande krisen, utan också om att få till ett forum för varje gränsområde som kan hantera framtida kriser i det berörda gränsområdet. En lärdom från coronapandemin är att stänga gränsen inte är en framtidssäker lösning." (Haarder & Sonesson, 2021)

> There is fierce competition between the metropolitan regions for talent, investments, and companies. But Stockholm and Copenhagen should not compete. Instead, they should support each other and compete with technology cities such as Boston and Singapore.
>
> If we hope to be able to match these cities, we must cooperate much more. A strong Stockholm and a strong Øresund region are each other's prerequisites for business development, growth, and innovation. The rivalry between Denmark and Sweden should stay on the handball field.[43]
>
> (David Bak & Eriksson, 2021)

The Øresund region should be internationally competitive in terms of innovation and economy. The policy problem, limitations to the freedom of movement, and lack of cooperation between Denmark and Sweden are hampering the potential of the cross-border region. However, if the policy problem is solved by following the moral of the narrative and the freedom of movement is restored, then the economic potential can be realized. Anderson and O'Dowd (1999) claim that one of the main rationales for cross-border integration is *regional asymmetries* that motivate people to take the trip across the border. The fact that more Swedes are commuting to Denmark, as was shown in the chapter on the setting, and since the policy goal is to enhance the economic potential in the Øresund region it can be assumed that they are both motivated by regional asymmetries.

Finally, we will scrutinize the *causal mechanism* of the narrative, Jones et al. (2013) define it as the source of the policy problem. As has previously been shown, national decision-makers are perceived as the source of the issue. It is national authorities and governments who decide to impose new border restrictions. There are however several different types of causal mechanisms (Jones, et al., 2013):

1. *Intentional* – an actor is purposefully causing an intended harmful outcome
2. *Mechanical* – an actor is unintentionally causing an intended outcome, harmful or not.
3. *Inadvertent* – an actor is guided by good intention, but the outcome is unintendedly negative.
4. *Accidental* – the outcome is not the product of intended action by any actor.

The causal mechanism in this narrative is defined as *inadvertent*. While the authors of the material, cross-border institutionalized policy actors, are critical of the nationally made decision to impose new border restrictions and the way it is done they are never suggesting that the consequential issues experienced by the victims are an intended outcome (an intentional causal mechanism). The border restrictions were never meant to harm the Øresund region. Rather, the issues experienced by the victims are the unintended consequences of a consciously made decision. As was discussed previously – the heroes even show a level of understanding for the need for border restrictions given the situation, "I acknowledge the need to keep the corona infection and the south African version down. And that restrictions can be necessary." (Greater

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[43] " Det råder hård konkurrens mellan storstadsregionerna om talanger, investeringar och företag. Men Stockholm och Köpenhamn bör inte konkurrera. De bör istället stödja varandra och konkurrera med teknikstäder som Boston och Singapore. Om vi hoppas kunna matcha dessa städer måste vi samarbeta betydligt mer. Ett starkt Stockholm och en stark Öresundsregion är varandras förutsättningar för affärsutveckling, tillväxt och innovation. Rivaliteten mellan Danmark och Sverige borde stanna på handbollsplanen." (David Bak & Eriksson, 2021)

Copenhagen (b), 2021). The unintended consequences of the restrictions are the problem and if the moral of the narrative is followed, they might be mitigated. In *table 6*, an attempt to sum up the plot of the narrative is made before we move on to the conclusions.

Table 6: The plot of the narrative

The national governments (***villains***) are responsible for introducing border restrictions in a way that ends up altering the enabling aspects of the border in unintended ways (***policy problem, causal mechanism***). The alteration of what the border enables results in problems for cross-border commuters, students, entrepreneurs, etc. who have built their everyday life around the previously enabled freedom of movement (***victims***). A task force where national decision-makers can meet with local and regional representatives to increase cooperation, coordinate, and find common solutions is needed to mitigate the negative effects (***policy moral***). Provided that this is done the regional and national economic benefits of an integrated economy (***policy goal***) in the Øresund cross-border region (***setting***) can be reaped. (***Hero = the narrator***)

5   Conclusions

The research aim of the present thesis has been to look closer at the role of local and regional institutionalized policy actors in verifying and/or contesting the relations between (a) national borders – discursively and socio-psychologically imagined as well as physical - and (b) national sentiments. In the literature on borders, a commonly made argument is that national borders function as a prerequisite, and base of common hegemonic national feelings (Anderson & O'Dowd, 1999; Paasi, 1998 (a); Paasi, 1998 (b)). The foundational assumption of this argument is that national cultures, identities, and sentiments exclusively can exist in a bounded space – a national territory. Thus, a degree of *territoriality*, influence, and control, over the bounded space and separating borders are believed to be necessary for the existence of *national sentiments*. In cross-border regions, however, national borders are argued to create *regional asymmetries* that function as an integrating rather than a separating force (Löfgren, 2008; Anderson & O'Dowd, 1999). Thus, cross-border communities may have a different understanding of the connection between national boundaries and national sentiments. The purpose of the thesis, and this chapter, is to answer the research question that was asked in the introduction; *How do regional narratives by institutionalized cross-border actors in the Øresund area challenge national perspectives on the connections between borders and national sentiments?* The result is that the regional Øresund narrative rarely mentions national feelings and therefore, does not link national sentiments and national borders.

