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Regional Presence in the EU

A Qualitative Study of Regional Offices' Activity in Brussels

Marte Christophersen Haugen

EU3D Report 8 | ARENA Report 8/22

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ISBN 978-82-8362-054-2

ARENA Report Series | ISSN 1504-8152

EU3D Report Series | ISSN 2703-8173

Issued by:

ARENA Centre for European Studies

University of Oslo

P.O. Box 1143 Blindern

0318 Oslo, Norway

www.arena.uio.no

Oslo, October 2022



EU3D is funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under Grant Agreement no. 822419 (2019-2023)



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Preface

The EU has expanded in depth and breadth across a range of member states with greatly different makeups, making the European integration process more differentiated. *EU Differentiation, Dominance and Democracy (EU3D)* is a research project that specifies the conditions under which differentiation is politically acceptable, institutionally sustainable, and democratically legitimate; and singles out those forms of differentiation that engender dominance.

EU3D brings together around 50 researchers in 10 European countries and is coordinated by ARENA Centre for European Studies at the University of Oslo. The project is funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme, Societal Challenges 6: Europe in a changing world – Inclusive, innovative and reflective societies (2019-2023).

The present report is part of EU3D's work on public opinions, debates, and reforms (workpackage four), which contains a subproject on cities and regions. Despite Europe's tremendous diversity at the regional and city level, this subject has received far too little attention in the otherwise burgeoning literature on differentiation. This interesting report addresses that lacuna with focus on how regions are represented in Brussels through regional offices. The report is also illuminating in that it compares and contrasts two very similar states, one of which is an EU member state (Sweden) and the other not (Norway). In addition, the report discusses intra-state similarities and differences in each state. The focus on Northern regions gives the report a bit of an Arctic dimension, as well.

John Erik Fossum

EU3D Scientific Coordinator

Abstract

All Norwegian Counties are represented in Brussels and engaged in different activities in the EU. This report investigates the Norwegian and Swedish regional offices in Brussels based on two overall perspectives on European integration: State-Centric versus Multi-Level Governance. The report asks the question of how membership and remoteness affect how regional offices work and interact at the European level. To answer this, the report analyses the overall theoretical perspectives concerning two factors: Regions from EU member states and non-member states, and regions from the metropolitan area versus regions from the peripheral areas of Sweden and Norway.

Interviews were conducted with relevant stakeholders to provide information about the regional dimension in the EU and the Swedish and Norwegian regional offices' activity at the EU level. I tested the theories through preconceived hypotheses based on the two above-mentioned factors.

The empirical analysis demonstrates that regional advocacy in Brussels varies greatly. The informal route to the EU still gives room for regions to operate autonomously at an EU level despite the states' affiliation forms. Furthermore, the report finds that the EU clearly has a multi-level structure and that the Centre-Periphery dimension is therefore not necessarily relevant for studying regional activity in Brussels.

Acknowledgements

Through studying Comparative Politics at the bachelor's level and an internship in Brussels, I have become very interested in the regional dimension of the EU. I quickly realised that there are many sub-national actors in Brussels, and I became eager to learn more about them. The result is a master's report on the regional dimension in the EU.

I owe several people my gratitude - without them, I would have never been able to create this report. Thanks to all fellow students, and a big thank you to the people in PC room 236 at the Faculty of Social Sciences. A big shoutout to Nimo and Johanne, who found time to read through my report in their busy everyday life.

A special thanks to my two supervisors at ARENA - John Erik Fossum and Resul Umit, and all the inspiring people connected to ARENA. I am thankful for the opportunity to participate in the EU Differentiation, Dominance and Democracy (EU3D) project, coordinated by my supervisor John Erik.

Furthermore, thank you to the eighteen informants who participated in this project, who I could not do this without. I am very grateful for their valuable insights.

Finally, I would also like to thank my family, especially my father, who passed away during the first semester of the master's programme in political science. I wish you could experience me completing this project.

Marte Christophersen Haugen, May 2022

List of Abbreviations

Commission	The European Commission
CoR	Committee of the Regions
Council	The Council of Europe
EEA	European Economic Area
EEC	The European Economic Community (the initial name of the EU)
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
EP/Parliament	The European Parliament
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESA	EFTA Surveillance Authority
EU	The European Union
LI	Liberal Intergovernmentalism
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
MLG	Multi-Level Governance
NNEO	North Norway European Office
NOU	Norwegian Official Report
NSD	Norwegian Centre for Research Data
NSEO	North Sweden European Office
NSPA	Northern Sparsely Populated Areas
ORE	Oslo Region European Office
SOU	Swedish Government Official Report
SRE	Stockholm Region EU Office
TEU	Treaty on European Union

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Some believe that politics is first and foremost when we vote, but politics is when we drink coffee, when we eat red king crab, when we meet and socialise, that is when politics are formulated [...] politics are people who meet and shape the future.

(Erik Bergkvist, the European Parliament)

Chapter 1

Introduction

The development of the European Union (EU) has changed the political landscape in Europe. Furthermore, Europeanisation has affected the internal relations of the European states and the relationship between the regional level and the EU. Nevertheless, discussions linked to the EU often concern the substantial issues and discussions between its member states. The EU is still very much a system of cooperation between states, but regions are given more room for manoeuvre in European politics, leading to regions establishing themselves in Brussels and seeking a form of para-diplomacy towards the EU (Tatham 2007; 2008; 2010; 2018).

Research on European integration has in the field's history been dominated by competing theories seeking to explain the EU's emergence and development. According to scholars, the EU system and European integration are complex and complicated to explain using only one theoretical model or theory. One theoretical perspective might explain a specific process in one policy area or decision-making level. Still, it is not necessarily applicable to describe another section or level of governance (Rosamond 2007, 231-232).

There are several theoretical perspectives, but arguably two perspectives still predominate. First, is Intergovernmentalism which is concerned with the limits to European integration and underlines the role of the state as the leading actor in the relations with the EU. This perspective does not

view subnational actors as distinct units operating in an international arena and furthermore, it is mainly seen as a state-theory which does not provide all that much scope for integration, especially in so-called core state powers (Genschel and Jachtenfuchs 2014, 2-4). Alternatively, neo-functionalism views integration as a dynamic multi-level process, including other elements of cooperation in the integration process. These opposing perspectives are persistently discussed in theorising European integration. For the purposes of this report, the fact that these perspectives have different views on the role of regions is of particular interest.

Regional development is a high priority in the EU, demonstrated through the fact that regional policy constitutes a third of the entire EU budget (EU Commission a, n.d.). People living in regions and local communities are directly affected by EU legislation. They are also the ones tasked with implementing EU policy in most member states. According to the principle of subsidiarity, decisions should be taken as close to the people affected as possible, which encourages regional mobilisation in EU policymaking (Guderjan and Verhelst 2021, 124).

1.1 The Emergence of a ‘Europe of the Regions.’

This report analyses the regional dimension in the EU with specific focus on regional offices. This topic is of interest given that regions have gained a more explicit role in the EU. The term ‘Europe of the Regions’ was introduced in the late 1980s as a reaction to the growing regionalisation processes in Europe and the establishment of the first subnational offices in Brussels, the city of Hamburg, and the German region Saarland. Today more than 300 regions and cities are represented by an office in Brussels (Hooghe and Marks 2001, 86). Jerneck and Gidlund define a regional office as ‘an administrative unit whose main task is to represent regions and municipalities in the EU system, established in European decision-making centres, usually in Brussels’ (2001, 58). These offices function as the regions extended arm towards the EU, and possess various mandates (Tatham and Thau 2014, 256).

Regional offices in Brussels are a special and unique phenomenon, which receives modest attention in the context of European politics. This report will investigate such regional activity, with a theoretically interesting twist – by comparing regional offices from a member state with those of a

non-member state. The offices are the North Norway (NNEO), Oslo Region (ORE), North Sweden (NSEO) and the Stockholm Region (SRE) European offices¹. These cases will be used to shed light on the distinction between EU member – non-member state and central versus remote location within each state.

As a member state, Sweden possesses access to the formal channels to influence the EU. Norway is not an EU member but is still closely affiliated with the EU through the EEA Agreement and numerous other agreements (Fossum 2019 a, 13). The Agreement on the European Economic Area (EEA) is the foundation for the relationship between Norway and the EU. The EEA countries (Norway, Lichtenstein, and Iceland) and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) (the EEA countries and Switzerland) are the EU's closest affiliations. These agreements provide Norway and Norwegian actors with access to a single market with few limitations (agriculture and fisheries) (Fossum, Quesada, and Zgaga 2020). Still, Norwegian actors lack formal access to the EU (NOU 2012:2, 167). Therefore, it is conceivable that Norwegian regions are less active towards the EU. On the other hand, it is intriguing that all Norwegian counties are represented in Brussels². Former research has not compared Norwegian and Swedish regions in this manner. It is thus interesting to examine Norway's unique position and thus how crucial formal membership status is. The next session will account for previous research relevant in this context.

1.2 Previous Research

Throughout this section some former research relevant for this study will be presented, while other findings will be accounted for in the analysis. This part starts off by briefly introduce the two overall theoretical perspectives, then, the section deals with previous studies related to regional mobilisation in Brussels. Furthermore, the few studies focusing on Norwegian regions will be mentioned. The aim is to gain an

¹ In this case the study will emphasise the offices, but these offices are closely linked to the region they represent and work on a mission from their region and members, so the terms 'region' and 'regional office' will be used interchangeably throughout the report.

² Agder County was until June 2021 represented by an office in Brussels. The office was then closed, and the activity is carried out in the region with one representative in Brussels.

understanding of why this is interesting to investigate and what contribution it makes to research.

Among the most well-known intergovernmental scholars are Hoffman, Milward, Putnam, and Moravcsik, who have presented partially different views on this state-dominated approach. Nonetheless, there is a consensus on the distinction between domestic and foreign affairs. The supranational institutions and the national governments possess different concepts of power. National governments can provide political outcomes through supranational institutions and cooperation with other states (Hooghe and Marks 2001, 4-5). The State-Centrist perspective emphasises how subnational governments are firmly established in the domestic context and that domestic governance can be resilient to non-domestic influences (Rosamond 2000, 77-80).

The domestic contexts within different systems of local and regional authorities' work are often overlooked in the literature on sub-national mobilisation in the EU. Former research on sub-national advocacy has focused merely on EU-level channels of influence (Callanan 2011, 402). Norway adds an interesting dimension to the theories since Norwegian regions lack formal entrance to the EU, and therefore, from a State-Centric view, it is reasonable to think that they do not possess any routes to the EU's decision-making.

Neo-functionalism stands in opposition to intergovernmentalism, and Haas is arguably the founder of the neo-functionalism perspective. Hooghe and Marks build on his work and present the MLG perspective as a respond to the State-Centrist view. In their approach (1996), they draw attention to the role sub-national units play in the daily politics of the EU. Thereby their capacity to cross the gates to non-domestic politics without the state's permission. Some of the puzzles in the context of MLG is the non-member states' position and geographical differences.

Former research on regional activity in Brussels has mainly emphasised regions from EU's member states. Tatham presents five common activities regional offices in Brussels perform. The regional offices' activities can be determined by various factors, e.g., financial resources, the offices' size, and longevity in Brussels (Tatham 2017; Tatham 2018; Tatham and Thau 2014). This literature also lacks focus on so-called third countries such as Norway.

Regarding the motives behind activity in Brussels, previous studies claim that there are multiple explanations for why regions set up a Brussels office. Among these motivations, we find funding opportunities, policy influencing, and the expanding EU competencies, which consequently leads to a need to be present (Wår Hanssen 2013 a; Tatham 2017). Marks et al. (1996, 188) finds that regional autonomy and distinctiveness drive regions to Brussels. In addition to resources and the regions' position, the offices' policy areas are often closely linked to the cases on the agenda in the EU. The latter resulting from the agenda in the EU affects the local communities to a large degree (Haugen 2020, 17).

Europeanisation in current literature is commonly referred to as the effect and adaptation caused by EU pressures on domestic policy and governance systems. Few in-depth studies have been conducted regarding Norwegian regions access, both formal but especially the informal routes to influence. The few studies focusing on Norway emphasise how the EU affects Norwegian regions, but the compelling puzzle regarding Norwegian regions' work towards the EU, from a regional perspective, is relatively absent. Wår Hanssen studies how Norwegian subnational actors seek influence on EU policy through transnational networks. She concludes that access is not necessarily synonymous with influence. The Norwegian regions' work towards the EU varies greatly, and the regions use their opportunities differently. Such uneven regional advocacy is engaging since their relationship with the EU is based on the same terms (2013b, 59). Another study of Norwegian regional representation in Brussels, focusing on how the NNEO works differently from the other Norwegian offices, supports Wår Hanssen's finding (Busch Sevaldsen 2015). A White Paper on Norway's relation with the EU also concludes that the offices differ in their work and priorities (NOU 2012: 2, 537).

Furthermore, the topic is essential to highlight due to a low level of knowledge concerning the EU/EEA. Several studies have concluded an extensive democratic deficit due to the knowledge gap regarding how the EU affects the Norwegian people daily (Sverderup, Svendsen, and Weltzien 2019; Aftenposten 2012). The same applies to the Swedish people and their awareness of EU policy (SOU 2016:10, 50-53). The EU seems distant from people, yet it directly affects those living in local communities. On average, Norwegian, and Swedish citizens outside the

EU bureaucratic sphere will have less knowledge about the organisation's internal processes. The knowledge also refers to employees in the business sector, public bodies, and organisations, who may be unaware of the importance of the EU, even though knowledge is improving (SOU 2016:10; NOU 2012:2). Such a knowledge gap is not only a matter of vertical deficiency, but it is also a horizontal deficiency since almost all aspects of society are less aware of what goes on in the EU (Fossum 2019 b, 269).

In short, one can say that these studies are particularly relevant and create a compelling foundation for understanding the phenomenon of regional offices in Brussels. Still, no empirical research has compared Norwegian and Swedish regional offices' work towards the EU. The Centre-Periphery dimension is also rather absent in regional advocacy studies in Brussels. The report will, through its cases, add to the existing research and provide new insight into the field. Accordingly, the transnational dimensions of function, geographical position, and affiliation have received modest attention, which all are relevant for these cases. The next section will present the methods and procedure for this study.

1.3 Method and Procedure

Norway and Sweden are similar countries with relatively similar political systems. Still, there is especially one clear distinction between them: Sweden is an EU member, and Norway is not. Furthermore, NNEO and the NSEO represent relatively peripheral areas in their respective countries. In contrast, ORE and SRE represent the capital regions. The explanatory factors used are thus difference regarding Centre-Periphery and the membership dimension. The theories will be applied to the cases, and the two dimensions will seek to explain variation among the offices.

Furthermore, these two states share similarities concerning demographic challenges, but their regional policies vary considerably (Angell 2019). The Centre-Periphery dimension is not particularly present in theories of European integration and regional advocacy in Brussels; hence this study thus investigates something new and different. Influence is difficult to measure, but these dimensions may provide some information on the regional offices' activities. The research question is thus the following:

How do membership and remoteness affect how regional offices work and interact at the European level?

To answer this question, some underlying issues must be addressed. Membership is, in this case, an important factor to study due to the assumption that the opportunities for the member states and non-member states differ. Membership in the EU provide the member states with access to EU’s decision-making which non-member states lack. Still, closely affiliated non-members have some opportunity space in the EU system. It will thus be interesting to investigate Norway as a case. One of the interesting puzzles is whether regions from non-member states possess opportunities seek influence on the EU through its state, when the state lacks formal access.

The two theoretical perspectives are rarely studied in relation to the regions` geographical positions. Former research has concluded that the regional offices vary in utilising the opportunities which the EU/EEA provides (Busch Sevaldsen 2015; Tatham 2017; Moore 2008). From a geographical point of view and since Europe consists of different regions, one can assume that domestic issues will affect how they work internationally.

Table 1.1 – Model of the explanatory dimensions

		Member	
		Yes	No
Remote	Yes	North Sweden	North Norway
	No	Stockholm	Oslo

Note: Demonstrates the cases with the explanatory dimensions in the study

The study will provide the two perspectives on European integration with an original feature. Rather than only presenting a top-down perspective on how such theories accounts for regions, it also views the phenomenon of regional office from the regional level, to understand these offices room for manoeuvre based on the two dimensions presented in the figure above. These dimensions will be used to explain variation among the cases. The different angles will provide insight into the regions' work at a European arena through their member states. Additionally, directly at the EU level through cross border cooperation.

In this section the procedure and structure of the report have been reviewed. The next section will give a brief review of the various chapters the report consists of.

1.3.1 Structure

The report consists of seven chapters, including the introductory chapter. Chapter two presents the theoretical framework and looks at two opposing ways of viewing the field of European integration: Multi-Level Governance (MLG) versus State-Centrist's theory. Furthermore, this chapter seeks to understand the theory concerning the two dimensions: membership and the Centre-Periphery issue.

In chapter three, the research design and methods are presented. The data is collected through qualitative interviews with relevant stakeholders and the chapter guides the reader through the methods and framework by looking at the procedure for collecting and analysing the data, including the researcher's own experience throughout the data gathering and the advantages and challenges of such research design.

Chapter four deals with background information relevant to understand the regional offices. The chapter include information about the regional offices and their channels of access, both formal and informal. Moreover, some basic information about regional and rural policy in Norway and Sweden. The chapter also account for the most frequent activities for subnational actors in Brussels. These activities are further being used in the analysis to measure the differences between the cases in this analysis.

Chapter five constitutes the first part of the analysis and presents the data based on the theoretical framework. The first analysis chapter deals with

the membership dimension and investigates the theoretical framework concerning differences in the form of affiliation to the EU. Based on the data from the interviews, it analyses the historical context for Norway's close affiliation to the EU and what this affiliation entails. Furthermore, the Swedish affiliation is studied, and thus what membership really means. This first analysis chapter also studies how the regions and regional offices from both Sweden and Norway use their space of opportunities and the tools available for regional mobilisation in Brussels. Such opportunities entail the participation in networks, which is also being analysed.

Chapter six consists of the second part of the analysis and examines the regional domestic cases in Sweden and Norway. This chapter analyses how the different offices work based on their geographical position. The Centre-Periphery relations in these two countries are thus analysed concerning the overall theoretical framework. The Arctic dimension is also given some space in this part of the analysis since it is of great significance for Norway and Sweden's northernmost regions and affects how their offices work. Furthermore, the chapter analyse the Centre-Periphery relations in Norway and Sweden and how these offices and their regions relate to the state level in their work in Brussels.

In the final and concluding chapter, remarks, and findings from this study are presented in addition to ideas for further research. The hypothesis presented throughout the theory chapter is summarised and the main findings are eventually concluded.

As presented, the study seeks to investigate the four regional offices based on the theories of European integration. The next chapter constitutes the theoretical framework and thus function as a foundation for the report. The chapter investigate these two opposing perspectives and its way of explaining the regional dimension in the EU.

Chapter 2

Theoretical framework

The following chapter provides an overview of the theoretical framework, which functions as a starting point for the subsequent analysis. It deals with theories of European integration and the emerging regional dimension in the EU. The theory applied in this context is the Multi-Level Governance approach as opposed to the State-Centric perspective. These two perspectives will be studied considering the difference membership entails and the dividing lines between centre and periphery.

MLG theory has its origins in neo-functionalism and views the EU as a matter of supranationalism, whereas the intergovernmental approach is based on the theory of state-centrism (Rosamond 2000, 131). Both theoretical approaches seek to explain European integration but vary in terms of how they explain the regional dimension in the EU. This chapter will thus begin by presenting these two rival narratives of European integration, including the extent to which they manage to explain variation in terms of the deepening of such integration and among different affiliations to the EU.

2.1 The State-Centric View

This section presents the State-Centric view which has dominated the theoretical explanations for State-theory, considering the establishment of the European Steel and Coal Community in the 1950s (Rosamond 2000, 10-11). Such theory has received significant scholarly support, many of

whom call themselves intergovernmentalists (Hooghe, Marks, and Blank 1996, 343). Intergovernmentalist thinking has contributed to different conceptualisations of State-theory. In this account, intergovernmentalism is characterised by its State-Centric components. However, these two approaches are arguably grounded in different traditions. Upholding a State-Centric view, Intergovernmentalism corresponds with this report regarding its focus on the cases of analysis. Such perspective views the state as unified and the gatekeeper in bargaining with the EU (Rosamond 2000, 138).

Being one of the first leading scholars to present the intergovernmental view, Hoffmann argues that political unification in Western Europe could have been successful. However, the nation-states' different issues (due to internal and external factors) hinder their complete devotion to 'community-building' (1966, 863). Intergovernmentalists view the national governments as the critical actors in regional integration. The establishment of the EU does not weaken the national authorities but instead determines the national states as the ultimate decision-makers in integration (Rosamond 2000, 138).

Such a state-focused model originated from the rise of territorial borders in the sixteenth century. Further, in the nation state's emergence, the state-level gained a prominent role as the dominant form of political, economic, and social organisation in Western Europe (Milward 1992, 3). Accordingly, the model is criticised for its narrow focus since it mainly emphasises the legislative power of the national governments in the EU's decision-making process. The state is viewed as the ultimate decision-maker and delegates limited power to supranational institutions to achieve specific goals. The perspective pays less attention to other elements of the cooperation. Milward goes as far as to claim that European integration and the EU have rescued the nation state from collapse after World War 2 (1992, 44-45). According to this theory, member state executives make joint decisions. However, they are not compelled to accept policies inappropriate since decision-making on crucial issues operates based on unanimity. Hence, it allows states to maintain individual and collective control over outcomes (Hooghe, Marks, and Blank 1996, 343-345).

This perspective views the EU as a system where the states are gatekeepers. This role entails that the member states lead the interstate bargains in the EU. Heads of government, backed by a small group of ministers and advisers, initiate, and negotiate in the Council of Ministers or the European Council. Furthermore, national governments adjust their policies to their collective preferences, making EU politics the continuation of domestic policies (Moravcsik 1991, 25). Accordingly, given that states define the limits of European cooperation and define the role of the different EU institutions, the national authorities retain collective control over EU decision-making (Hooghe and Marks 2001, 17). In other words, the state is seen as the definitive source of power, and such an approach's framing of the phenomenon of European integration has dominated among scholars for decades. Theorists in the field of this perspective study European integration with a top-down approach from the intergovernmental level and view this process as a matter of downward integration decided and controlled by the states. This implies the state's regulation of the integration process and suggests minimal changes in the states' administrative structures, rules, cultures, and collective identities (Trondal and Grindheim 2007, 17).

The intergovernmental approach with its state-dominated focus is persistently discussed among scholars. The previous section discussed the origins of the classical way of viewing the theoretical approach of this perspective; the next section will consider Moravcsik's more liberal approach which seeks to apply such state-theory to the EU and European integration.

2.1.1 Liberal Intergovernmentalism

One different way of studying this approach is the liberal intergovernmentalism (LI) presented by Moravcsik. His approach is a clear attempt to build on the State-Centric perspective and adapt it to a form of integration theory. The LI builds on Putnam's way of theorising European integration as a two-level game. Putnam's model claims that the state acts at both the domestic and the supranational level. According to him, domestic groups put pressure on their national authorities to pursue their interests and achieve specific goals. Politicians seek power through the creation of coalitions among domestic groups. National authorities will again access to the international level and try to maximise their ability to meet domestic pressures and minimise the negative results of foreign developments.

According to LI, national authorities cannot ignore the two levels, particularly in a system such as the EU, when countries cooperate in some fields but remain sovereign. Moravcsik characterises European integration as a process consisting of national preference formation and a strategic intergovernmental bargaining process between member states (1993, 515). When a state chooses to transfer sovereignty, it increases the credibility of its commitments as costs of policy reversal and non-compliance are significantly expanded. Such commitment is also effective to handle domestic opposition (Rosamond 2000, 138-142).

The key actors remain governmental elites and the integration does not lead to a weakening of the state, it rather sees integration as a process which leads to maintaining executive capacity at the state level (Rosamond 2000, 138-142). Member states use the institutions in the EU, primarily the Commission, the EP, and the ECJ for purposes of domestic legitimation and the pursuit of preferences (Moravcsik 1993, 514). Such liberal view leaves little room for sub-national bodies and the interesting puzzle is thus how this perspective explains the emergence of a regional dimension and hence regional offices in Brussels.

2.1.2 The Regional Dimension in the State-Centric View

The State-Centric perspective tends to view the practical cooperation and the incorporation of subnational units into EU decision-making as a lack of firm commitments and tangible results (Guderjan and Verhelst 2021, 5). In line with EU treaties, representatives from national authorities are the sole legally recognised signatories, arguably enhancing their power and opportunities. Regions may be active within the state but are still subject to the national authorities' work towards the EU (Rosamond 2000, 77-80). Intergovernmental relations and how local governments interact with other levels of government are thus path dependent. This evolves according to different historical contexts and is likely to remain embedded in national traditions that pre-date the EU project (Callanan 2011, 399-402).

Accordingly, sub-national groups adopt a State-Centric strategy and apply pressure on their state to seek influence (Hooghe and Marks 2001, 6). The argument is further strengthened given that the EU institutions are governed by and particularly adapted to the states. The EU game is, according to this, played by intergovernmental rules, and the key

institutions are mediated by bargains and compromises among national interests (Rosamond 2000, 151).

The State-Centric view gives brief attention to interest groups' representation at the EU level: 'Even when societal interests are transnational, the principal form of their political expression remains national' (Moravcsik 1991, 25). In the case of regional advocacy and regional offices in Brussels, such theory argues that the state's gatekeeper role prevents regions from being autonomous actors. Regions are subordinate parts of self-directed states and the only way for regions to truly participate in the EU's decision-making system is through their national authorities. In contrast, the theory does not make room for regions operating autonomously on behalf of the state and these regional offices will function merely as a representative office and a source of information. Their low level of power is visible in how they lack veto power on the EU's decision-making. Subnational actors, are according to this view, nested within the state (Hooghe and Marks 2001, 3-4).

Neither traditional intergovernmentalism nor liberal intergovernmentalism emphasises regions as autonomous actors at an EU level. State-centrists would argue that in the specific case of EU's regional policy, national governments remain the critical gatekeepers in the relations between the EU and the regional and local levels. The states enter into agreements and transfer sovereignty to the EU bodies on which they have the last word. The fact that the EU's member states are more important cooperation partners for the Commission underpins such a perspective. Another argument stems from the fact that the member states are the ones who bargain the level of the budget on which the regional policy of the EU is based, which in turn provides the states with the right of disposal in matters concerning regions and regional development (Cole and Pasquier 2012, 162). In sum, one can say that the state remains the most important actor for subnational authorities. The ability of the EU to influence intergovernmental relations is thus limited, and regional advocacy independently from the state is not given room for (Callanan 2011, 402).

2.1.3 State-Centrism about Different Affiliations

According to the State-Centric view, power is concentrated at the state level. The integration is primarily limited to economics, not politics, and

is viewed as a state-led process controlled and dependent on the states (Mann 1993, 130). State-centrism would thus argue that the state functions as the most vital tool at the EU level.

Norway's relation to the EU is regulated by the EEA Agreement and other agreements which provide the nation with equal rights and obligations as member states in most fields. The national authorities mainly control its relationship with the EU, given the absence of Norwegian representation in the EU institutions (Fossum 2019b, 269). Norway's position is not as binding as a full membership, and formally speaking, it may appear that Norway has not relinquished sovereignty to the EU by voting no to membership. Norway's sub-national authorities lack formal opportunities to bargain in EU's decision-making processes. Thus, Norwegian regions are expectedly dependent on national authorities to work towards the EU. Hence, Norway, an affiliated non-member state, arguably stipulates a favourable case in the context of State-Centrism.

Regarding the role of regions within states, the State-Centric view does not make any sharp distinction between member states and non-member states. As a member state, Sweden's relationship with the EU will be governed by the states according to State-Centrism. The decision-making on essential issues in the EU operates based on unanimity. While some national governments cannot integrate as much as they would like to, none is forced into deeper collaboration than they want. The states will thus maintain individual as well as collective control over outcomes (Hooghe, Marks, and Blank 1996, 343-345). The Swedish National government could therefore veto policies that contravene their fundamental national interests. Furthermore, the national governments are allowed to pull out of the EU, which substantiates the states' decisive role (Hooghe and Marks 2001, 5). To investigate the state-centrism concerning the regional offices from Sweden and Norway, the following assumption can be made:

H1: Regions from closely affiliated non-member states and member states are not autonomous actors at the EU level but are dependent on their state when working towards the EU.

This sub-chapter presents the state-focused view which has dominated the theory of European integration for decades. State-centrism emphasises the

state as the leading actor in bargaining with the EU and leave little room for regions as independent actors seeking influence directly at the EU level. The intriguing issue will thus be to investigate whether the Norwegian and Swedish regions fit into this traditional model.

From the 1960s onwards, a new approach to the phenomenon of European integration gained prominence. In line with a widening and deepening of European integration, an increased degree of regionalisation in European countries led to the state-dominated approach gaining competition. The emergence of a neo-functional view in European integration theory grew steadily (Rosamond 2007, 241).

2.2 The Multi-Level Governance Perspective

This section will account for the MLG perspective, contrasting the State-Centric one. The sub-chapter aims to distinguish between the intergovernmentalism view and neo-functionalism, focusing on more MLG structures and the inclusion of other elements into the cooperation. Thus, MLG breaks with the traditional state-dominated theory and view European integration as a process that, to a greater extent, weakens the state and breaks with the traditional form of state sovereignty (Hooghe and Marks 2001, 4). Furthermore, the chapter aims to place Norwegian and Swedish regions in the context of MLG.

Ernst B. Haas can be seen as the pioneer of the field of neo-functionalism. His work *'Beyond the Nation-State'* contributed to a change of focus by emphasising the competition of other actors in the integration process (Rosamond 2000, 55). Theorists further built on the neo-functionalism view, and during the 1970s and 1980s, one could witness an increased focus on regionalisation in the western European states. This emerging regional dimension in the European integration process further challenged the State-Centric perspective, and the idea of an MLG approach gained prominence (Rosamond 2000, 110-111).

One of the purposes of the EU has traditionally been to seek integration through a standard set of EU laws that are binding for the member states. An issue with this legislative harmonisation was that it traditionally ignored the regional and local levels of government. In the wake of the Treaty of Maastricht of 1993 and consequently the introduction of the

principle of subsidiarity, there has been a constitutional trend in many member states to devolve power and create more formal structures for regional governance (Article 5(3) TFEU, 1992). The Lisbon Treaty formally introduced the right to local self-governance (Article 4(2) TEU, 2007). Additionally, the Treaty extended the principle of subsidiarity explicitly to apply to the regional and local levels (Article 5(3) TEU, 2007). These Treaty amendments and the establishment of regional offices from member states and non-member states can be viewed as a clear institutional symbol of the multi-level system in practice (Guderjan and Verhelst 2021, 124-125). In sum, one can argue that these changes helped shape what some will characterise as a European system of MLG. The system has later been manifested in the treaties that recognise that the EU has a distinct regional objective (Cygan 2014, 266).

MLG refers to the 'dispersion of authoritative decision-making across several territorial levels'. Power is, in this case, spread vertically between different levels of government and horizontally across sub-national units and other actors (Hooghe and Marks 2001, 1-2). According to the MLG perspective, national governments are important. Still, one should analyse the independent role of different actors to explain the development of EU policy. Accordingly, the traditional boundary between domestic and foreign policy has been loosened, and the EU can thus be described as a multi-level system (Jerneck and Gidlund 2001, 24). Furthermore, one can say that MLG differs from state-centrism in several manners, among other in its view of sovereignty.

2.2.1 Pooling of Sovereignty

According to the MLG perspective, member states allocate sovereignty to the EU in violation of State-Centric views of the states' uniformity and complete control. Sovereignty in the EU differs from the classical tradition of state sovereignty. The EU's approach is referred to as the *pooling of sovereignty* (Keohane 2002, 748). EU's sovereignty does not provide the external presence and control of the external borders that states hold. The member states are provided with robust responsibility and access to participate in EU's decision-making bodies, with voting rights and co-decision power (Fossum, Quesada, and Zgaga 2020)

Through an MLG approach, European integration is considered a polity-creating process where power and policy-making influence is shared among different authorities (Hooghe and Marks 2001, 2). Regions are an integral part of the European multi-level system according to this view. The MLG perspective opposes the State-Centric view and privileges domestic actors such as civil society, businesses, associations, and regions. One argument for such inclusion stems from the fact that regions and municipalities are directly affected by EU policy and that regions are responsible of the implementation of EU policy in most member states (Bomberg and Peterson 1998; Piattoni 2009; Indseth and Hovik 2008). In other words, citizens affected by EU legislation live in regions, and according to the principle of subsidiarity, decisions should be taken as close to the citizens as possible (Article 5(3) TFEU, 1992). Such factors collectively call for regional engagement in EU policymaking.

2.2.2 Regions in the Multi-Level Governance Perspective

The core of the MLG theory was presented above; this section aims to get a more precise notion of how such a theory makes room for regions. The following sub-chapter discusses how sub-national actors, according to this view, are being incorporated into the EU system to enhance the understanding of the dynamics in the system and what such a regional dimension entail.

EU influences the formal structures of governance, decision-making processes, and the content of policies in its member states and closely affiliated states such as Norway. The degree of change still varies between different countries, levels of government, and policy areas (Trondal and Grindheim 2007, 12). According to the MLG perspective, Europeanisation of the regional level of government illustrates a bottom-up form of Europeanisation where the regional authorities address and meet the European level in terms of participation, influence, representation, and organisation (Trondal and Grindheim 2007, 16-17). The regional level of governance has been specified as a distinct objective in several EU treaties, e.g., the Single European Act, the Maastricht treaty, the Treaty of Amsterdam, and the Treaty of Nice. Thus, this manifestation of the regional dimension can arguably facilitate an MLG system and give room for regions operating at the European level (Torgersen 2007, 29-33).

Another argument is based on the subsidiarity principle, which states that decisions should be made close to citizens. Member states can protest if they believe that a political proposal violates this principle and may thus prevent the EU from legislating on the issue. The principle likewise applies to lower levels of government, i.e., if the state believes that the subnational government should be consulted (Flordal, Hofman, and Lantz 2020).

Moreover, according to the MLG theory, the establishment of institutions such as the EP and the Commission led to the strengthening the supranational level. National governments are still important, but the MLG model states that collective decision-making leads to a loss of control for the states. Subnational actors operate according to this perspective on both the national and supranational levels, where they create interregional networks.

EU's extensive focus on cohesion policy has fostered a deepening of European integration which in turn has opened a new arena for direct dialogue between sub-national, national, and supranational levels of governance. Centralised decision-making within member states is thus being challenged (Hooghe and Marks 2001, 3-4). One can also observe a mutual relationship between local and regional authorities and the EU level, which is visible through the growing impact of EU decision-making at the local level and the influence of EU ideas on sub-national policymaking (Callanan 2011, 401).

Formally speaking, the EU's member states are provided with substantial responsibility and central access to participate in the EU's decision-making bodies, with voting rights and co-decision power (Fossum, Quesada, and Zgaga 2020). The multi-level nature of the EU entails that this responsibility also applies to subnational units. The EU exerts impact on their member states in various ways, including everyday aspects in the local governments, which can be characterised as the core of the EU's multi-level system. The EU impacts both legislative and political, around more than half of the agenda items from the regional councils in their member states (Flordal, Hofman, and Lantz 2020).

Swedish regions, as actors from a member state, possesses two main routes of influence. Either they can pair with the national government when seeking influence on the European decision-making, or they can try

to influence EU policy directly through institutions such as Committee of the Regions (CoR) or through regional networks. The first is by Tatham referred to as co-operative para-diplomacy understood as 'sub-state interest representation in tandem with its member state', while the latter is called *bypassing* which is defined as 'substate interest representation without interaction with its member state'. (2010, 78). Most regions choose to mix methods highlighted as the most decisive (Tatham 2008, 497).

Member states' formal affiliation with the EU is still at the state level, but the informal access channels have gained prominence due to a deepening and widening of European integration. According to the MLG perspective, regions from EU's member states take part in a system of multi-level policymaking. European integration is equally crucial for regions and communities as for national authorities. Another argument stems from the fact that the institutions in the EU have adapted themselves to and included the regional and local levels of governance. One interesting issue is thus whether the regions of EU's member states can override the state. According to an MLG perspective, European networks and associations can enable them to bypass their central government and influence key institutional players (Tatham 2008, 509). To study the MLG perspective, one relevant expectation could be:

H2: Regions from member states are independent actors who possess access to the formal channels and can work directly to influence the policymaking in the EU.

The second hypothesis deals with how membership in the EU entails participation in a system of multi-level decision-making. MLG-theorists would argue that European integration has increased the degree of extra-national channels for subnational political activity. The most prominent sign of this development is seen in the emergence of regional offices in Brussels and the establishment of the CoR in the wake of the Maastricht Treaty, in addition to the formation of a *maze* of formal and informal networks for regional stakeholders (Jerneck and Gidlund 2001, 92-93).

Ultimately, the MLG approach represents a shift of focus from the traditional approach of the nation state as the central actor in the EU. The MLG perspective views regions as independent actors operating internationally. This 'new' way of theorising European integration has gradually emerged consistent with an increased degree of regionalism

and Europeanisation of the administrations of member states. The demand for a presence in Brussels is demonstrated by the establishment of regional offices from member states. The non-member states' establishment of regional offices arguably reinforces the argument that proximity to decision-making is necessary. These subnational actors' work towards the EU varies broadly and is characterised by an uneven level of impact and participation. It is thus interesting to study the distinction between regions from member states and non-member states in their work towards the EU.

2.2.3 Variation in European Integration

The EU system consists of various states and regions. One can thus see the EU as a complex and constantly dynamic project, which in turn gives rise to a variation regarding how EU law is integrated. Europeanisation rarely or never leads to complete harmonisation. European integration would thus not have the exact causes and effects in all countries. Instead, it will be a subject to varying degrees of national adaptation within existing national political systems and traditions (NOU 2012:2, 819). Schimmelfenning underlines how differentiated membership in the EU emerges from a sequence of decisions on the deepening and widening of the EU. '*Deepening* refers to the extension of the EU's policy scope and the centralisation of integrated policies, while *Widening* refers to the territorial extension of the integrated policies to additional states' (2016, 791).

In line with an increased degree of competence and the inclusion of more states, European integration has become less uniform. Some member states have opted out of the agreements, such as the monetary union or the Schengen free-travel area. The EU also excludes new members from immediate participation in these two policy areas. Additionally, some non-member states participate in the EU's internal market; others enter the trade, partnership, or association arrangements (Schimmelfenning 2016, 789). One interesting distinction in this context is how European integration unfolds in Norway as a closely affiliated country. Therefore, Norway's relations with the EU and the EEA/EFTA must be accounted for.

2.2.4 Norway and the EEA/EFTA

Member states and non-member states are distinct regarding the regional offices' formal opportunities. According to a MLG perspective, regions

from a member state will have access to the EU institutions. Thus, a more vital ability to secure local and regional interests and influence EU policy through the multi-level model of the EU. Instead, such formal access is absent for regions from non-member states. Norway is still a closely affiliated partner with one foot inside the multi-level system. Its relationship with the EU secures the safeguarding of Norwegian interests, and the obligations are met in this collaboration characterised by intergovernmentalism and interaction with MLG (NOU: 2012:2, 167-168).

The EEA Agreement provides Norwegian actors with a unique opportunity to participate in the preparatory phase where the decisions are being shaped, with some limitations. Despite its close ties to the EU, Norway has not relinquished sovereignty to the Union. According to MLG, the state does not surrender sovereignty, but rather shares the sovereignty (see page 15) since the power is shared horizontally among different levels of governance and vertically between different actors (Hooghe and Marks 2001, 1-2). Since the MLG perspective does not distinguish between different affiliations, it is presumable to think that Norway's close affiliation provides some access to the EU system besides the more formal entrances. To investigate the MLG perspective concerning Norway, one assumption could be:

H3: Regions from closely affiliated countries possess indirect routes to EU's decision-making through the EEA Agreement and can thus seek influence through channels like networks and associations to gain influence.

Norway's position as closely affiliated to the EU and thus very well affected by EU policy, creates some challenges regarding the opportunities that the offices have in Brussels. A White Paper from the Norwegian government called *Outside and Inside Norway's agreements with the European Union* seeks to address the issue of being caught in the middle and what such involvement really means (NOU 2012:2). The analysis seeks to understand what formal membership involves regarding regional mobilisation in Brussels.