This result can be interpreted in two opposite ways. First, the lack of a narratively articulated connection between national borders and national sentiments *may be read as a critique* of this nationally made link. Indeed, the result suggests that the Øresund cross-border narrative prioritizes a different meaning of the border altogether. Following the discussion of the narrative element *policy goal*, the integrating and enabling qualities of the border are emphasized. The *border* is connected to phenomena such as economic development and growth, rather than to national sentiments. Thus, the results of the analysis suggest that in a cross-border context, theories where the national border is connected to regional asymmetries, creating specific cross-border opportunities, are more fitting than theories of territoriality, connecting the border to national hegemonic cultures. This interpretation of the result is further strengthened by the fact that the Danish and Swedish governments are narratively represented as *villains* responsible for the policy problem. To understand this, we must quickly repeat the articulated policy problem: stronger territoriality as the "simple solution" when a crisis strikes, resulting in such control over the national boundaries that cross-border integration is negatively affected. Previously it was stated that the regional Øresund narrative, rarely mentions national sentiments. The exception is the debate article co-written by the managing director of Greater Copenhagen and the director of the Øresund bridge. Here, feelings of national belonging are referred to in the context of borders. In the article, it is argued that the state-level national decision-makers in Denmark and Sweden have a competitive and perhaps even protectionist relationship, based on national perspectives. This comparative

relationship is narratively represented as an obstacle to achieving the *policy goal*: utilization of the specific opportunities originating from the *regional asymmetries* between Denmark and Sweden, to create economic development and international competitiveness in the Øresund region. Instead, there tends to be such *competitive territoriality* between the two countries, that the cross-border mobility and integration, necessary to obtain the policy goal, are hindered. Following this, the theoretical assumptions of Paasi (1998 (b); 1998 (a)) as well as, Anderson and O'Dowd (1999), that borders are the foundation of national sentiments, are narratively contested by local and regional institutionalized actors in the Øresund region. Instead, the competing narrative of local and regional actors portrays borders as an opportunity for regional, as well as national economic growth and development. Thus, in this article, a connection is made between national borders and national sentiments. It is however the exception, not the rule.

The second possible interpretation of the result is that the lack of an articulated link between national borders, and national sentiments *should not be understood as a criticism* of national decision-makers for making such a connection. The fact that the link between national borders and national sentiments is not made does suggest that the Øresund cross-border narrative prioritizes a different meaning of the border. However, it is very much possible for these meanings to co-exist. Indeed, based on previous research, it is even likely that they do co-exist. The research of Anderson and O'Dowd (1999), Andersen and Winkler (2020) as well as the research of Paasi (1998 (a); 1998 (b)), and Paasi and Prokkola (2008) suggest that borders often are given different meanings in different contexts and that these meanings, more often than not, are contradictory. As such, the border can be interpreted as separating, and as the foundation of national sentiments in one context, while in another be interpreted as an integrating force based on particular cross-border opportunities. Following the conclusion of Löfgren's study of cross-border integration in Scandinavia, the interpretation of the result in this particular study is in accordance with Löfgrens conclusions. Löfgren (2008) suggests that Scandinavian cross-border regions are structured around national differences rather than cultural integration. This implies that the maintenance of a sense of exoticness and abroadness is valued in Scandinavian cross-border regions. Thus, the present study concludes that there are signs in the Øresund cross-border narrative, that may be interpreted as a criticism of the connection between national borders and national sentiments. However, the more likely conclusion, is that the meaning given to borders by the Øresund cross-border narrative is *coexisting* with the national state-level discourse.

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Appendix I

Victims		Villians	Hero
Greater Copenhagen: Skab en fælles dansk-svensk Corona task force			
The cross-border commuters	The Swedes	Both governments	Tue David Bak
Those who make the trip across the Øresund strait to work	The commuters		Us/We
The people who are affected by the changes	Danish and Swedish commuters		
The economy in the capital			
Greater Copenhagen: Grænselukning og PCR-test er ikke løsningen			
Swedish cross-border commuters	The work commuters	Danish health authorities	Us
Work commuter in the borderland	The Danish and Swedish economy	The authorities	Greater Copenhagen
Cross-border commuters	The important cooperation across Øresund	They	
Airport (to function as an airport for both Sweden and Denmark)	Danish-Swedish cooperation	The health authorities	
Omstart med bro som aldrig stängs			
The cooperation across Øresund	Businesses	Leaders	We
The Danish-Swedish cooperation	People	Decision-makers	
The development of our capital region (economic)	The valuable cooperation	Stockholm and Copenhagen	
		Denmark and Sweden	
Aktuella frågor: Tillsätt en dansk-svensk task force			
Freedom of movement (leading to	Commuters	The governments	We

development and growth)			
Businesses	Students	Responsible politicians	Greater Copenhagen
Those living in another Nordic country	Entrepreneurs	Crisis	The Nordic Council
Those working in another Nordic country	Those living and working in cross-border regions	Danish and Swedish governments	
Those studying in another Nordic country	The people from Bornholm		
Those investing in another Nordic country	The Nordic passport union		
The common labor market	Citizens who want to divide their lives between two countries		
The Øresund commuters			
Den nya svenska ID-kontrollen kommer att orsaka stor skada			
Travelers	Tourists	The government	Dansk industri
Commuters	Gods transports	The Swedish government	Sydsvenska Handelskamaren
The 18 000 Danes and Swedes working on the other side of the strait	A common and integrated labor market in Greater Copenhagen		Greater Copenhagen
The national economy	The transportation companies		
The Øresund region	The cooperation between Denmark and Sweden		
The labor market in the Øresund region	The freedom of movement over Øresund		
Businesses	Private people		