Membership in the union is not the only thing that can explain differences between the regional offices in this case. Since these cases represent different areas of their respective countries, it is interesting to examine what their geographical position means for their work towards the EU.

Thus, when studying regional offices activities in Brussels, the domestic context in a country is of interest, hence the relationship between the centre and periphery.

2.4 Domestic Regional Differences

Rokkan's theory based on the Centre-Periphery dimension is of interest as an explanatory factor for regional activity in Brussels. The following section will examine geographical differences concerning the general theory. Expectedly the geographical position is of interest and will possibly be able to say something about the regional offices' work at the European level.

2.4.1 The Centre-Periphery Concerning State-Centrism

Rokkan's perspective is relevant to understanding post-1945 European integration. He describes the nation-building processes in Europe as a creator of tension between the capital region and its periphery and views such tension as crucial in the formation of the political system (Cited in Flora et al. 1999, 110). The theory of Centre-Periphery is based on the existence of a political centre in a country, which subsequently presupposes a peripheral area. Thus, these relations are interdependent and peripheries' relation with the centres is often characterised by distance, differences, and dependence (Flora et al. 1999, 115).

Centre-Periphery relations can be viewed in the light of a State-Centric perspective since the states are formed through the concentration of power in the centre, where the aim is to ensure control over the periphery (Aarebrot and Evjen 2014, 190). Here, it is considered more effective for regions to mobilise through their national governments. The EU acts as an additional structure of opportunities that only some regions are willing and able to exploit effectively. The regional authorities use their diverse resources differently, especially the social, economic, and cultural ones. Furthermore, they use their various connections to their local communities to carry out para-diplomacy. This is mainly done through, for instance, establishing regional offices in Brussels, opening cultural exchanges, entering cross-border cooperation agreements, and engaging in twinning exercises. (Piattoni 2009, 173). Thus, the perception of the

relationship between centre and periphery can be described as a 'Europe *with the regions*'.

Rokkan remained sceptical regarding European integration's overall significance and prospects, which was particularly evident through his work on the *Impossibility theorem*. According to this theorem, a solid European identity with an institutional political community of trust remains impossible. This is because the integration mechanisms in the individual nation state are so extensive. In addition, European integration is subject to administrative cooperation for economic exchanges (Ferrera 2019, 3-4). Thus, Rokkan's view on European integration is entrenched in a State-Centric approach where the state dominates and remains in control over the dialogue with the EU level. Subsequently, leaving little room for other elements in the cooperation.

Rokkan argues that centres are privileged places and regions from the peripheral areas of a country will thus be strategically disadvantaged in comparison (Flora et al. 1999, 110). These trends will thus also affect state and sub-state interactions at a European level. The line of conflict here applies to both economic and political differences and different grounds to assert themselves in decision-making institutions and building networks and alliances (Jerneck and Gidlund 2001, 168). Seen from a State-Centric perspective one can therefore assume the following:

H4: Regions near the centre will cooperate better with the state, thus possessing more significant influence towards the EU level.

State-centrists claim that national governments possess the opportunity to keep the Centre-Periphery gates. Thus, decide which sub-national formations should be given the right to represent themselves in the EU's political process as carriers of legitimately distinct interests (Piattoni 2009, 166). In this comparative analysis, the dimension may be an essential counter-theory that explains some differences regarding the regional offices' work and interaction at a European level. To get the broader picture, one must thus also account for the Centre-Periphery dimension in the theory of MLG.

2.4.2 The Centre-Periphery Concerning Multi-Level Governance

The MLG perspective emphasises how a unitary state can be forced to devolve powers to regional or local units to acquire federal or confederal configurations (centre versus periphery) (Piattoni 2009, 173). Elaborating on Rokkan's work, Hooghe and Marks highlight how peripheral minorities in party systems will oppose the centralisation of authority in the central state and at the European level (2001, 166-167). Thus, the MLG arguably disregards the domestic cleavage between centre and periphery. From this perspective, subnational actors of various kinds are allocated the power to operate individually. Subsequently, the geographical position is not necessarily significant. Sub-national units can be robust vis-à-vis the state level through formal attributes, e.g., legislative, and fiscal competencies. Yet, through less formal but essential features, e.g., cultural distinctiveness, administrative capacities, and proactive political classes. The theory of a 'Europe of the regions' claims an identified causal relationship between growing Europeanisation and the strengthening of regional identities (Piattoni 2009, 173). To study the MLG perspective with the Centre-Periphery dimension, the following hypothesis is of significant relevance:

H5: The region's geographical position is not the decisive factor for their work towards the EU.

Based on the literature presented in this section, theories of European integration can be studied concerning the dividing lines between centre and periphery. This explanatory factor is particularly compelling given the report's investigation of two peripherals and two metropolitan regions. Peripheral minorities often oppose the centralisation of authority in the state and favour decentralisation and cultural defence (Hooghe and Marks 2001, 166). Contrastingly, The MLG perspective views the regions as independent actors in the EU, and thereby the Centre-Periphery dimension should not be particularly significant.

Chapter 3

Methodology

The starting point of this report is existing research on regionalisation, governance theory, and regional advocacy in the EU. Furthermore, documents and white papers are essential sources, together with empirical data collected from interviews with relevant stakeholders (see Table 3.1). These sources give a solid base to understand the regional offices' work, how these offices interact, what membership entails, and how the geographical position affects their work in Brussels. One of the benefits of using different sources of information is the different perspective one gets access to. If the different sources point in the same direction, the results will also be more credible (Yin 2009, 115).

For this type of research project, a qualitative research design is appropriate since it allows to investigate the regional offices work and their relation to the state into detail. The existing literature and accessible documents provide some information about the formal channels of access, but they are not sufficient to form an in-depth analysis concerning the informal channels of access. New empirical data thus had to be gathered through interviews with relevant stakeholders to analyse the regional offices work.

In this case, the report investigates whether the theoretical framework could be applied to the cases. The theory based on two perspectives on European integration is comprehensive, and to narrow this down, the cases will be investigated through the preconceived hypotheses presented

in the theory chapter. It will be interesting to see if offices from a non-member state follow the same pattern of activities in Brussels and if the Centre-Periphery dimension will affect how regions work at a European level. The motivation behind such focus is that a few qualitative studies have been conducted on the activities of regions from non-member states. The report will thus contribute to the field of research with a new insight which is not present in the literature. Therefore, one can claim that the report is research-wise interesting since it fills a gap, particularly in its focus on affiliated non-members and to its contribution to the Centre-Periphery dimension.

3.1 Qualitative Research Design

As presented, qualitative research design allows delving deeply into the cases. Qualitative methods tend to focus more on developing theories and concepts since such a method does not lend itself to usable results for statistical generalisation (Bullock 2016, 330). In this report, I use a qualitative approach to test some preconceived hypotheses concerning the theories. The study will provide results which may indicate some tendencies useful to say something about how such regional offices operate in Brussels. Still, the result is not necessarily applicable to other cases. The report aims to create new concepts and understandings based on an analysis of what is already known from the theory and by extending the role of membership and geographical position to the context of regional office activities.

Accurate measurement demands understanding the meaning and context of the studied phenomenon (Gallagher 2013, 181). The methodological framework is first and foremost based on data gathered from in-depth interviews with relevant actors. The report uses the general theory as a guideline for the data and aims to go into detail and study how regions work towards the EU through their regional offices. The most appropriate method to apply in this case is thus a qualitative research method, which can offer the report with detailed information of a certain topic and further create analytical descriptions and theoretical generalisations (Grønmo 2016, 144). Such a qualitative research design differs from a quantitative study that seeks a broad overview and explanation. Thus, such analyses

aim to generate rather than generalise as opposed to quantitative analyses (Grønmo 2016, 365).

Such a qualitative approach also made the research design quite flexible and allowed me to simultaneously work with various parts of the research process. I started conducting the interviews while still working on the different chapters. During the data gathering, I thus got the chance to adapt the chapters to the information obtained. One of the benefits of such research designs is their flexibility, making room for manoeuvre since the overall design was adapted as new findings appeared (Thagaard 2018, 27). Furthermore, such research schemes are characterised by proximity and sensitivity to the sources, in this case is due to a close contact between the researcher and informants. One can thus say that this method gives insight and promotes understanding of the complex phenomenon of regional offices. Such in-depth understanding will in turn provide the study with relevant interpretations (Grønmo 2015, 145-146).

3.2 Comparative Case Studies

Comparative analyses are, in most cases, based on a strategic selection of the units and uses often one out of two methods to compare the units: Most Similar or Most Different System Design. This is a qualitative comparative case study based on the first type. It is challenging to find completely similar cases, and this report does not aspire to reach a perfect type. Therefore, the cases of Norway and Sweden carry many similarities and some differences. In this case, the most notable difference is their relation to the EU. Sweden is a member state with all the opportunities and requirements it entails. On the other hand, Norway is not an EU member, but still a closely affiliated country.

The countries had similar governance systems, cultures, and shared history in Union together until the 20th century, to point out some similarities. These standard features make it especially interesting to study these cases in comparison. Furthermore, their common geographical and demographical challenges make the Centre-Periphery dimension particularly relevant. Both the NSEO and NNEO represent peripheral areas in their country which traditionally have been characterised by high opposition against the EU (Stein 2019, 83). These regions share similarities regarding regional challenges as well as

opportunities. Still, Sweden has approximately twice as many citizens as Norway, and their rural and regional policy differs quite much, which again makes room for an interesting comparison. Furthermore, both the ORE and SRE represents the metropolitan area in their respective countries, with the common challenges and opportunities this brings.

For this report, I chose to closely study four offices from two countries rather than examine several different countries or sub-national units. One can thus say that the method has limited the scope of the study and helped sharpen the analysis, which is necessary for such an in-depth study. One can argue that these cases are well suited for such research design, as they share many of the shared structural and geographical features. On the other hand, it is also clear that the cases vary in the abovementioned areas and other independent variables, which will always remain a challenge in comparative analysis. Using two similar states, one can study how these regions work towards the EU. The fascinating topic is the space of opportunities the regions have access to, which they perform, and if there are any limits based on the membership dimension. The role of the Centre-Periphery dimension is also of interest in this context. The theoretical framework will be tested through some preconceived hypotheses, using a comparative case study based on a qualitative approach.

3.3 Written Sources

The source in this report is based on the data gathered from interviews. In addition, accessible literature and documents supplement the interview data in the analysis. Documents in the form of reports, websites, and the statutes of the offices are relevant supplements to the interviews since these sources add a different perspective on the topic. Such documents made available for research yet developed without the researcher can be characterised as *naturally occurring data*. That is because the data is developed for another purpose than used for in the research project. One of the benefits of using such documents and literature in a research project is that these are often reasonable in price and easily accessible. Furthermore, the researcher must pay attention and check the origin of the sources before referring to them. I thus carefully considered the sources' relevance, authenticity, and credibility before using them in this report (Grønmo 2016, 177-178).

To point out some written sources, a White Paper on Norway's relations with the EU and a report from The Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS) has been used frequently. The common denominator for these reports is that they are old (10-16 years), and some of the information is thus discarded and not very relevant for the current situation. Still, they provide a basic understanding of the Norwegian perspective on the EU and European integration regarding the regional dimension. The formal ties between Norway and the EU through the EEA are still the same, but one can argue that European integration has deepened since these reports were published. The need for hands-on information has therefore been necessary.

Other reports and public documents used for the analysis are research reports from SIEPS (Swedish Institute for European Policy Studies) and ARENA (Centre for European Studies). One of the challenges of using documents and reports as sources is that they are not necessarily tailored to the purpose of the report, and one must analyse the context to sort out the relevant parts (Grønmo 2016, 178). Furthermore, the lack of up-to-date documents made it necessary to use interviews as the primary source of information in the analysis.

3.4 Field Work and Interviews

The data in this report is mainly based on data from qualitative interviews. Such interviews are well suited when exploring complex cases. Furthermore, it is a suitable method to understand attitudes, beliefs, opinions, experiences, motives, or feelings. In this case, I seek access to information from the relevant actors and their knowledge and thoughts on the regional dimension in the EU. During the semi-structured interviews, I used a flexible approach with a casual style (Thagaard 2018, 90). I prepared some questions in advance, but the interviews evolved naturally throughout the conversations, making them end in different directions (Bullock 2016, 330). The interviews provided me with hands-on information on how the different regions work with policymaking and influencing at a European level, which is information not otherwise available.

The flexibility of a qualitative study is relevant during the interviews since such a report is dependent on getting in touch with the suitable

informants. The interviewees who contributed to the analysis are relevant stakeholders who could provide the analysis with information that documents, and literature lack. It was essential to secure variation among the informants, so I contacted both representatives from the regional level (the counties), representatives from the offices, representatives from the national level, and the EU level (see Table 3.1 for a complete list of the informants).

The choice of interviews was based on a strategic choice of units since I was dependent on getting suitable informants relevant to this context. Furthermore, I used a so-called snowball sampling for some of the informants since I asked if the informants knew someone I should talk to during the interviews. I thus got some interesting suggestions from their network, which could provide me with relevant information. One must never underestimate the importance of such network-based sampling since I, through my initial informants, got in touch with actors I most likely would not have talked to otherwise (Grønmo 2016, 117). The flexibility of a qualitative study is thus convenient since I got the chance to conduct more interviews along the way throughout the research process. The last interview was conducted only a few weeks before the deadline.

Common to all the informants is their knowledge of the regional dimension in the EU and the regional offices. Furthermore, these informants are also familiar with each other's work. In sum, these informants were significant contributors to answering the research question. It can be challenging to know how many people one should contact and how much information they will provide to you. In total, I conducted fifteen interviews with eighteen informants. Most of the interviewees were carried out one-to-one, but in the interviews with Stockholm Region and the Troms and Finnmark County (department west), the Head of Unit wanted to include one and two co-workers to get a better picture of their work Brussels³. To get a broader picture of the region, I interviewed one more employee from Troms and Finnmark County from their department in the east.

³ See table 3.1 for information on the informants.

Since I conducted fifteen interviews the interview process was quite time-consuming, pervasive, and intensive, but I wanted a representative database for the upcoming analysis. Since the interviews also functioned as the primary source of information in this research project, it was essential to include enough informants. The chance of getting all the necessary information for a sound analysis is thus more significant. One can arguably say that there is a greater chance of achieving reliability and validity in the results (Thagaard 2018, 187-189).

There is always an opportunity to conduct more interviews, and in the case of regional activity in Brussels, there is a wealth of people to talk to. I was simply forced to limit the number of people I contacted, at the same time as I was dependent on the right people wanting to talk to me. If I had more time and resources, I would have included even more informants from the regional office’s members, in addition to a few more informants from the EU institutions. The latter type of informants proved challenging to obtain, but eventually, I got in touch with one representative in the CoR and one member of the European Parliament (MEP). These could offer a broader top-down perspective on the regional dimension in the EU, which is necessary to understand this complex phenomenon from different angles. Below is a table of the informants, including their workplace and job title.

Table 3.1 – Overview of the interviewees

Name	Title	Organisation	Date	Reference
Gørill Elisabeth Brodahl	Head of International Affairs	Viken County	14.02.2022	Informant 1
Erna Ansnes	Head of International office	The City of Oslo	15.02.2022	Informant 2
Christina Larsson	Head of Unit International	Region Stockholm	15.02.2022	Informant 3
Evert Kroes	International strategist	Region Stockholm	15.02.2022	Informant 4

Fredrik Wikström	International strategist and project management	Region Stockholm	15.02.2022	Informant 5
Janus Brandin	Regional Development Director	Region Norrbotten	24.02.2022	Informant 6
Anne Andersson	Managing Director	Stockholm Region EU Office	25.02.2022	Informant 7
Eivind Lorentzen	Former Counsellor for Regional and Local Affairs Now Specialist Director	The Mission of Norway to the EU Department for Research and Innovation, Royal Norwegian Ministry of Trade, Industry and Fisheries	28.02.2022	Informant 8
Gunnar Selvik	Managing Director	Oslo Region European Office	02.03.2022	Informant 9
Bente Knudsen Helland	Head of International Relations	Troms and Finnmark County department West (Troms/Tromsø)	07.03.2022	Informant 10
Marthe Svensson	Special adviser	Troms and Finnmark County department West (Troms/Tromsø)	07.03.2022	Informant 11
Nils Kristian Sørheim Nilsen	Managing Director	North Norway European Office	09.03.2022	Informant 12
Mikael Janson	Managing Director	North Sweden European Office	09.03.2022	Informant 13
Jeanette Lund	Administrator/adviser	Permanent Representation of Sweden to the EU	15.03.2022	Informant 14
Gisle Holdsbø Eriksen	Adviser	Troms and Finnmark County department East (Vadsø)	29.03.2022	Informant 15

Jonny Lundin	Representative	Renew Europe (Centre Party, Sweden), Committee of the Regions, Västernorrland County Council	30.03.2022	Informant 16
Erik Bergkvist	Member of Parliament	Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament. Nordsjö Municipality, Västerbotten Region	11.04.2022	Informant 17
Jan Edøy	Former Counsellor for Regional and Local Affairs Former Managing Director Now Special adviser	The Mission of Norway to the EU Oslo Region European Office Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development	19.04.2022	Informant 18

In terms of representation, half of the informants were Swedish and the other half Norwegian. I believe that I managed to secure a fair degree of variation and thus also a good representation. The interviewees involved the directors of all four offices and one or two members or co-owners in the offices, which represented the different counties/regions. Furthermore, I interviewed one informant from the Swedish state level and two informants from the Norwegian state level. Since Norway is not an EU member, it was relevant to include two representatives from the state level as a replacement for the lack of Norwegian stakeholders in the EU institutions. I was also lucky to eventually get in contact with one representative in the CoR and one in the EP, representing the northern part of Sweden. Ensuring a good representation basis among the informants is essential to achieve the highest possible degree of validity and reliability for the upcoming analysis (Thagaard 2018; Grønmo 2016).

3.5 The Interview Process

There are numerous ethical considerations which must be addressed while conducting interviews. First, the project was reported to the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD), a privacy representative for research institutions. NSD evaluate the project on the current rules for research ethics. The most important ethical consideration was related to the processing of the data (Thagaard 2018, 22). Since this report does not examine particularly personal data, this reporting served as a formality. All the informants accepted that recordings were made during the interviews and that their names could be published.

Prior to the interviews, the informants received an information letter covering information about the project and issues related to how the data was to be stored⁴. The coronavirus made the interview situation more challenging, primarily where the interviews were conducted. The initial plan was to approach the informants themselves, but these plans changed due to restrictions on the requirement to use a home office. Fortunately, the world has become more digital, and it was thus easier to conduct the interviews in alternative ways. This method is less time consuming than approaching people in person. In addition, it is cheaper and more environmentally friendly to conduct the interviews digitally. I also experienced that most informants preferred digital arenas in their busy everyday lives.

However, digital interviews are not entirely without problems and the researcher may face difficulties. In addition to the obvious technical challenges that may arise, it can be challenging to establish a good relationship with the interviewee digitally. The interviews can thus seem slightly mechanical. My experience was overall positive, and the technicalities was not an issue during the interviews. Furthermore, I also felt that the interviewees were eager to talk about their work and at the same time curious to hear about me and my report, which in turn made it easier to establish a friendly tone between us.

⁴ See appendix 10 for the full information letter.

I made the interview guides⁵ in advance for the purpose of having something to relate to during the interviews. The order of the questions was determined by the interaction with the informant along the way (Grønmo 2016, 168). This semi-structured approach involved close contact between the researcher and the interviewees. One of the benefits of this method is that it provided an overview of the topics addressed and gave me flexibility, which is quite advantageous. Such flexibility allowed the informants to bring up new topics during the interview and I got the chance to adjust the questions (Thagaard 2018, 90).

All except one informant did not receive the interview guide in advance, but in the information letter, they were informed about the topics for the interview. The informants were thus allowed to prepare but still not able to construct their answers beforehand, which again can limit the risk of the interviewees becoming preconceived in their answers. As a result, it was easier to capture the initial response, which can create a more truthful picture of the reality. In addition, it gives freedom to manage the interviews as a natural conversation which develops based on the information given during the interviews. This will make it more natural to ask follow-up questions instead of following a list of questions slavishly. The interviews seemed more like a natural conversation, and the atmosphere was more relaxed. It was thus easier to establish trust and confidence with the informants, which is particularly important since the interviews were conducted digitally. One of the informants asked explicitly to receive the questions in advance, I thus facilitated for this to ensure good representation. This was especially considered during the interpretation of the interview and further in the data analysis.

Furthermore, I also made sure to ask the interviewees for informed consent during the interviews to be able to use their full names in the report and when quoting. I thus found it more crucial to send a citation check to those I quoted directly, to avoid misunderstandings. Moreover, it is essential to process the information the interviewees provided correctly and honestly throughout the data collection and analysis (Thagaard 2018, 205).

⁵ See appendix 1-9 for interview guides and above is an overview of the informants.

One special ethical consideration the researcher always should have in mind during interviews is to avoid leading questions. I thus decided to do a pre-test of the interview guide before the interviews. I tested some of the questions on a friend to see how the structure functioned. A pre-test of the interview guide is highlighted as an essential study component based on interviews or surveys (Blair et al. 2014, 36). It was especially important to consider the flow of questions in the guide, the order of the different questions, and the variation among the questions. In addition, one should analyse whether the informants understand and interpret the questions as they are intended (Converse and Presser 1986, 54). Furthermore, the interview guide was officially tested through the first interview with the informant from Viken County. After the first round, it was natural to make some adjustments. This flexibility is a hallmark of such qualitative studies that were very useful during the research process.

The interview guides⁶ were quite similar, but I still made some minor adjustments based on the geographical position and the difference between regions from member states and non-member states. The answers were easier to compare and analyse, as I used similar guides adapted to the interviewees. It was vital for me to obtain some knowledge about the interviewees, their field of work and the institution they represent beforehand to seem interested and make a good impression. This improved the relationship between the different interviewees and me, fostering informative interviews.

Since the sample relevant for the analysis consisted of Norwegian and Swedish informants, the interviews were all conducted in Norwegian. I did not experience challenges related to language difficulties during the interviews. The challenges appeared after conducting the interviews and were linked to the risk of losing nuances in the Swedish information during the transcription period. I thus chose to transcribe the interviews straight after the interviews were conducted to avoid losing information. Further, I translated the information from the interviews into English. Here, the researcher ought to be aware to bring out the correct reproduction of the information throughout analysing the data.

⁶ See appendix 1-9 for the interview guides.

3.6 Analysing the Data

After conducting and transcribing the interviews, the next step was to analyse the data. First, the data seemed large and confusing, which made it look challenging to analyse (Bryman 2016, 570). Qualitative interviews often provide much detailed information, making them a source of in-depth knowledge on a given topic. Much of the information gathered from the interviews was relevant. However, one will often find that such interviews may be redundant as they consist of irrelevant information for the research project. Still, it was essential to include introductory questions to understand the context of regional offices' work in Brussels. By including as many as eighteenth informants, the opportunity to obtain relevant and necessary information increases, thus the study's validity and reliability (Grønmo 2016, 241-242).

The data obtained from all these interviews provided me with relevant information since the informants possessed different perspectives and, thus, diverse information on the same topic. These regions vary greatly, and the interviewees could thus provide me with various knowledge. One of the characteristics of qualitative interviews is that it is dependent on what the informant says and what questions the researcher asks. One can therefore say that such interviews rely on the relationship established between the researcher and the interviewee. The data thus formed a complex basis for understanding the phenomenon. The answers were easy to link and compare since they addressed the same through different angles of incidence. This approach also made it easier to identify comparable features to highlight similarities and differences among the cases (Grønmo 2016, 405). In qualitative studies, reliability refers to the researcher's accounts of their experiences during the fieldwork. Such experiences should be viewed considering how the data develops throughout the research process (Thagaard 2018, 181).

I decided to go into detail to gather all the relevant information for the analysis. I applied a method described by Tjora as 'empirical coding', which means that the coding starts while working with the empirical material (2017, 201). Therefore, some of the work was already done throughout the transcription of the interviews because I was careful to underline the relevant quotation. The data in qualitative studies is usually analysed in parallel with the information gathering. Since the data was

comprehensive, complex, and confusing at first, it was necessary to simplify and summarise the content of the transcribed interviews to make it easier to get an overview of the central and essential tendencies (Grønmo 2016, 265-266). During the interview process, the transcription, and the data analysis, I found interesting empirical-analytical reference points, which according to Tjora, refer to 'statements that suggest relevant analytical or conceptual directions' (2017, 204). The reference points aroused my interest, and I thus chose to highlight these in the transcribed documents carefully. Such highlighting and careful reading of data accelerated the analysis process. Since the interviews varied quite much, I decided to highlight the information based on the dimensions of the study (Bryman 2016, 581).

Regarding ethical considerations, the researcher must be careful when analysing and interpreting such data. It was especially important since the interviews were conducted in Scandinavian and then translated into English after being analysed and interpreted. In such cases, one may risk the researcher's subjectivity challenges. Such a mix of languages also gives rise to minor misunderstandings in the translation that could impact the more subtle points. I thus chose to send a citation check to the informants in the cases where I used their direct citations. I chose not to directly quote in some cases since it was challenging to translate some of the sentences without losing their relevance.

In addition, I transcribed the interviews straight after conducting them, not only for the language's sake. It was crucial to avoid losing some of the meaning or context the interviewees attempted to express. Furthermore, it was very relevant since much of such analysis often depends on the researcher's interpretations throughout the gathering and analysing of the data. I was thus quite careful during the reproduction of the data. By reproducing the data in the most authentic way possible, a higher degree of validity and reliability is possible (Bryman 2016, 384).

Chapter 4

Background

The regional offices in Brussels are a complex and unique phenomenon. To understand how these offices work and their interaction patterns, one must consider some background information. This chapter will account for the EU's Cohesion policy, regional policy in Norway and Sweden, and give a brief presentation of the offices and regional activities carried out by such offices in Brussels. In addition, the last section will present information about the EU institutions relevant for regional advocacy.

4.1 Regional Policy in the EU

The EU was initially established as a project between states to strengthen the economic community and ensure harmonious development by reducing the gap and the backlog for less developed regions. Still, no standard regional policy was established then. However, during the 1970s, the regional policy became an agenda item in the EU with the establishment of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). Together with the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund (established in 1958 and 1992, respectively), this constitutes the three Structural Funds for regional development and makes up about a third of the total EU budget (Jerneck and Gidlund 2001, 32-33).

The establishment of the ERDF can be viewed as the first step towards a more pronounced and precise regional policy in what then was called the European Economic Community (EEC). The idea behind a stronger regional policy was to show clearer solidarity between European regions to create a greater sense of a European Community. In addition, it was an important instrument for promoting economic integration in the EEC (Torgersen 2007, 26). The more extensive focus on regional and rural development in the EU paved the way for the emergence of a regional dimension.

4.2 Regional Structure

The EU is a complex system composed of both federal and unitary states. There are no official 'rules' and standards, which means that there is no convergence in the political role of the different sub-national authorities represented. Furthermore, the regional offices in Brussels vary significantly in terms of funding, organisation, institutionalisation, political autonomy, and the level of political influence they possess (Hooghe and Marks 1996, 73-74).

In the case of regional mobilisation in Brussels, different scholars distinguish between *constitutional* and *administrative* regions (Huysseune and Jans 2008; Marks et al. 2002; Moore 2008). The former type refers to regions with substantial autonomy and delegated legislative powers, most common in federal states, such as the German *Länder* (Huysseune and Jans 2008, 4). More administrative units with relatively weak domestic constitutional status are more frequent in unitary states (Moore 2008, 222). Swedish and Norwegian regions are among the types in the latter category (Huysseune and Jans 2008, 3-4). The regional structure affects how the offices are organised and work. Subnational offices from administrative regions are characterised by diverse types of ownership and often possess a mandate based on different actors such as local government actors, universities, business groups, and private companies. The work and activities of constitutional regions in Brussels are often driven by a forceful political dimension, which is present in the office's strong ties with local or regional politicians back home. These strong ties make it easier to pursue political agendas (Moore 2008, 224-226).

4.2.1 Multi-Level Structure

The EU, in many ways, sets the agenda for Swedish local politics, which in turn has led to the local and regional sectors increasing their influencing activities towards the EU. Even though Sweden is a unitary and centralised state, the principles of self-governance at the local level in Sweden are deeply and constitutionally conditioned. Sweden distinguishes itself from some other countries in the EU because the local and regional authorities hold the right to impose taxation to finance their operations. Subsequently, it provides Swedish regions and municipalities with a higher degree of independence from the state (Flordal, Hofman, and Lantz 2020).

Even though Norway is not an EU member, one can view their administration as a multi-level system within its state. Norway consists of both local and regional levels of governance which are not enshrined in the constitution but defined by other laws and regulations (Government of Norway, n.d.). The regional and local administrative levels is strongly institutionalised, and other sub-national actors possess an essential role in policy development (Valderhaug 2003, 206-207). One can thus place the Norwegian system of governance in an MLG perspective since the power is shared among different levels of authorities and organisations, associations, labour unions, and employer organisations (Stigen, Kolltveit, and Winsvold 2018, 44, 62). In addition, EU policy has a vital role in the administrative levels in Norway visible through how 70 per cent of the EU directives impact Norway's local and regional administrations (Indset and Hovik 2008, 60). Such development has weakened the room for manoeuvre for the national authorities in Norway (Stigen, Kolltveit, and Winsvold 2018, 21).

4.3 Regional and Rural Policy in Norway and Sweden

Norway and Sweden share standard features and differences in their regional policies. Both Norway and Sweden have struggled with relocation from rural areas in line with an increased centralisation in the metropolitan area. Despite this, Sweden has more populous municipalities generally than Norway (Angell 2019).

Sweden and Norway have developed different designs regarding their regional policy. Norway has focused on the northern part to counteract the decline in agriculture, forestry, and fishing and an extensive relocation from Northern Norway to the capital area. Furthermore, their different labour market policy has affected these developments. In Norway, the focus has been to facilitate a dispersed population. The Employer's national insurance contributions are regionally differentiated in Norway to prevent relocation. This has not been the case in Sweden, where an extensive grant system led job seekers to move to the labour market in southern and Central Sweden. An extensive housing construction programme in the metropolitan areas also supported such labour market policy (Forsberg and Berger 2015, 7).

Sweden has furthermore gone through a more comprehensive local government reform, back in the 1970s where they reduced their number of municipalities from around 2000 to 290 (Forsberg and Berger 2015, 8). Norway, on the other hand, has not been through such major reform, but has rather implemented minor reforms. Both Sweden and Norway have the last years been through quite extensive regional reforms which has provided the counties with a clearer role as a community developer with the tasks that such coordinating role entails (Hofstad and Hanssen 2015).

North Norway and North Sweden share a close common history and long traditions of cross-border collaboration. Much of their collaborative opportunities and challenges are linked to their Arctic dimension (Stein 2019, 79-80). The Arctic policy has been an agenda item in the EU for decades. In 1993, the Barents Euro-Arctic Council was founded on a Norwegian initiative, with the five Nordic countries, Russia and the Commission as members and several other NATO members as observers (Bailes and Ólafsson 2017, 46). Much of their work in Brussels is related to their standard Arctic dimension (North Norway European Office a, n.d.; North Sweden European Office b, n.d.).

Their common distinctiveness and challenges have established an interregional network, the Northern Sparsely Populated Areas (NSPA). NSPA aims to create a common platform for regions from the northernmost counties of Sweden, Finland, and Norway. The network works to raise awareness of the issues and challenges these regions face

and to influence the EU policy. Climate changes, the Arctic, access to resources, and the relationship with Russia make this region significant and regional, and sustainable development in these regions is thus critical (OECD a, n.d.).

4.3 Regional Offices from Sweden and Norway

The Stavanger Region European Office was the first Norwegian regional office to establish itself in Brussels in 1993. Between 2001-2005 the other six Norwegian offices followed⁷ (NOU 2012:2, 536-537). The first Swedish regional office to establish in Brussels was the West Sweden Office in 1993 (Roumeliotou 2010). Sweden has eleven regional offices based in Brussels today, and most of them were established when Sweden joined the EU (Sveriges Kommuner och Regioner, n.d.). The office's members, priority areas, and the region they represent are engaging when studying the regional offices' work. The offices mainly work on behalf of its members and/or owners, determining their focus areas (Busch Sevaldsen 2015, 30). Below is a brief description of the offices in this report.

4.3.1 Stockholm Region EU Office

The founding members of the Stockholm Region EU Office (SRE) are the City of Stockholm, Region Stockholm, and Storsthlm (an association that unites the 26 municipalities in Stockholm County). In addition to the co-owners Mälardalsrådet (Council for the Stockholm Mälar Region), Region Gotland, Region Sörmland, Region Uppsala, and Region Västmanland. The office also has close ties with its partner, the University Alliance Stockholm Trio, which includes three universities in the region (Informant 7). Their priorities are research and innovation, digitalisation, energy, climate, and regional policy. The office represents an area of 3,6 million people, which accounts for approximately 36 per cent of the Swedish population (Stockholm Region a, n.d.). SRE has eight employees, including two trainees (Stockholm Region b, n.d.).

⁷ Southern Norway European Office was discontinued in 2021, and their duties were placed under the County council. They still function as a European office with one employee in Brussels.

4.3.2 Oslo Region European Office

The Oslo Region European Office (ORE) is a member-based organisation. Their members are the four counties: the City of Oslo⁸ Innlandet, Viken, Vestfold, and Telemark⁹, 12 municipalities, and Oslo Metropolitan University. Around 2,5 million people inhabit this area, and the office represents approximately half of the Norwegian population. The office focuses on areas related to the green transition (Energy, Climate, Circular Economy, Mobility, and Bioeconomy) and inclusive societies (Health, Culture, Education, Youth, and Social Inclusion) (Oslo Region European Office, n.d.). ORE has six employees in Brussels, including two interns. They usually also have an employee in Oslo, but that position is not currently occupied (Informant 9).

4.3.3 North Sweden European Office

The North Sweden European Office (NSEO) works for the Swedish regions Norrbotten, Västerbotten, Jämtland Härjedalen and Västernorrland. The office is a collaborative project between its regions, the county council of Norrbotten, the municipalities of Norrbotten, the municipalities of Västernorrland, the Businesses and Chamber of commerce in Norrbotten and Västerbotten and Mid Sweden, as well as Luleå Technical University, Umeå University and Mid Sweden University (Informant 13). This is an area that consists of around 900 000 people. The office's main activities are regional policy, transport, innovation, trade, climate, and social policy (North Sweden European Office b, n.d.). NSEO consist of eight employees, including two trainees (North Sweden European Office a, n.d.).

⁸ The City of Oslo is the only municipality in Norway which both function as a municipality and a County with all the functions and tasks such role brings.

⁹ The three counties surrounding Oslo merged to form Viken from January 2020. This is now being reversed, and the three former counties will re-emerge as Akershus, Buskerud and Østfold County. Vestfold and Telemark County was also merged in 2020 and will now be reversed to the original counties. These changes will most likely have no consequences for the membership in the ORE (Informant 9).

4.3.4 North Norway European Office

The North Norway European Office (NNEO) is owned by the Norwegian county municipalities Nordland, Troms, and Finnmark¹⁰. The geographical area houses just below 500 000 people. The office also works on a mission for its partners: Tromsø municipality, Nord University, University of Tromsø, Norges Råfisklag, and Salten Regional council. Their focus areas are regional policy, arctic, research and innovation, transport, climate and environment, fisheries and maritime affairs, trade and industry and consultation responses (North Norway European Office a, n.d.). NNEO has four permanent employees and usually one or two trainees (North Norway European Office b, n.d.).

4.3.5 What are Regional Offices Doing in Brussels?

The offices often vary in terms of activities and level of activities. Tatham presents five types of activities that dominate among regional offices in Brussels. Some offices work with lobbying activities, referred to as 'attempts to influence the EU's decision-making process in one's favour'. Other offices work more with information gathering, focusing on relevant legislation. A third activity is gathering information about financial opportunities to increase the chances of funding. The fourth activity is a more passive one, where the office functions as a liaison between the region and the EU. The fifth activity is networking, which in this case refers to 'building ties with other offices' (2017, 1090).

4.4 Regional Mobilisation and EU's Institutions

Modern democracy emerged within the European nation state, and the EU system itself was built under the original objective of the Union, which was to ensure a set of common law for the member states. The EU institutions are thus also mainly built up under the states and were not initially adapted to other administrative levels. Regionalisation processes, changes in the power structure and interregional cooperation have led to the EU institutions adapting to other levels of governance besides the national

¹⁰ Troms County and Finnmark County were merged from 01.01.2020. This is now decided to be reversed, and the two old counties are re-emerging with its original borders. The separation will not entail any changes for the office, as the County has continued to operate with two departments.

authorities. Furthermore, the EU have gradually included subnational entities in their policymaking (Jerneck and Gidlund 2001, 50-51).

EU's decisions must be supported in the treaties that specify the issues that the member states have agreed should be raised at the EU level. The principles guiding EU relations with the member states also apply to third countries (Fossum, Quesada, and Zgaga 2020). There are two main treaties: The Treaty on the European Union (TEU) and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU). These treaties state how the EU institutions, and the decision-making process should function (Flordal, Hofman, and Lantz 2020). Through these treaties, the EU holds the authority to adopt binding legislation in the form of Regulations and Directives. Regulations enter into force immediately, whilst the Directive states what objectives are to be achieved but leaves it to the member states to decide the details of how the Directive should be implemented. Suppose there is a conflict about how the laws should be interpreted. In that case, the ECJ decides and, in some instances, can invalidate national laws and administrative acts that violate EU provisions (Flordal, Hofman, and Lantz 2020).

4.4.1 Network and Networking Activities in Brussels

Regional advocacy in the EU is mainly reliant on networking activities. The regions lack formal access to the central decision-making institutions in the EU, where the states play the dominant role. Cross border networks are thus regions' way of influencing EU policy in cooperation with other regions and relevant actors. Such networks can arguably be said to emerge based on the characteristics of the EU institutions, which encourage collaborative measures in the pursuit of advocacy and influence (Bomberg and Peterson 1998, 234).

Börzel defines a policy network in the following way:

A set of relatively stable relationships which are of a non-hierarchical and interdependent nature linking a variety of actors, who share common interests with regards to a policy and who exchange resources to pursue these shared interests acknowledging that co-operation is the best way to achieve common goals.

(1997, 1)

In Brussels, a vibrant community of associations and networks is accessible to sub-national actors. One can find an appropriate network for all policy areas and geographical conditions. Such networks are virtual gateways to influence the EU system. The regions become part of something bigger, both geographically and as part of a network that represents a common interest (Wår Hanssen 2013 b). Such networks jointly attempt to influence the EU institutions; below is an account of how receptive these institutions are to regional influence.

4.4.2 The Committee of the Regions

The CoR was established in 1994 in the wake of the Maastricht Treaty. The CoR was established based on the principle of 'voice, but no vote', and the consultative organ, therefore, possesses access to decision-making arenas but lacks formal voting power (Hönnige and Panke 2013, 452). Still, the Council of Ministers, the Commission and the EP are obligated to consult the CoR in regional or local matters (Hooghe and Marks 2001, 81-82).

The CoR has two sources of influence. First, its members function as speakers for regional and local governments implementing European policies. The decision-makers in the system of EU cannot avoid regional concerns in shaping European policies. The other source of influence lies in that some of the CoRs members (Belgian, German, Austrian, and Spanish regions in particular) can pressure their national governments directly through the Council of Ministers or in their respective national arenas (Hooghe and Marks 1996, 75).

According to Hooghe and Marks, the CoR is characterised by a high degree of diversity. This is both in terms of the selection of representatives but also the division between local and regional representation since both regional and local governments are represented in the CoR. To a large degree, the local-regional division can be explained by the difference between federal or regionalised countries and unitary member states (1996, 75-76).

4.4.3 The Council of Ministers

The Council of Ministers is viewed as the most potent EU institution (Hooghe and Marks 1996, 77). Some regional officials take part in negotiations in the Council. Still, regions' relation to this institution is

characterised by a high degree of differentiation, and the strong institutional regions benefit from this. It is also discussed whether the regional officials defend regional interests or simply possess a symbolic role as representatives for their member state (Tatham 2008, 499). Therefore, the Council of Ministers is often characterised as the most complicated access point for subnational actors in the EU (Guderjan and Verhelst 2021, 164).

4.4.4 The European Commission

The Commission is often mentioned as the most prominent institution for a regional lobbyist in Brussels since it possesses formal responsibility for initiating and preparing new legislation. In addition, the Commission possess an essential role in the work with EU's structural funds, which regional offices turn to for information (Jerneck and Gidlund 2001, 111). Furthermore, one of the unique features of the Commission is its 'open door policy'. Such openness has encouraged academics to view their strategy as a process of weakening the states and empowering the regions (Tatham 2008, 502). Lobbyists can approach the Commission through formal channels like contacts and online consultations (Guderjan and Verhelst 2021, 163). According to a Swedish study, the Commission is the most responsive EU institution for Swedish subnational actors (Berg and Lindahl 2007, 18).

4.4.5 The European Parliament

The EP has often been overlooked as a channel for regional influence, but it functions as an effective channel to promote regional interests in the EU. The system of the EP is also characterised by disproportionality because the chance of regional influence is higher when MEPs are elected based on regional constituencies (Tatham 2008, 504). Tatham furthermore concludes that MEPs in the EP hold a great degree of soft power and can provide added value to their regions interests while lobbying towards the Commission or their central executive (2008, 506). Their lack of an embedded political majority also makes them receptive to influence (Gurderjan and Verhelst 2021, 164).

Regional offices in Brussels are a complex phenomenon. They possess no formal power and lack a formal role in the EU. Still, many would claim that they have enhanced their power and found alternative routes to

influence EU policy. The EU system and its institutions have further adapted to the regional mobilisation in Brussels, and the treaties have been adjusted to regions. In this chapter, relevant background knowledge has been accounted for. Such information is highly relevant to understanding the context of the regional offices in Brussels and is a crucial foundation for the upcoming analysis.

Chapter 5

Analysis: Member States versus Non-Member States

The following chapter constitutes the first part of the analysis, presented in sub-chapters according to the overall theoretical framework based on the MLG versus State-Centric view. It analyses the primary data gathered from qualitative interviews and some information from the written documents that can substantiate the interview data regarding the question whether membership matters for how regional offices work and interact. In so doing, this section seeks to explain the theoretical framework based on one of the two explanatory factors: the difference membership plays in this context. Based on the two overall perspectives and the cases in this study, the following hypotheses were made concerning the membership dimension:

H1: Regions from closely affiliated non-member states and member states are not autonomous actors at the EU level but are dependent on their state in the work towards the EU.

H2: Regions from member states are independent actors who possess access to the formal channels and can work directly to influence the policymaking in the EU.

H3: Regions from closely affiliated countries, possess indirect routes to EU's decision-making through the EEA Agreement, and can thus seek influence through channels like networks and associations, to gain influence.

By studying the Swedish and Norwegian relations to the EU, the chapter delves into how the offices work differently, including what access the affiliation provides the offices with and how the offices use its opportunity space. Influence is challenging to measure, but by studying similarities and differences in the regional offices' work towards the EU, one can testify the theory and consider whether membership is crucial for regions in their work towards the EU. The activities of the regional offices must be accounted for concerning the theory to map the differences between them.

As presented in the background chapter, regional offices in Brussels carry out different activities. The State-Centric perspective leaves little room for regions as autonomous actors towards the EU. According to this perspective, the regional offices from Norway and Sweden thus function merely as channels for information. These regional activities involve working with competence enhancement, funding opportunities, and networking. However, this approach does not see such offices as active lobbyists. The MLG perspective, on the other hand, allows for regions to unfold in the EUs multi-level nature, which involves the possibility to work with influencing activities towards the EU.

An interesting twist to these two perspectives, which has not been studied much before is Norway's unique position as a closely affiliated country. Such affiliation may seem more like membership in practice, but in theory, they have not relinquished sovereignty to the EU.

Regarding influencing activities, the MLG theory would assume that the regions can seek influence at two distinct levels: first, at the state level, where regions lobby their domestic national institutions to promote their interests, and second, directly at the European level, where regions seek to represent their EU interests independently from their respective state (Tatham 2010, 78). Norwegian regions are interesting since they cannot effectively go through their state in their work towards the EU. Furthermore, the Norwegian regions lack regional MEPs and representatives from their region in the CoR, which thus, in theory, should make it more complicated to approach the EU level directly. In this context, the aim is to investigate how crucial formal membership in the EU is. Based on the hypothesis, this chapter will study how the four offices work to investigate if they can fit into one of these two models.

5.1 Theories of European Integration: Member States versus Close Affiliated States

Scholars are persistently discussing whether the EU can be said to be a matter of a system where the states are gatekeepers or if the power is shared among different actors. The two next sub-chapters will emphasise the preconceived hypothesis and analyse what formal channels of influence entail, thereby studying the differences in membership.

5.1.1 Norway as a Closely Affiliated Country

Norway lacks formal access to EU's institutions, but have some national experts in different EU bodies, including the Commission (NOU 2012: 2, 829-830). Furthermore, the Norwegian national authorities are given an opportunity for professional input in the preparatory phase when the Commission prepares proposals for legal acts to be incorporated into the EEA Agreement (Norwegian Government 2017). In addition, the Mission of Norway to the EU is centrally located in Brussels, vis-à-vis the Commission, with representatives from almost all the Norwegian ministries (Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, n.d.). Still, these gates are mainly at the state level, which underpins the State-Centric perspective.

In the case of the EU, the distinction between Norway and Sweden has been visible in how they relate to the supranational level. Hence, how their parliaments handle the EU policy issues. The Norwegian Parliament has traditionally handled these issues as foreign policy, which can reinforce the distance between EU's policy and Norwegian policy. Such distinction is more in line with the State-Centric approach which view EU policy more as foreign policy issues. The parliament in Sweden handles EU issues more like their domestic cases, which indicates an MLG system in practice (Claes 2003, 289).

Still, through a deepening and widening European integration in Norway and their close affiliation to the EU, has contributed to a vaguer distinction between foreign and domestic policy. In some cases, such distinction is even erased, visible in how Norwegian counties and municipalities take part in a foreign para-diplomacy through interregional cooperation, networks, and offices in Brussels (NOU 2012:2, 137). Such development

weakens the idea that Norway is best explained using a State-Centric perspective since Norwegian regional actors' can work towards the EU with its own voice.

The growing level of regional mobilisation in Brussels is furthermore challenging the State-Centric view on European integration. In Norway, EU/EEA laws have forced forth significant changes in routines and mindsets in the municipalities and counties administration. In addition, Norwegian regional and local policy is Europeanised to a high degree, which indicates that the EU not only serves as a cooperation partner but functions as a model to follow (NOU 2012:2, 541-544). This is confirmed in the interview with the Former Counsellor for Regional and Local Affairs, referring to the European models the Norwegian counties adapt to through their transnational networks (Informant 8). Jan Edøy, also former Counsellor for Regional and Local Affairs, and former director of the ORE, underlines that the regional administration in the late 1980s and beginning of the 1990s started a massive restructuring process to adapt the administration to EU's regional policy. This restructuring was similar to the processes in Sweden, Finland, and Austria, when they joined the EU in 1995 (Informant 18).

The informant from NNEO builds on such arguments and underlines that Norway to a certain extent takes part in an MLG system. He refers to how Norwegian regions essentially are adapting to the multi-level structure of the EU (Informant 12). Such adaptation was confirmed by Jan Edøy, highlighting how Norwegian regions have become better at participating in different arenas, narrowing their focus, and specialising on a few issues (Informant 18). A White Paper from the Norwegian government on Norway's relation to the EU, argues that the EU creates pressure in the direction of harmonisation for Norwegian subnational actors regardless of their affiliation. Norwegian regions have thus developed in the same direction as European regions (NOU 2012: 2, 541). Such adaptation in different levels can substantiate the MLG perspective. As a closely affiliated country, Norwegian actors participate in this system, strengthening the idea that the MLG perspective does not necessarily distinguish between different forms of affiliation.

For Norwegian interest groups and various non-state actors, European integration and the EEA Agreement have helped establish a new channel

for promoting their interests and policies. Even though Norwegian regional offices work most actively with information gathering, which underpins the State-Centric perspective, some offices also spend more time influencing EU decisions than what is assumed in the literature (Eliassen and Peneva 2011, 5). Instead of just trying to influence national authorities, they are allowed to influence the EU and its member states (NOU 2012:2, 191-192). Such opportunities can be viewed as a sign of the MLG system since the perspective views regions as independent actors. All Norwegian counties are established in Brussels which further substantiate such development.

Furthermore, Norwegian regions and its office hold the opportunity to lobby 'on behalf' of the Norwegian government since they are often active inside parts of the EU, where the Norwegian government lack representation (Eliassen and Peneva 2011, 28). The White Paper on Norway's affiliation to the EU states that the Norwegian government and its ministries participate less in EU policy-making and legislative processes than lower levels of government, including regional offices (NOU 2012: 2, 147). This was confirmed by several informants and is underlined by the common understanding that the people in the local and regional communities are directly influenced by the EU's decision-making (Informants 1, 2, 10, 11, and 15).

Erna Ansnes from the City of Oslo says the following about their work towards the EU institutions:

The EEA Agreement ensures access into many areas. It is clear that not having the direct dialogue is probably more difficult for the national authorities than it is for local authorities like us working administratively. Nothing prevents me from having a dialogue with the Commission.

Regional actors from Norway have opportunities to influence policy and get in contact with people in the EU institutions. Such informal dialogue demonstrates an MLG system in practice. Jan Edøy builds on such opportunities:

[...] what's interesting about the Committee of the Regions, one thing is that we formally lack Norwegian representatives in the Committee

of the Regions. However, Norwegian actors can participate there and talk to their Swedish and Danish colleagues, or others who have ties with Norwegian regions. Thus, what we eventually experienced in the ministry was that Norwegian regional political actors more often were in touch with high-ranking politicians at the European level compared to the ministry itself.

Furthermore, he highlights how many were prepared that Norway would join the EU in the years before the second referendum in 1994. For almost three-quarters of a year, this led to that Norway in a so-called 'interim period' until the referendum was sitting around the negotiating table in the Council, where they lack access today. The regional policy was later excluded from the EEA Agreement, which entered into force in 1994 (Informant 18). Such a historical connection is essential to understanding the close ties between the EU and Norway and why Norway is an interesting case in the theories of European integration. Norway's position in the EU can be characterised as a layer between a member and a non-member state. Since the MLG perspective does not confront the sovereignty of states directly and breaks with the idea that the state is unified, it seems as if this view gives more room for various affiliations (Hooghe and Marks 2001, 27). In sum, the Norwegian regions, to some extent, take part in the system of MLG since Norwegian regions possess an opportunity to contact EU politicians directly and thus also influence relevant EU policy through channels other actors lack. Such regional advocacy is especially prominent in the case of cross-border networks (Wår Hanssen 2013 b, 58).

Norway is by far not a prime example of a non-member state. Through its 'quasi-membership', Norway is formally considered a policy shaper. However, Norwegian actors still lacks formal access to policymaking, and the national authorities are appointed the task of negotiating with the EU (NOU 2012:2, 261). EFTA is highlighted as one of the formal channels where Norwegian actors possess an opportunity to influence EU policy. The Norwegian actors in Brussels are more frequently in contact with the Commission, EP, and the Council than with EFTA and EFTA Surveillance Authority (ESA). This is because the ESA and EFTA only have access to the preparatory decision-shaping process in the EU, not the central decision-making (Eliassen and Peneva 2011, 26-28). Jan Edøy underlines

how ESA does not engage in policymaking but instead works with surveillance. Furthermore, he highlights that ESA is relevant in policy areas potentially in conflict with the EEA Agreement but does not influence EU policy (Informant 18). The only formal channels accessible for Norwegian actors are thus not relevant for regions, strengthening the hypothesis that Norway can be explained through a State-Centric approach, where the state remains the gatekeeper in the EU relation.

Through their close ties with the EU, European integration seem to be extensive in Norway. Furthermore, the EFTA states, notably Norway, have high credibility in the EU system when implementing EU regulations and enforcing competition rules (Eliassen and Sitter 2003, 139). The deepening of European integration in Norway has not nearly diminished over the years and the Norwegian society is essentially adapting to EU's formal structures (Trondal and Grindheim 2007, 12-13). Even though the regional policy is excluded from the EEA Agreement, most of the Norwegian administration is, in one way or another, integrated into the work with EU/EEA matters. The administration is integrated horizontally, across disciplines, and vertically, between the various levels of administration, and this trend is steadily increasing (NOU 2012:2, 137). Such an extensive integration can further challenge the State-Centric view since regions are given more room for manoeuvre. Norway is not formally an EU member state but is still very much affected by EU policy. One can thus argue that Norway fits into the MLG model.

The access Norwegian regional actors possess into the EU's decision-making breaks with the preconceived thought that views non-member states in a State-Centric perspective. Furthermore, it can substantiate the idea that Norwegian regions participate in the MLG system to a certain extent. The national authorities still govern the formal contact between Norway and the EU, but Norwegian regions have challenged the traditional state-dominated systems such as other European regions. Jan Edøy summarises it: '[...] the formal level of contact through the EEA Agreement is national, there is no doubt. But we have tried to build up informal structures [...] we have arenas where people can meet and develop their initiatives.'

5.1.2 Sweden as a Member State

Sweden's relation to the EU entails formal attachment and full inclusion in what many neo-functionalists would characterise as an MLG system. Sweden is also essentially adapting to the EU and has gone through extensive processes after joining the Union. Such commitment is expressed in a Swedish White Paper: 'The European Union is part of Sweden and Sweden is part of the EU' (SOU 2016:10, 31). The EU institutions constitute the supranational level, and below the state level, regional and local levels have a more significant influence on the political process. Such cooperation in a multi-level system occurs vertically and horizontally in Sweden, as in most member states (Berg and Lindahl 2007, 14). The prominence of the EU level in accordance with a strengthening of the local and regional administrative levels, can substantiate the MLG perspective in this case. Sweden has more than 500 Swedish nationals in the EU institutions and the Swedish representatives in the EP are highlighted as a significant access point for Swedish subnational actors (Eliassen and Peneva 2011, 5).

The MLG perspective argues that both the Council of Ministers and the treaties do not give national authorities complete control over the EU's decision-making. The EP has been empowered, and since the Treaty of Maastricht entered into force, national authorities have had to cope with different domestic actors while negotiating treaties. Furthermore, national authorities possess limited control over supranational institutions such as the Commission and the European Court of Justice (ECJ) (Hooghe and Marks 2001, 6-8). The subsidiary principle and the right to local self-governance also support the argument that the EU has extended to the local and regional levels of governance and thus underpins the MLG perspective (Guderjan and Verhelst 2021, 124).

On the other hand, state-centrists would argue that member states retain collective control over EU decision-making through the Council of Ministers and the treaties chiefly based on the states. Intergovernmentalists would argue that EU's institutions can be characterised as State-Centric since the most potent EU institutions are built up under a state-dominated system and fail to include regional authorities into the heavy decision-making. Furthermore, one can argue that the EU treaties strengthen the nation states' power (Hooghe and

Marks 2001, 6-7). The informant from Norrbotten argues that their region is active towards the EU but still underlines that the state is more advantaged in their work in Brussels:

We certainly do not have the same opportunities as the state. The government has the Representation which function as the government extended arm in Brussels. The government has a huge office in Brussels to work towards the Commission and the Parliament. So, they have completely different muscles than what we have.

(Janus Brandin)

The informant from the Swedish Representation, which negotiates in the Council, underlines the Swedish state's strong apparatus in Brussels and points out how regions lack access to these ongoing negotiations and thus need to use its informal channels:

[...] but where regions can influence during the negotiations, is to lobby against their representatives in the Parliament, and against the Commission when they are writing proposals [...] but even the Swedish state influence both the Commission and the Parliament during the negotiations.

(Jeanette Lund)

She further states that regions have a role: '[...] it is clear that the regions play a role, and their voice will be heard before and during the negotiations. Still [...] member states negotiation mandates also depend on how the member states' domestic administration looks like' (Jeanette Lund). Sweden as a centralised state will thus be heard in the EU, but the states have the final word, as the State-Centric perspective would argue is the case.

The CoR is the most important representative body for regions but only possesses an advisory role. As an institution, it has access to decision-making arenas but lacks formal voting power (Hönnige and Panke 2013, 452). In addition, the CoR receives much criticism for being inefficient with an undefined and obscure role (Schönlau 2017, 1167-1168). Regions and regional offices lack a formal role in the EU system, which according to the informant from NSEO reinforces such a vague role: '[...] the EU is

still a collaboration between countries. Regions have no formal status or role, even if we in a way try to create short-cuts to the system by being regions that exist in the EU' (Mikael Janson).

In other words, the CoR is not perceived as a crucial point of contact for Swedish regions (Berg and Lindahl 2007, 60). This is confirmed by several of the informants from the Swedish regional offices and the informant from the Swedish Representation (Informant 7, 13, and 14). The informant from the Swedish Representation puts it this way:

Personally, I mainly see it as a body where the region discusses their role and interests in the EU by biased members. [...] The Committee of Regions can have a say on and debate many topics from the regional perspective, but the CoR do not have much impact on the ongoing negotiations as such. However, the Commission might refer to the opinions of CoR during the negotiations as a leverage for the Commissions position.

(Jeanette Lund)

The representative from the EP underlines the EP and CoR's good relationship and how they are frequently in contact regarding regional issues. He still claims that the CoR can be perceived as very bureaucratic for the regions, which has led to regions joining networks or contacting the EP directly to seek to influence the EU instead (Informant 17).

The representative from Västernorrland in the CoR, on the other hand, argues that the CoR is an essential platform for regions:

Yes, it has an advisory function, but the EU is still obliged to listen to the Committee if the Regions, because it is a legal requirement that the Committee of the Regions will be consulted on local and regional issues. So, it is a formal platform, and it has a greater significance than much of the lobbying organisations.

(Jonny Lundin)

In sum, the CoR is more relevant for the regions which possess representatives from their region. This idea of the CoR is confirmed by Berg and Lindahl (2007, 60), which claim that only such regions will view the CoR as an essential channel for influence. A similar argumentation is forwarded by the Swedish representative in the CoR, who underlines his

close ties with the office through his position on the board of directors of the NSEO. Furthermore, he states that he works on behalf of his region and northern Scandinavia¹¹ from an Arctic perspective (Informant 16). Such a north Scandinavian community gives actors from northern Norway a unique ability and access in the EU system. The informant from NNEO underlines that they have just as much access to politicians in the EU. He further mentions that they are frequently in contact with the MEPs and representatives in the EU institutions, particularly from the northern parts of Sweden and Finland, which, according to the informant, often evolves into friendships (Informant 12).

The EU institutions are firmly adapted to the states, underpinning the State-Centric perspective. Still, the regional actors have found their routes to influence by being present in Brussels which in turn strengthens the MLG perspective on the EU and European integration.

5.2 Europeanisation as a Matter of External Differentiated Integration

The fact that European integration is a matter of a differentiated process can reinforce the argument that the EU system is controlled by and for the states. Schimmelfenning argues that European integration can be viewed as graded membership. Such integration can be seen as a refusal to further integration on the one hand, while other states are refused by the core of the EU (2016, 790).

Norway's relation to the EU through its form of affiliation can, to a certain extent, be described as a matter of graded membership since the EEA Agreement secures Norwegian actors access to parts of the system while still excludes them from others. Such graded membership can be challenging with regards to manoeuvring through the space of opportunity:

¹¹ In this case North Sweden (Norrbotten, Västerbotten, Jämtland Härjedalen and Västernorrland), North Norway (Nordland and Troms and Finnmark counties) and East and North Finland (Lapland, Oulu, Central Ostrobothnia, Kainuu, North Karelia, Etelä-Savo and Pohjois-Savo counties).

[...] I often say that life is lived locally and when you put your focus on local and regional issues, you forget to look up and see what is happening outside your own region or your own country. So many people forget about the EEA affiliation we have, they think of the EU as a market only.

(Nils Kristian Sørheim Nilsen, NNEO)

Difficulties in navigating the various spaces of opportunity also leads to different ways of seizing available opportunities among the states. Arguably, this trend may strengthen the differentiated integration. The Norwegian regions have traditionally been more restrained in their work towards the EU since it has taken some time and resources to find a path and take advantage of their affiliation. According to the director of the NNEO, this is changing:

[...] Norway has good opportunities. It's just that one must take those opportunities. And Norwegian actors have probably been a little more introverted, seen things in retrospect. It seems like there is a change in the way of thinking about it now [...].

(Nils Kristian Sørheim Nilsen)

The knowledge gap is not only an issue among actors and people in Norway (NOU 2012:2, 157, 269). A White Paper from the Swedish government concludes that Swedish stakeholders should also continuously improve the knowledge among the people, regional actors, and other relevant stakeholders (SOU 2016:10, 143-144). This knowledge gap is characterised as 'a self-inflicted democratic deficit' which thus force forth a need to underline how EU is such an essential part of Sweden, and vice versa. The EU's impact on the Swedish local communities must continue to be clearly emphasised to maximise their work towards the EU (SOU 2016:10, 31).

Such lack of knowledge can potentially limit Brussels actors regardless of affiliation. Such limitation can further be avoided by an increased presence in Brussels, which also is highlighted by the Swedish MEP:

I think it is necessary for the regions to be present in Brussels, and I would say that most regions, maybe even all, would gain a lot from strengthening their presence [...] both countries and regions have a

lot to gain from raising their awareness of the EU and strengthening their presence and their networks in Brussels.

(Erik Bergkvist)

5.2.1 Presence in Brussels

In most cases, the subnational authorities must manage and implement the directives and recommendations from the EU (Jeffery 2000, 9). This creates distance between the decision-makers and the executive branch, which leads to challenges regarding communication between the different levels of governance. Such issues have paved the way for a need to be present in Brussels, close to the decision-making. The EU has responded to such a gap by establishing the CoR and introducing the principle of subsidiarity (Jeffery 2000, 2).

The establishment of regional offices from member states and non-member states indicates the regions' more prominent role in the EU, and the MLG approach can thus seem strengthened. Furthermore, according to the informants, Norway's affiliation strengthens the need to be present in Brussels. Such presence provides Norwegian sub-national actors access to information unavailable elsewhere (NOU 2012:2, 540). The informants underline how the EU system is based on informal contacts and networking, and that presence is crucial to avoid a huge information deficit (Informants 11, 12, and 15). One of the Troms and Finnmark County informants underlines the presence in Brussels and says that it is even more crucial for them as a region representing a non-member state (Informant 15). Jan Edøy builds on this argument and states that presence is crucial for Norwegian regions to be aware of the possibilities and to be able to navigate through the space of opportunities they possess in the EU (Informant 18).

Edøy furthermore underlines how the issue with regional activity in Brussels is that it rarely can be measured and that the added value thus can be challenging to see for those not present (Informant 18). According to the White Paper on the Norwegian position as an inside-outside country, the Norwegian European debate appears introverted. The knowledge of the EU/EEA has traditionally been low outside the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but the competence is getting better in line with an

increased degree of Norwegian actors establishing themselves in Brussels (2012:2, 317-318).

5.3 Regional Influence

Regional offices have no official status in the EU and are only one of many channels through which the regions can try to influence EU policy (Bergseth 2007, 66-67). Such a lack of official channels of representation has led to subnational units being forced to go through informal channels, e.g., lobbying (Guderjan and Verhelst 2021, 151). The establishment of transnational networks has thus opened a new arena of access beyond the national. Instead of trying to influence national authorities only, these actors are provided with an opportunity to influence the EU both in accordance with its state (para-diplomacy) or independently without its state (bypassing).

Informal connections are highlighted by the informant from the EP, which claims that the regional actors can act more informal than the national representatives. According to him, policymaking in the EU is first and foremost based on the human encounters:

Some believe that politics is first and foremost when we vote, but politics is when we drink coffee, when we eat red king crab¹², when we meet and socialise, that is when politics are formulated [...] politics are people who meet and shape the future.

(Erik Bergkvist)

Such a perspective substantiates the importance of presence in Brussels. It gives rise to an understanding of the EU as an MLG system, where the power is dispersed horizontally and vertically, and where informal contacts are decisive.

Jan Edøy builds on such informal contacts and underlines that the regional offices in Brussels should be an institution in a continuous process of competence development. It is, according to Edøy, essential to expand and deepen the networks and create stable long-term relations. Such relations can, according to him, lead to significant results: '[...] you are suddenly

¹² The red king crabs refers to an annual event organised by NNEO, where red king crabs from the region is served.

drinking a cup of coffee with someone who is making a huge investment in your region.’ Furthermore, these informal meetings are crucial for issues that may come on the agenda later (Informant 18).

Continuity, specialisation, and long-term thinking are furthermore frequently repeated through documents, and interviews (NOU 2012:2; SOU 2016:10; Informants 1, 13, 15, 16, and 18). Such factors are crucial to achieving success in regional advocacy in Brussels. Furthermore, are these keywords also part of the Commission’s overall strategy on regional development in the EU based on Smart Specialisation¹³ (EU Commission b, n.d.).

The importance of informal contacts is also highlighted by Jerneck and Gidlund, which concludes that it is more successful for subnational actors to exert influence early in the process. Such an approach gives opportunities to shape thinking early and thus shape the policy (2001, 118-120). It furthermore involves more informal contact with the stakeholders responsible for EU’s policymaking. The informant from the Swedish Representation to the EU underlines that nothing prevents regions from contacting representatives in the EP, people in the Commission, or other parts of the EU system directly (Informant 14). Much of the regional influence is achieved through networks with other regional actors, the next section will account for networks and networking activities.

5.3.1 Networks as a Channel for Influence

Interregional networks play a crucial role in promoting specific regional interests when these overlap with the interests of other regions. Constant replacements of the workforce characterise the working life in Brussels since most people working in the EU system are only stationed there on fixed terms. Such dynamics can create challenges in building a good reputation and solid networks. Still, one observes some long and stable interaction patterns among the Swedish and Norwegian actors, such as the NSPA Network. This network has, according to Jan Edøy, become institutionalised. In turn, this led to the regions from the northernmost

¹³ ‘The Smart specialisation’ approach combines industrial, educational and innovation policies to suggest that countries or regions identify and select a limited number of priority areas for knowledge-based investments, focusing on their strengths and comparative advantages’ (OECD b, n.d.).

parts of Norway, Sweden, and Finland automatically being invited to participate in the policymaking linked to the Arctic:

[...] it does not matter where you come from if it makes sense what you have to contribute. So, if you have a well-thought-out strategy and have something you absolutely want to work for, it is entirely possible to be heard in Brussels, both within the Parliament and the CoR, not least in projects.

(Jan Edøy)

The argument of continuity and long-term thinking is underlined by the informants from Troms and Finnmark County. Furthermore, the common understanding that if you stand together, you will have more significant influence. Such an argument is according to the informant, a motivation to use the office actively and participating in the NSPA network (Informants 10 and 11). This network provides the regions in North Norway with unique access to EU policymaking: 'It is a fairly seamless participation from our side, even though we are not an EU member' (Gisle Holdsbø Eriksen, Troms and Finnmark County).

The informant from Viken County underlines that participation in networks is a matter of added value for them and further, that such work is particularly effective if you have active politicians within these networks: 'Then you can get common political proposals that you can take further in the system, in arenas where national authorities lack access. So that's what I call the golden detour to Brussels, through regional organisations' (Gørill Elisabeth Brodahl). The added value is further highlighted by the informant from SRE, which underlines the matchmaking between countries as particularly relevant and describes the network's participation as a process that 'creates rings on the water' and thus often lead to more informal contacts, which gives them access to information, exchange of experiences, and invitations to important events (Informant 7).

In sum, regional stakeholders have some unique routes to influence. Several interviewees underlined that there are entrances to the EU system for regional actors through networks. Such networks are open and accessible, and membership seems less relevant in the context. The former Counsellor for Regional and Local Affairs from the Mission of Norway to

the EU describes this networking process for Norwegian actors the following way: 'There are many contexts you are not invited to, and you have to invite yourself; there are also some contexts you are invited to' (Eivind Lorentzen).

Such distinction between the regional and national levels weakens the perspective that lends itself to a state-dominated EU. Cross-border networks unite regions and actors with similar challenges and give them a stronger voice towards the EU institutions. Participation in networks allows for raising small regions' reputations and makes them seem like serious political actors. The informal entrance is furthermore highlighted as a 'greater together' process. Representatives of more extensive organised interests have a higher chance of being heard than an individual municipality or region (Jerneck and Gidlund 2001, 124-126). The informant from NSEO underlines that they find different allies based on common issues (Informant 13). Furthermore, the form of affiliation is not necessarily relevant in these networks (Wår Hanssen 2013 b, 58).

5.3.2 Voluntarily Exclusion

The Norwegian state has relinquished the most crucial instrument for influencing EU policy by declining membership twice. This refusal has led to Norwegian actors lacking voting and representational rights in EU institutions. According to a White Paper about Norway's relation to the EU, it seems a disadvantage to be an organisation from a non-member state when influencing the EU's decision-making. The Norwegian network inside the EU institutions is more restricted than actors from member states (Eliassen and Peneva 2011, 5).

The voluntary exclusion entails a few disadvantages for Norway's national, regional, and local authorities. The informant from Viken County puts it this way: 'Yes, of course it is a disadvantage be a non-member [...] We implement directives and regulations almost best of all in all of Europe, but we are not sitting around the negotiating table' (Gørill Elisabeth Brodahl). According to a White Paper on Norway's relation to the EU, the Norwegian government's position as an outsider may provide difficulties in achieving their goals and objectives through their networks or the existing framework for the dialogue between Norway and the EU (2012:2, 167-168). Since regions and municipalities are the ones in charge

of implementing the EU policy, this inside-outside issue can seem even more problematic for them. The Norwegian Regions and municipalities are to varying degrees involved in the central government's advocacy work with EU/EEA issues in the early phase. Lack of involvement can lead to local and regional interests not being heard in cases that affect them, and to EU regulations not being formulated in a way that safeguards Norwegian interests as much as possible (Oslo Economics 2021). Furthermore, it can force forth an engagement and desire to try to influence the decisions at the EU level.

The director of the NNEO underlines that the region is taken seriously by different networks and other parts of the EU system. This is expressed through that Norway as a non-member is not even a topic of discussion in Brussels. Norwegian actors are treated similarly as sub-national units from EU member states (Informant 12). According to the White Paper on Norway's position, their affiliation with the EU is relatively unproblematic and requires little attention among actors in Brussels. For the EU, Norway is a 'privileged partner' and the third country most closely affiliated. At the same time, Norway has earned these benefits by fulfilling its obligations effectively and loyalty by contributing to social and economic development in Europe (2012:2, 317). Expectedly, Norway is not fully compatible with other non-member countries. Through its close bond with the EU, Norwegian sub-national actors have found some routes to the EU system. Such inclusion of regional actors from non-member states can indicate that EU is matter of MLG.

The informant from NNEO emphasises how their region has developed close contact with the MEPs representing the northern parts of Sweden due to a shared interest related to regional development in sparsely populated areas (Informant 12). Such open access has forced forth a high engagement at the regional level in northern Norway to give input on relevant EU policies. One of Troms and Finnmark County informants demonstrates this: 'When you see reports adopted in the EP and strategies in the Commission, you can recognise contributions that we have

delivered, or text that Northern Norway¹⁴ has reported' (Marthe Svensson).

The informant from the City of Oslo also underlines how the EU system is open and interested in Oslo's input, even though they are representing a region from a non-member state:

[...] the political leadership has a dialogue with, among others, Frans Timmermans, the vice president of the EU, who is very concerned with how Oslo can contribute. At the administrative level, we have close cooperation with different departments in the Commission [...] we have a direct dialogue with them.

(Erna Ansnes)

Jan Edøy builds on such openness and highlights how Norwegian actors are treated the same way as actors from member states. He says the following about membership: '[...] it means nothing in Brussels. What matters in Brussels is what you say, what you bring to the table, what kind of competence you express, and the meaning you have in these open dialogues' (Jan Edøy). He furthermore underlines that regarding the EU's regulatory development, the case is a little different:

[...] but it is also open; Norwegian regions respond to several consultations that the EU puts out... if you are an alert observer and participant in Brussels, you can have a say on almost anything of policy development. And in a way, Norwegian regions have become much better at this.

(Jan Edøy)

Former Counsellor for Regional and Local Affairs from the Mission of Norway to the EU argues that the EU is quite open to Norwegian actors but that this may require some work:

In some areas, they are very inclusive, in others, not so much. Sometimes you must act, either informally or formally. It depends entirely on the subject area and institution, and to a certain extent, it depends on the administrative unit in charge. If the matter is

¹⁴ Northern Norway in this case refers to the two northernmost counties in Norway and the NNEO office work on behalf of these.

regulatory, a more formal procedure may be required. So yes, inclusive in many contexts, but sometimes challenges occur simply due to our outside/inside status and which you must work around.

(Eivind Lorentzen)

He further underlines that the Norwegian affiliation with the EU is not always common knowledge for people working in the EU and that such knowledge gap can create misunderstandings. In some cases, third countries are excluded. Such exclusion can be related to areas not regulated by the EEA Agreement, but the informant also experienced more technical issues. In several sector areas, 'associated countries' were not mentioned. It was thus crucial to safeguard the EEA Agreement in several cases, both in Norway and in Brussels (Informant 8). The knowledge gap in the region and among the people working in the EU system can thus limit the Norwegian actors. In line with increased knowledge, the regional stakeholders in Norway have become more aware of EU legislation's impact and thus also more familiar with the scope of opportunity that the EEA Agreement gives (NOU 2012:2, 542-543). Based on what the informants say about the presence and the importance of informal contacts, it is clear that being present in Brussels and through participation in networks, the Norwegian actors have contributed to increasing the level of knowledge about the EEA and the opportunities that the agreement offers the stakeholders in Brussels.

Jan Edøy builds on the importance of presence and competence and underlines how regional offices should be an institution in continuous development and seek to increase their competence consistently. This process is described the following way:

So, when you are in Brussels, you function as an ant – you build things, and move things all the time, every day [...] you do things that have consequences for something. Therefore, you must be strategic in what you do.

(Jan Edøy)

It seems as if the EU system is open and inclusive for regional actors from closely affiliated countries. Such an argument weakens the idea that Norway is best explained through the State-Centric model. Still, the general knowledge of the EEA Agreement and Norway's relation to the

EU could be improved, both in Brussels and in the regions, to maximise the work of Norwegian actors in Brussels. The EEA affiliation seems relatively unproblematic for the people and actors aware of Norway's position as a third country. In addition, it seems as if the competence is steadily increasing in line with a dynamic EU. Such development has allowed Norwegian subnational units to expand their networks and participate in informal channels with its Swedish neighbours and actors from other member states. Norwegian and Swedish regions can lobby towards the EU level, which strengthens the MLG perspective.

5.3.3 Bypassing and Para-diplomacy

Networks and associations have steadily become a part of an emerging phenomenon of para-diplomacy, where regions are challenging the monopoly of the state in transnational relations (Tatham 2008, 508). Different organisations and networks are potential contact routes for gaining influence in the EU, particularly relevant for EU member states' stakeholders. Still, Norwegian regions have found access to this informal system.

Regional interests are not necessarily corresponding with the national ones in each country. Still, in this context, it is, according to the informants, not a game characterised by rivalry and a high degree of competition (Informants 12 and 13). The informant from the Permanent Representation of Sweden to the EU highlights that the Swedish state's overall goal in Brussels negotiations is to keep costs down in the first stages of the legislative processes:

In the 'joint company Sweden', it is the Swedish state that is the parent company that is responsible for the negotiations, off course while also considering our other subsidiaries interests in a proportionate manner. We must work together, but if one does have to sacrifice a subsidiary's interest for the interest of the parent company during the negotiations, then we do it

(Jeanette Lund)

The informants from the Stockholm Region point out that the EU office is mainly their entrance to the EU system. Furthermore, it is not always easy to go through their national authorities since much of their work is done

at their level, and they often do not include much of the region's point of view (Informants 3, 4, and 5). This is confirmed in a report from the Swedish government, which underlines that when legislative work is going on at the EU level, the Government Offices allocates limited resources to obtain the viewpoint from the surrounding society. Instead, their focus is on investigating and consulting with the national implementation after the EU act has been adopted (SOU 2016:10, 121-122).

Based on the interviews with the Swedish informants, it seems as if the EU is predominantly open and welcoming to regional actors. The Swedish sub-national actors can directly contact the Commission if it is a particular project they want to carry out or get funding for (Informant 14). The director of the NSEO says the following: 'I always say that the EU Commission is significantly much more accessible compared to the Swedish authorities' (Mikael Janson). The Swedish informant from the CoR substantiates such a view: 'I have often experienced that we have achieved greater consensus and gained a greater understanding at the EU level. And that I have had to fight more for our issues towards national authorities' (Jonny Lundin). The former Counsellor for Regional and Local Affairs from the Mission of Norway substantiates this based on his experience and close contact with Swedish actors in Brussels and underlines how the Swedish regions traditionally have had little contact with their ministries at home (Informant 8).

Furthermore, the MEP builds on this and emphasises how both the Commission and the Parliament traditionally have been very welcoming and inclusive at the regional level. He underlines that earlier; it has been a poorer contact between the national level and the regions:

[...] it is often the case that there is a good dialogue between the EU level and the regional level, but to include the national level in that dialogue could be more challenging, but this is necessary because, in the end, it is the national level whom many times decide in the council [...].

(Erik Bergkvist)

In comparison with the EU countries, the interests of Norwegian regions towards the EU are more frequently represented through the national government (NOU 2012:2, 825). This can largely be explained because

Norwegian regions have previously been slightly backwards and not worked as strategically with EU policy, which, according to the informants, can be linked to challenges associated with finding the room for manoeuvre that the EEA involves (Informant 12 and 18). This view strengthens the State-Centric approach, which emphasises the states as the leading actors in relations between a member state and the EU.

The Norwegian offices and the Counties they represent are steadily increasing their competence which results in a more specified and strategic way of working in the municipalities. Such a development is also in line with the overall objectives of the EU regional policy, focusing on Smart Specialisation and how regions should emphasise their resources and become skilled at what they have the prerequisites to become good at (Informant 18). Such development underpins how Norwegian regions primarily adapt themselves to European regions and the EU's regional policy, which can strengthen the argument that Norwegian regions participate in the MLG system of the EU. According to both theorists and the Norwegian government, the Norwegian regions have obtained an international and European dimension through the EEA Agreement (NOU 2012: 2, 514).

In some areas, the Norwegian non-state actors may possess greater formal access to the decision-making than the Norwegian authorities, while in other areas, it is the other way around (NOU: 2012, 825). It is considered beneficial for the Norwegian state-level that regions operate towards the EU. The regional offices show, externally, that Norway is a complex country with active regions, thereby meeting an expectation for such domestic, regional activity in the EU. At the same time, these offices provide Norwegian actors with relevant information (NOU 2012: 2, 537). The State-Centric perspective is thus weakened since Norwegian regions, to some extent, are in direct contact with the EU, independently of the state.

The former Counsellor for Regional and Local Affairs from the Mission of Norway underlines that the contact between Norwegian national authorities is best described as *different* from the regional levels of contact with the EU, and it is thus 'a matter of different contact and different networks' (Informant 8). The distinction is mainly based on their separate missions in Brussels. While the Norwegian state possesses a more formal

role in the interaction with EU/EEA, a constitutional role based on their national policy, the regional level has a different mandate in Brussels and access to other networks to pursue their regional interests (Informant 8).

Furthermore, the system is open and accessible for sub-national actors from non-member states such as Norway. The director of the NNEO underlines that they are not treated in any other way than their Swedish and Finnish allies. He puts it in the following way:

[...] we get the chance to meet people quite high up in the systems, i.e., the foreign service [...] EU's Arctic Ambassador is an example [...] we're having lunch or a cup of coffee, and we have also been on several trips with him [...] so he has almost become like a friend to us.

(Nils Kristian Sørheim Nilsen)

Several informants underline these trips where NNEO brings MEPs, political advisors, and others working in the EU system on an extensive study trip to Northern Norway. These trips function as a tool in NNEOs work towards the EU and help contribute to increased knowledge of the Arctic. Furthermore, it fosters informal contact between the region and politicians or other people in the EU system (Informants 10, 12, and 15). The director of the NNEO also underlines that the staff working with Arctic policy in the EU receives valuable information from their region (Informant 12). The EU is dependent on the competence of the northern regions in Norway and Sweden, which in turn fostered close contact and a foot inside the system for NNEO and its region. Such informal contact demonstrates the MLG system in practice and suggests that formal membership is not necessarily crucial in the EU system.

In the case of Norway, the regions possess access to the network through participation in different organisations and federations, giving access to parts of the decision-making system closed to the Norwegian national authorities. Regional representations can thus advocate Norwegian interests inside arenas closed to the national representatives (Eliassen and Peneva 2011, 28-29). Such a development demonstrates how Norwegian regions pursue a bypassing of their state. The director of ORE underlines the Norwegian regional actors' relatively seamless contact with the EU institutions:

[...] our members participate in various European regional organisations, and those organisations often communicate directly with the Commission and others. Our members then meet the Commission and others on an equal footing [...] So, what this means is that we may have our own direct voice, which the Norwegian state lack.

(Gunnar Selvik)

In sum, it seems as if the regions in both Norway and Sweden have developed a form of para-diplomacy in line with their state in Brussels. Even though it is not necessarily a matter of rivalry and conflict of interests, both Swedish and Norwegian regions are enabled to bypass their state and mobilise towards the EU. In the case of Sweden, the national authorities are, in some cases, considered less responsive to regions than the EU level. Such developments demand more of the regions and can make it necessary to bypass the state in cases where the regions feel left out. The Norwegian regions are more often represented by their state at the EU level. Still, there is a change in this practice in line with higher competence and increased presence in Brussels. Norwegian regions bypass its government when they operate based on their peculiar regional interests in Brussels. That is because the Norwegian state lacks formal access to the EU's decision-making and Norwegian regions possess access to some formal and informal channels in which the state lacks.

The interests in Brussels are not only varying between the regional level and the state level, but domestic relations will also possibly impact the regional offices' work in Brussels. This chapter has investigated what formal membership entails. In sum, membership involves some advantages through the direct entrance to the formal channels and access to highly relevant information. Still, Norwegian regions have a fair degree of access and opportunities to influence policy, but the regions use their opportunities differently. The next part of the analysis will thus examine the regional dividing lines as an explanatory factor for the regional offices' work and interaction pattern in Brussels and investigate the difference between the cases for the analysis.

Chapter 6

Analysis: Regional Dividing Lines in European Integration

This chapter is the second part of the analysis and is concerned with the domestic context of the two countries being studied. Furthermore, this part accounts for what role geographical position plays in the regional offices' work and their interaction pattern in Brussels. Earlier in the research process, the following preconceived hypotheses were made:

H4: Regions near the centre will cooperate better with the state, thus possessing more significant influence towards the EU level.

H5: The region's geographical position is not the decisive factor for their work towards the EU.

Overall, regional mobilisation in Brussels arguably differs in several manners. One of the most remarkable distinctions is identified in organising and performing activities at the Brussels offices. Their geographical and demographical position largely determines the regions' interests and work areas, likely affecting their way of working towards a European level (Tatham 2017; 2018). The activities of the regional offices concerning the Centre-Periphery dimension are studied to analyse these hypotheses.

Given a State-Centric view, the regions in proximity to the centre would be more strategic advantaged since their interest are more in line with the national authorities. The peripheral regions would thus expectedly have more conflicting interests with their state but still lack the opportunity to operate autonomously towards the EU. On the other hand, the MLG perspective would assume that regions have an extra channel of access to decision-making, regardless of their geographical position. According to such a view, the regions will, in theory, be equal and possess the same opportunities to lobby at the EU level. Accordingly, they will seek influence at the European level in cases where they feel left out by their government (Tatham and Thau 2014, 264).

The regions' natural resources, political mandate, and financial resources are among the factors that tend to affect which activities they prioritise (Tatham 2017, 1089-1090). Tatham finds that Brussel offices with low self-rule often tend not to be interested in policy lobbying. The same counts for small offices with few resources that are 'newly' established in Brussels. Consequently, offices with more extensive staff, financial resources, and established over a more extended period are more interested in influence and legislation activities and significantly less active in funding or networking (2017; 2018). Swedish regions as units from a member state are a part of some of these studies, and one can thus assume that their offices are compatible with some of the tendencies. This chapter will thus investigate if Swedish administrative regions from a centralised state follow this pattern. Furthermore, this section will investigate if the same pattern can explain the Norwegian cases.

The Centre-Periphery dimension is also of interest since it is presumable to think that regions in the peripheral areas are more in conflict with their state. Thus, according to an MLG perspective, they possess the opportunity to bypass their government. Similarly, the regions near the centre will seek cooperation and para-diplomacy since their interests tend to be more like the national interests. The chapter will use former research of regional activity in Brussels and the Centre-Periphery dimension to grasp the domestic and regional differences in Sweden and Norway and study whether such differences affect how these offices work in Brussels.

6.1 EU's Regional Policy

The EU has traditionally been a project by and for its member states. This has been challenged through the extensive focus on regional policy, with various tools aimed at levelling out regional development and thus the dividing lines between centre and periphery in Europe. The EU thus creates a framework to which national and regional policy must adhere, which is strengthening the MLG perspective.

Swedish regions have, through EU membership, access to the EU's Cohesion Policy and structural funds, and has thus developed its policy within this system (Angell 2019). These funds are highlighted by the informants from all Swedish regions and its offices under analysis. The informants from both Region Norrbotten and the NSEO highly emphasise these funds and underline how such contributions are crucial for them as a region on the outskirts of Sweden and the EU, as their geographical position brings several challenges (Informants 6 and 13). Such funds can underpin the importance of the regional dimension in the EU and, in a way, foster a development where regions play a more critical role. Through such participation in the EU's regional policy and the fact that they possess representatives in the CoR and MEPs from its region in the EP, which demonstrated how Sweden remains a subject to the MLG perspective. Still, the Swedish state is in control and allocates the funds, strengthening its role in the EU relations and thus the State-Centric perspective (Informant 14).

In contrast, the EU's Cohesion policy is not a part of the EEA Agreement. Thus, Norwegian regions lack access to these economic and social equalisation funds (NOU 2012:2, 514). Such voluntary exclusion can substantiate that the Norwegian position is best explained by the State-Centric view, where the states remain the gatekeeper in international bargaining. Still, Norwegian actors have found some routes into the regional policy of the EU. The Norwegian state contributes financially to the EU's Interreg programme through an agreement which the EEA does not regulate but independently negotiated with the EU (Informant 18). Through different cross-border projects, Norwegian regions are given room for manoeuvre in the EU's Cohesion policy. Such engagement fosters cooperation and networks for Norwegian regional actors (NOU 2012: 2, 541-542).

Furthermore, Interreg has been highlighted as an area where the EU has contributed to the modernisation of Norwegian regional policy regarding new ways of working and cooperating, building partnerships, and long-term thinking. In addition, Interreg has strengthened the Norwegian counties' role as an international actor (NOU 2012:2, 535-540). Several informants put forward Interreg as a vital source of information and an excellent way to find cooperation partners across borders (Informants 1, 10, 11, 13, and 15). Norway's foot inside the system is beneficial in this context. Since European integration can be characterised as a process of differentiation, one can claim that Norwegian regions, to a greater extent, take part in the MLG system in the EU compared to other non-members. As a third country, Norway can seek influence without membership through close ties with other regions and actors from the EU states (Schimmelfennig, Leuffen, and Rittberger 2015, 774-776).

The informant from the Permanent Representation of Sweden to the EU underlines how the EU's regional policy is characterised as a redistribution system which aims to lift the less developed regions through Smart Specialisation Strategies. Her work with the regional policy on behalf of the Swedish government is, mainly, a mission to keep the costs down. Furthermore, in the case of regional policy in Sweden, long-term investments contribute to the EU's overall objectives of a digital and green transition that is on the agenda. On behalf of the regional level in Sweden, more concrete, her work towards the EU Council is to lobby to retain the unique benefits and exceptions for Sweden's sparsely populated areas (particularly North Sweden). The overall objective is to cut costs, and where a specific regional interest will cost more money, the informant underlines: '[...] As blunt as it may seem, reducing the size of the EU budget are our overriding goal. Ultimately, in the overarching negotiations on the multiannual financial framework this goal for Sweden prevails' (Jeanette Lund).

According to State-Centrists, the states possess the power in the negotiations with the EU through representation in the Council of Europe such as in the Swedish case. The informant further underlines that in some federal states such as Belgium and Germany, it is the autonomous regions who negotiate. This underpins the region as autonomous actors, such as in a MLG perspective. Still, it demonstrates how regional mobilisation in

the EU vary (Informant 14). The following section will study the Centre-Periphery dimension concerning regional activity in Brussels.

6.2 The Centre-Periphery Dimension

The northernmost regions in Sweden and Norway represent peripheral areas of both their elongated countries and are also located at the very edge of the continent of Europe. Both regions can thus be viewed in Rokkan's description of a centre-peripheral relationship since they are geographically distant from the political centre in their state and the EU. In addition, the opposition against membership during the EU referendums was notably high in the northern areas in both states (Stein 2019, 83). Several of the informants highlighted their position and distance from the rest of Europe. The Swedish representative in the CoR says the following about their position:

[...] When I started here, our regions were not on the official maps of the EU system, but on the Swedish side, they stretched to the capital area, Stockholm, and Uppsala [...] now we are part of that picture in a very different way, and the maps have 'moved', so the perspective includes the whole of Europe.

(Jonny Lundin)

Being located on the outskirts of Europe involve some challenges. In the case of North Norway and North Sweden, there are several obstacles linked to long distances, challenging climate, and rough weather, but also an issue with the high degree of relocation to the more central areas in their countries (Informant 6, 10, 11, 12, and 13). Such challenges create a different starting point for regional development and foster a deficit that demands more resources, as stated by several informants. The director of the NNEO demonstrates the challenges clearly: 'It costs more to produce, and it costs more to ship into the markets. There are also greater challenges in obtaining a competent workforce [...]' (Nils Kristian Sørheim Nilsen). Such an argument is often used to protect the employer's National Insurance contributions, which are regionally differentiated in Norway. This tax is highlighted as a core issue for the regions in northern Norway in terms of regional development. Furthermore, it constitutes a high motivation for their work in Brussels:

[...] it is important that it constantly continues to be approved in the EU system and that it is not classified as illegal state aid [...] it is probably the most important financial instrument we have here in the sparsely populated areas in the north.

(Gisle Holdsbø Eriksen, Troms and Finnmark County)

The informant from Norrbotten County builds on these regional challenges and underlines how the Structural funds are crucial for the regions in northern Sweden to make them as competitive as other European regions in the EU's internal market. Based on his impression, the Norwegian lagging regions receive more financial support from the national authorities. In addition, the Norwegian state creates intensives and support schemes which make it more desirable to live in these sparsely populated areas (Informant 6). Such division based on regional policy in Norway and Sweden is confirmed by Stein, who underlines how several scholars claim that such differences in regional policy have led to Norway keeping a more dispersed population structure (2019, 80). The informant argues that the Swedish sparsely populated regions are more dependent on EU funding since the Swedish state does not create as many incentives for the development in the North (Informant 6). The regions from the northern areas of Norway and Sweden have different challenges, affecting their motivation and work in Brussels.

Clearly, their position on the outskirts of Norway and Sweden and their distance from the European decision-makers creates challenges, such as the Centre-Periphery theory would assume. Still, these factors instead call for increased presence and activity in Brussels since such work seems to demand more from the peripheral regions.

6.2.1 Presence Concerning the Regions' Geographical Position

Even though most informants pointed out that presence is decisive to be heard and gain influence in the EU, this is underlined more heavily by the informants from the peripheral regions. Arguably, since these regions are more geographically distant from their national governments and the political centre of Europe, presence and representation seem more important (Informants 10, 11, 12, and 13). The informant from Troms and Finnmark County department east substantiates this by saying that a consequence of distancing themselves from the rest of Europe will lead to

the region losing track of what is happening in the EU. He furthermore underlines how counties in southern Norway are more advantaged since they are physically closer to continental Europe and thus possess more natural points of contact (Informant 15). This perspective strengthens the interpretation of such regional engagement as a matter of issues linked to the Centre-Periphery.

Presence is critical and essential to get contacts not accessible elsewhere. For North Norway, such information deficit is based on their status as a region from a non-member state in addition to their geographical position in the outskirts of Europe and Norway. Presence in Brussels is thus crucial for them in terms of receiving information: '[...] we have the opportunity to receive information that may not have been given to the Norwegian Mission to the EU, but to the EU office since they are closely linked to other actors in Brussels' (Marthe Svensson, Troms and Finnmark County).

The motivation behind NNEO and NSEOs regional advocacy in Brussels is based on much of their challenges as regions from the far north. The informant from the Permanent Representation of Sweden to the EU underlines how she is much in contact with the northernmost regions in Sweden in her work towards the EU. These regions are highlighted as the most active Swedish regions at the European level, motivated by an aim to keep the exceptional benefits to create a smoother development with less inequality (Informant 14). Such motivation for the regional work towards the EU is also present in Norway, where former studies suggest that the NNEO is more active with lobbying at the EU level due to a strong political will, high expertise on the regional issues, and distance to Central Europe (Busch Sevaldsen 2015; Wår Hanssen 2013 a). Because presence is significant for regions on the outskirts of Europe, their positioning and distance to the political centre can explain some of the motivation behind their unique and proactive character in Brussels.

In contrast, the ORE and SRE represent the metropolitan area in their countries with such geographical conditions. The informant from the City of Oslo points out that size and geographical position matter regarding regional mobilisation in Brussels: 'Oslo has an advantage because we are much bigger than the others, which means that we are more interesting to some of the networks' (Erna Ansnes). The director of the ORE

independently confirmed this: 'What is special about the Oslo region is that it is the capital region, and then we can access similar capital networks in Brussels [...] so it makes us a little different from the other regional offices' (Gunnar Selvik). The informant further builds up under the capital characteristics and emphasises that the capital region, especially in the Nordic area, are some of their most crucial cooperation partners (Informant 9). This was confirmed by the informant from SRE which also highlights the Nordic network between the capital regions (Informant 7). Their position as capital regions thus provides them with some unique opportunity which arguably is particularly beneficial for Oslo which represents a capital from a non-member state.

The informant from the City of Oslo builds on such Scandinavian community underlining how Stockholm and Copenhagen are some of their most essential cooperation partners as well as their main competitors in the case of tourism and business establishment:

The fact that we are geographically far north is of course a disadvantage in some situations. The fact that we are not an EU member is sometimes also a disadvantage. I have said many times that for example business and industry in Norway needs to be more competitive than businesses in cities and regions south of Norway, as I fear that much of the establishments will stop at Øresund¹⁵. The businesses concentrated around Copenhagen-Malmö gives Norwegian businesses strong competition. The Øresund bridge has created a new region that has become one of the strongest hubs in Northern Europe.

(Erna Ansnes)

The informant from the City of Oslo highlights also networks focusing on climate and environment as particularly important for the region (Informant 2). Viken's informant highlights such particular focus on climate, transport, logistics, and urban development. These policy areas are important for the region due to its position as a neighbour to the capital region, and much of their work is related to being a region near the capital (Informant 1).

¹⁵ Øresund is the strait between Sweden and the Danish Island of Zealand.

In general, the membership dimension can limit the regions in their work towards the EU. The fact that Norway is not as closely linked to continental Europe as its Danish and Swedish neighbours strengthen the distance between Norwegian regions and other European regions. Such issues, in turn, strengthen the need for the presence among Norwegian actors and can also demand some more work to get the right contacts and access the right networks (Informant 2 and 8). The issue linked to distance is thus even more vital for the northernmost regions in Sweden and Norway. The regions in northern Norway are quite limited by their geographical location and as non-member state region. To seek out what such geographical position brings, the next session will account for the regional offices' activities.

6.3 Regional Offices Activities

It is generally difficult to measure impact and, in this case, how effective the regions activities towards the EU are (Flordal, Hofman, and Lantz 2020, 9-11). One way of analysing the regional offices' work and advocacy is to study the offices' activities in Brussels and how they differ in their work and mandate.

European integration is differentiated, and the EU system is complex and varies greatly. One distinction is based on how the regions work and use their available tools differently. Even though the regional offices vary, they also share some similarities. Common to all the offices is a need to be close to where decisions are made. Furthermore, they function as liaisons between the EU system and its region and members. None of the offices is working on a mission from their state and thus no formal affiliation with their national authorities, even though they share close ties in Brussels and back home (Informant 7, 9, 12, and 13).

In the case of Norway, as one might expect from a non-member state, the activities of its municipalities and counties towards the EU vary to a great extent. The distinction is primarily based on capacity and knowledge. The smaller municipalities have less capacity and thereby less knowledge on utilising various available tools (Indseth and Hovik 2008). The same accounts for small municipalities in Sweden (Berg and Lindahl 2007, 24-25).

The regional offices vary regarding their agenda in Brussels. The informant from region Norrbotten points out that their agenda in Brussels is first and foremost to influence policy (Informant 6). Their work is much related to the sparsely populated bonus and the exceptions to certain conditions, which ensures the region's competitiveness (Informant 14). The motivation is similar in North Norway, and the director of the NNEO underlines that the office works quite proactive with lobbying in matters relevant to their region, even though they are not EU members (Informant 12). These regions have a clear mission to influence EU policy on matters based on their geographical position.

The SRE and the informants from the Stockholm region underline that the office in particular works to monitor EU policy relevant to its region and inform the region back home (Informants 3, 4, 5, and 7). They have not been working extensively with lobbyism and influencing activities but is an area where the region wants to improve. Much of the international department in the County's work is related to raising interest and increasing the level of knowledge associated with EU policy. The informants from the region and its regional office underline how Stockholm is a relatively newly established region¹⁶. A few years ago, it gained the role of a regional community developer which in turn, led to that the region has not been able to build up an international mission and enough competence to use the office more strategically (Informants 3, 4, 5, and 7). '[...] it takes time to get into the arenas we should be in, and where they also need to hear our input, views, and priorities' (Christina Larsson, Region Stockholm). This substantiates previous findings, emphasising that continuity and long-term thinking are crucial for Brussels regions. It is particularly interesting since former findings suggests that metropolitan municipalities in Sweden possess more financial resources. Moreover, superior expertise and competence in activities towards the EU (Berg and Lindahl 2007, 24-25).

Based on the interviews, the two offices representing the capital have more common interests and a similar mandate in Brussels. These offices are not working as proactively to influence EU policy but rather emphasise networking, getting more contacts and monitoring EU policy,

¹⁶ On 1 January 2019, Stockholm County Council became Region Stockholm with an increased responsibility for regional growth and development (Region Stockholm).

and raising the awareness of the EU back home in the region (Informant 1, 7, and 9). The informant from Viken County says the following about its office work: 'They facilitate influence and help us make contacts [...] but it is not a lobby organisation. Still, indirectly all activity in networks comes with a clear purpose [...] it is kind of an influencing process.' (Gørill Elisabeth Brodahl). This is supported by former research which highlights that participation in EU funded projects is essential for Norwegian regional actors. The funding itself is not necessarily the most important, but instead, getting contacts and developing new projects for their members back home. Furthermore, European associations are one of the most important ways of seeking indirect influence (Eliassen and Peneva 2011, 28).

In the Swedish case, the offices also differ concerning which activities they prioritise and how active they participate in networks. Furthermore, the different offices vary in ownership, and they thus possess different types of assignments. In the case of NSEO, it is a clear mandate that the office should work to try to influence EU policy actively. A former study concludes that offices with more staff and resources, representing a more significant part of Sweden and having a clear mission from home, work more directly with influencing activities (Berg and Lindahl 2007, 68). SRE and NSEO have the same number of employees, but NSEO represents a larger geographical area and has a distinct mission from its region based on common challenges. Such understanding of the region can thus explain why NSEO work differently and more proactively with influencing activities, and the Arctic dimension is, in this case, particularly relevant.

6.3.1 The Arctic Dimension

Domestic and regional differences are expected to affect how the different regional offices work and interact at a European level. When analysing the northernmost regions in Norway and Sweden, one cannot avoid the Arctic policy. The Arctic dimension is highlighted as one of the main reasons why these regions distinguish themselves from other regions in their countries and the rest of Europe. This distinction is according to the informants based on their shared history, as well as challenges linked to having a scattered population, long distances, and a harsh climate (Informants 10, 11, 12, 13, and 15)

The Arctic policy is a matter of an interdependent relationship between the Arctic regions and the EU. For these regions, it has been of great importance that the Arctic policy is on the agenda of the EU to increase competence, added values and opportunities that exist in the Arctic. Not least to erase old attitudes that it is not very viable in the northern parts of Europe. In turn, the EU has raised awareness and gained more interest in the Arctic due to an increased focus on security policy, the region's resources, and the number of raw materials in the region. The increased awareness and engagement can be viewed through the EU's more active role in the global Arctic and the appointment of an Arctic Ambassador in the EU (Informants 12 and 13). The director of NSEO features this interdependent relationship:

We have a very good dialogue with the Arctic players. One should also keep in mind that there are not many in the commission or within the various services in the EU that work specifically with the Arctic. So, the EU also needs us to strengthen its policy and strengthen its mandate and gain a broader understanding of what is really happening [...].

(Mikael Janson)

The EU's focus on Arctic policy seems to give the regions in northern Scandinavia, regardless of the form of affiliation, an opportunity to influence EU policy. The NSPA network can have a significant amount of credit for this development. The informant from Region Norrbotten further highlights how the NSPA network gives the region the most added value and that this is much because this network is coordinated by the regional offices from northern Norway, Sweden, and Finland, which in turn lead to these regions dominating the agenda more than in other networks: 'What is special about the NSPA network is that there is a link to the Brussels office. The Brussels office is working to form the basis for the NSPA network, on our behalf' (Janus Brandin). The NSPA network demonstrate a MLG system in practice since the regions from these areas are developing close ties with people high up in the EU system and get the chance to give input and influence EU policy through other channels than the state.

Both the NNEO and NSEO clearly emphasise the Arctic dimension as the decisive for their way of working in Brussels. The offices work more

directly with policy lobbying and possess a clear mandate which underpins their lobbying agenda. The informant from NNEO points out that the office is listed in a lobbyist registry (Informant 12). Much of this work is directly connected to the work in the NSPA network, and policy influencing, especially towards the Commission and the representatives in the EP (Informants 12 and 13). The Swedish MEP in the EP and the Swedish representative in the CoR underline their close contact with NNEO and thus work on behalf of the northernmost regions in Norway, too (Informants 16 and 17). Through this network and the informal and formal contact points in Brussels, the northernmost regions get essential access to the system in the EU.

The NSPA network is highlighted as the NNEO and North Norway's most important gateway to the EU system, weakening the State-Centric approach to European integration. One of the informants from Troms and Finnmark County reflects on how things would have been without the Brussel office:

[...] I believe we wouldn't have had the same meeting points that our politicians and administration have with the EU's Arctic Ambassador and the people in the Commission working with the EU's Arctic policy. We would have had the opportunity, but we would hardly have sent consultation responses to hearings in the Commission concerning northern Norway in particular, and we would not have had the same knowledge of the ongoing processes.

(Marthe Svensson)

The informant highlights an apparatus in the government that will disseminate information and influence EU policy, but this can seem a little further away. Since the region has some unique issues important to them, it is underlined that the office is very important for their work with regional development (Informant 11). The fact that regional stakeholders from the northernmost part of Norway have found some routes to influence EU policy directly and give input on consultations in the Commission seems to break with the traditional State-Centrism. It can strengthen the view that emphasises other elements in the EU system in which closely affiliated countries such as Norway are included. Much of this work is based on a close relationship between the northernmost regions in Norway, Sweden and Finland and their co-location in Brussels.

6.3.2 Co-location in Brussels

Several informants independently underline the location in Brussels. The NNEO takes advantage of the geographical similarities between its region and their cross-border neighbours from North Sweden and East and North Finland. For years, these offices were co-located in Brussels, and NNEO and NSEO are still co-located. Such closeness is highlighted by all informants from the northernmost regions due to their common interests and similar geographical condition (Informants 10, 11, 12, 13, and 15). The co-location is also highly relevant since it ensures the regions in northern Norway access to information that is impossible to obtain otherwise (Informant 12). Such co-location is valuable for the NNEO, but the swedes also utilise this close network of contacts. The Swedish MEP from region Västerbotten puts it this way: '[...] organisations never collaborate. It is the people who cooperate, and if people do not know each other, the cooperation will not work. So, such co-location is really good' (Erik Bergkvist).

Co-location is also underlined by the informant from ORE. The office is placed in the Nordic House in Brussels, together with the three Swedish offices; Central Sweden, Region Östergötlands and Region Värmland European Office, instead of establishing its office in Norway House with the Mission of Norway to the EU and other Norwegian actors. The informant points out how the choice of location was motivated by the idea of remaining tight with their Swedish allies and remaining independent from the national authorities (Informant 9).

Nordic cooperation and the Scandinavian community appear as essential when studying Sweden and Norway's relation to the EU. This area of Europe share similarities regarding their advantages and challenges, which foster Nordic cooperation. Such cooperation also creates cross-border networks, and the Nordic cooperation has in recent years been particularly affected by the ongoing Europeanisation of the administrations in the Nordic states. Such networks thus function as a gateway to EU arenas and are relevant to Norwegian actors, which generally lack official access to the EU institutions (Stie and Trondal 2020, 5). Such co-location in Brussels, in many ways, is based on joint Nordic

work in Brussels and that the Nordic community functions as a distinct region in the EU system. The regions in the Scandinavian/Nordic area united through common challenges and opportunities, which ensures them greater power in the face of a larger entity such as the EU.

In sum, regions in the same state do not necessarily possess similar interests. Standard features often unite regions across borders with similar geographical preconditions. Their position in Brussels also functions as a political instrument, especially relevant for Norwegian regions, to achieve information not otherwise accessible. In addition, the northernmost regions in Norway and Sweden use this co-location to stand together to promote their shared interest in the EU. The joint Nordic and Scandinavian community also provide Norwegian regions with a unique foot inside the MLG system since Norwegian actors access official channels in the EU through their regions. The next part will account for these regions work in Brussels and investigate these regions interests in relation to the national interests.

6.4 Regional Interests: Para-diplomacy and Bypassing

Both Sweden and Norway are two centralised unitary states characterised by a high degree of heterogeneity. The regional level in these states has had less autonomy than other federal states in Europe. Still, as presented in the background chapter Swedish regions possess taxation rights, and their responsibilities are constitutionally enshrined, which is not the case in Norway. Furthermore, the regional policy has varied much between the two countries. The state has created many incentives to facilitate a dispersed population structure in Norway, while such a focus has been somewhat absent in Sweden.

The informant from the EP underlines how this is about to change in Sweden, and that regional policy is having a renaissance at the national level in Sweden in the wake of the regional reform and due to issues related to significant differences in population growth (Informant 17). Several informants highlight that the Northern part of Sweden is experiencing a reversed process and extensive industry growth due to the battery factories and the mining industry. Hence, the regions lead towards the green shift in such industries (Informants 5 and 6). 'The common perception that there has been a pity for those up there, and less pity for

us, that perception is about to change' (Fredrik Wikström, Region Stockholm).

In the case of Stockholm, the informant from Region Stockholm emphasise how much of their work is based on national interests boiled down to the local and regional environment. Thus, there is a high degree of consensus between the region and the national authorities in their work towards the EU (Informants 3, 4, and 5). Such argument is confirmed by the informant from their office in Brussels: '[...] our mission is based on promoting the Stockholm region's interest. But these interests rarely differ from national positions' (Anne Andersson, SRE). It seems to be the case that the capital regions interests are highly represented by the state level. Such reflections are also accounted for by the MEP, which underlines how Stockholm is quite interesting since that they have not worked as strategically with regional development towards the EU:

[...] most state ministries are in Stockholm, so Stockholm has never had to worry about its regional development; it has automatically emerged as the capital [...] not much has been invested in regional development, nor in terms of regional development towards Brussels.

(Erik Bergkvist)

Former research on Swedish regions and municipalities has found that there is a relationship between municipalities' proximity to the centre and the level of activeness in working towards the EU (The Swedish Institute for European Policy Studies 2007). Furthermore, one can observe a trend of strengthening the Centre-Periphery dimension. The latter implies that the most prominent and most independent local and regional actors remain one step ahead in their activities towards the EU. Large municipalities near the centre of Sweden participate in more EU projects than smaller and peripheral municipalities. This reinforces the distinctions given that the larger municipalities reap the most significant benefits and financial resources. Similar tendencies are observable in countries with more EU-friendly attitudes and more financial resources that tend to be more active towards the EU (Berg and Lindahl 2007, 36).

Contradictory, the cases for the analysis demonstrate something different. It seems as if the SRE have not been working very actively with lobbying

activities. Former findings have shown that the Swedish government stands out as a significant channel for the municipalities and regions in influencing EU policy (Berg and Lindahl 2007, 32). And according to Tatham, the most effective is to both pair up with the state and work more directly towards the EU level, through more bypassing (2008, 497). The informant from SRE underlines that strategically it can be very effective to pair up with the state level to receive more information and stand together towards the EU level: '[...] and sometimes it is about being active enhancing the Swedish interests. So, when we learn about the Swedish national positions and align with our region's interests, we can strengthen Sweden's voice in the EU' (Anne Andersson, SRE). Both the director of the office and the informant from the region highlight that such strategic way of working with influencing will be their future focus:

[...] but look to Region Skåne - where they have understood that one must influence both at the national level and the EU for it to be effective. This is due to that EU is not really an international perspective, it is a part of our everyday life and most law proposals in the region have also been on the agenda in the Commission as a regulation or a law proposal. There is a lack of knowledge, and Region Stockholm has so far, no influence strategy.

(Evert Kroes, Region Stockholm)

The other informant from region Stockholm builds on their great potential and says:

[...] there is an increased potential when you work even more systematically with it. You can turn it around and say that we could become even better in the areas we are good at if we just work more systematically with it.

(Fredrik Wikström)

The other informant from the region puts forward such an argument and underlines the regions good potential:

We are the most innovative region, we are the most competitive region, we are in the lead over several other regions - and the Stockholm Region is also expected to lead [...] and that has not fallen into place yet.

(Evert Kores)

This confirms how long-term thinking, continuity, specialisation, and presence is necessary for such influence activity to be successful. It builds on previous research which states that the most effective way to influence is through a combination of both the national level and the EU level (Tatham 2008, 497). Furthermore, it is interesting regarding the Centre-Periphery dimension, since one according to such view would expect the regions near the Centre to be more strategic advantaged and thus also work more actively towards the EU.

The NNEO and NSEO on the other hand, has other challenges regarding geography, demography, and regional development. Relocation, sustainable use of resources and the Arctic are thus among the issues that are high on the agenda in these regions, affecting their work towards the EU. They are also very well affected by the EU's Green Deal, and one of the office's main objectives is to contribute to sustainable development in the region. Still, their distinct regional interest seems particularly overarching in their work towards the EU, and the climate issue is essential in this case (Informants 10, 11, 12, and 15).

NNEO and NSEOs activity in Brussels can be supported by Tatham and Thau which builds on the MLG perspective and discover that less densely populated regions have a higher probability of mobilising in Brussels. This is derived from the peripheral regions' greater likelihood of being overlooked by their central government, which forces them to mobilise directly in Brussels. Furthermore, less densely populated areas are often characterised by rurality and agriculture. Since the agricultural policy is one of the EU's most integrated standard policies, these regions have a strong incentive and engagement (2014, 264).

Such findings can be visible concerning NSEO and NNEO. The director of NNEO sums it up: 'It is usually a rough climate, sparsely populated, long distances to the markets. And very often we experience much of the same, namely that our capitals they do not necessarily look north to see the possibilities' (Nils Kristian Sørheim Nilsen). Such issues force forth a proactive engagement for the regions in the north and is one of the reasons why they work more directly towards the EU level. He furthermore underlines that their regional interests are not in conflict with the state and

that the region and its office do not function as a wild card in Brussels: 'It is first and foremost driven by regional interest, but we are very much in tune with each other.' These offices bypass its state more, not in a conflicting manner, but to secure its peculiar interests and to be heard at the EU level since much of the EU policy affects the people in local communities.

As already presented, Norwegian regions have traditionally not been so active in their work towards the EU, much due to their outside-inside position, and challenges related to be aware of which opportunities that exists for Norwegian actors in the EU/EEA (NOU 2012:2, 195-196, Informant 12). It seems as if this has improved and that Norwegian regions use its different channels available for influence more actively today. One of the informants from Troms and Finnmark County emphasises this: '[...] when we provide consultation input, we often use the national channels, but also the common Scandinavian channels and our regional office. We give input from different angles, hopefully with a more or less similar message' (Bente Knudsen Helland). The informant from Norrbotten County builds on this Scandinavian community in Brussels 'We are united through common challenges regardless of national borders' (Janus Brandin). Such common work demands active regions, which can work strategically both in line with its state and more directly towards the EU. Such combination is as already presented, highlighted in former studies as most effective. It can thus also explain some of the engagement from the regional level in these areas.

According to Tatham, higher devolution levels lead to greater cooperation and less bypassing of the state. One theoretical explanation for this counter-intuitive relationship is that devolution increases regions' inclusion in the domestic EU policy-shaping process (2007; 2010). In the case of SRE and ORE this could to some extent be true. Even though both Norway and Sweden are centralised states, the regions have gained a more comprehensive role. In addition, since their interests are more similar to the state interests, one can assume that they would feel more included in the policy-shaping process which in the Norwegian case refers to the preparatory phase, while the Swedish state possesses greater access to the policymaking.

In sum, the interests of the regional level in the metropolitan areas are more equivalent to the national interests in both Sweden and Norway. The informants from the counties and the directors from both offices emphasised climate, transport, and the reduction of environmental emissions as particularly relevant for their regions (Informants 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, and 9). The EU's Green Deal, transport, and climate seem to be high on the agenda for Norwegian and Swedish national authorities since it is also very relevant in the EU (Informant 18). The regions from the northernmost parts of Sweden and Norway seem to stand out a little more in interest. It is not about conflicting and rival interests but more specific regional interests due to their position as Arctic regions, which in turn entails more active political influence activities, in which the region in some cases are enabled to bypass its state to seek influence at the EU level. In other words, the EU system is clearly a matter of MLG since regions from both member states as well as non-member states, regardless of their geographical position, can work autonomously at an EU level.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

The purpose of the report has been to answer the research question: *How do membership and remoteness affect how regional offices work and interact at the European level?* This was done by studying two Swedish and two Norwegian regional offices with a qualitative approach. Such an analysis is not intended to form generalisations but instead provides in-depth information on a given topic, in this case, about regional offices in Brussels and their activities. The results and main findings can explain how regional offices from member states and closely affiliated states work and interact with each other as well as with the state. The report sought to investigate the research question based on some preconceived hypotheses. To conclude, the hypotheses will be summarised below. Finally, the main findings of the report will be summed up.

The first hypothesis seeks to apply the State-Centric approach to the cases, to check whether these cases can be explained by such a perspective, and if one of the forms of affiliation is more applicable for this perspective than the other.

As presented in the analysis, Sweden possesses formal access to the EU institutions. These gates allow Swedish regions to unfold in the EU system and can support the perspective which views the EU as a matter of MLG, since regions from member states have channels to seek influence directly

at the EU. On the other side, the analysis confirms that the EU first and foremost is governed by the states. This is visible through the fact that the negotiation in the decision-making institutions is mainly controlled by the states. My findings suggest that to gain influence in the Council, the regions must work towards their government, such as the State-Centric approach would argue.

Norwegian regional offices lack national representation in the EU institutions, and as it appears in the analysis, national authorities are the ones who govern in negotiations between the EU and Norway. It is thus quite reasonable to think that Norway is best described through a State-Centric perspective, where the state remains the gatekeeper. After analysing the cases, the reality seems slightly more complicated. The results of this investigation suggest that through Norway's close affiliation to the EU, subnational actors have some room for manoeuvre in the EU. Norwegian regions possess informal routes to EU policy and participate in projects, partnerships, networks, and associations with other European regions.

In sum, one can argue that H1 is not really confirmed. Even though the EU is mainly governed by states, the findings suggests that the informal routes to the system through networks and contacts can provide regional actors with noticeable influence. This analysis shows that Norway is special as a closely affiliated country and the form of affiliation seems to be rather unproblematic in Brussels. There is thus a space of opportunities also for non-member states, but it can require some more work since the regions lack direct access to the institutions and thus also risk a large information deficit. The fact that this analysis shows how both Swedish and Norwegian regions work directly towards the EU underpins how the MLG system functions in practice. The next hypothesis is thus more relevant.

The second hypothesis investigates if membership in the EU entails participation in a system of multi-level decision-making and whether regions from member states are autonomous actors in this context.

The analysis concludes that the Swedish regions' formal routes to the policymaking in the EU provides them with an advantage in comparison with Norwegian regions. Furthermore, the findings show that the

informal route to the system is based on a 'greater together' process. One region alone will not have much influence, especially not from unitary states. One can thus say that the theory of MLG is applicable to explain the EU since this study demonstrates how the EU system has adapted to the informal actors and accounts for their views. The study demonstrates how such informal contacts are crucial in regional mobilisation in Brussels.

Furthermore, the analysis shows how Swedish regions can bypass their state and work directly towards the EU, which means that MLG works to explain the Swedish case. Still, the results find that regions use this space of opportunities differently. Such variation can according to former research and the informants be linked to that the knowledge of the EU traditionally has been relatively low. This is according to the study improving and the regional offices are working more strategically than before. Such competence development is also visible in the counties where one observes a strengthening of the international departments, where one works more strategically with EU policy.

In sum, one can argue that H2 is partially confirmed. The results show how regions from member states will have better access points and thus possess more information and better opportunities. Still, former research points out that regional mobilisation in Brussels varies between regions. There are numerous factors which determine regional advocacy. Such findings correspond with the analysis which also finds that in these cases, such work mainly demands a strong apparatus in the region and presence in Brussels. Furthermore, long-term thinking, continuity, and specialisation is important to achieve success in such work, which also applies to Norwegian regions. The next hypothesis emphasises the Norwegian cases.

The third hypothesis seeks to understand if the Norwegian case as a closely affiliated country to some extent can be explained through the MLG framework.

Several written sources conclude that it seems to be a disadvantage to be an organisation from a non-member state when working towards the EU. Still, it appears from the analysis that the EU system is accessible and responsive to other actors. Furthermore, based on former analyses, one

can say that Norway is more advantaged than regions from other non-member states. Norway is viewed as one of the EU's closest partners and is thus not the best example to illustrate the member - non-member distinction. Still, it becomes clear through the analysis, that the knowledge of the EEA could be improved among actors in Brussels and in the region, to secure more strategic work and thus increase the added value. The analysis concludes that the EU is dynamic, and that any kind of mobilisation in Brussels demands continuity and an aim to constantly improve the knowledge of EU/EEA. Norwegian regions are according to the informants given the opportunity to contact the EU institutions directly and to try to influence EU policy. Such perspective strengthens the MLG theory and expands the perspective to also apply to regions from closely affiliated states such as Norway.

Former in-depth analysis states how the NNEO works proactively with policy lobbying and both seeks influence through its state and directly at the EU level. This study finds support for such former findings and adds to this by stating how their work is based on their close ties with North Sweden and Northeast Finland. Such findings are contradictory to former findings which tends to view Norwegian regions and regions from centralised states in general as mere channels for information exchange and competence development, such as the State-Centric perspective will view regional offices in Brussels.

H3 can thus be confirmed, both regions from member states and closely affiliated states such as Norway can work towards the EU through other channels beside their state. According to the analysis such work just demands more effort for Norwegian actors to access the relevant information. Based on the analysis one can conclude that presence is the most crucial factor for regional mobilisation. It applies to all stakeholders who have an interest in EU policy. Presence seems even more crucial in the case of Norway, where one potentially would experience a considerable information deficit by not being in Brussels and keep on expanding its existing network. Based on the analysis this information deficit is even more relevant in the case of North Norway which represents a region from a non-member state and a peripheral area. The next hypothesis investigates such geographical differences.

The fourth hypothesis refers to the Centre-Periphery dimension concerning the case and testifies if the State-Centric perspective applies to the cases' geographical position.

Former studies have stated that the most effective way of gaining influence is to provide input with their views through various channels such as the state level, networks and directly through people working in the EU institutions, this was also confirmed by the informants. Regions from both Norway and Sweden are according to this study enabled to bypass their state and work directly towards the EU. In the cases here analysed, the NNEO and NSEO stand out as most active with policy lobbying towards the EU. The analysis also states how such work is not a matter of conflicting interests and competition between national and regional authorities in. It can according to the analysis be viewed as a joint project that both the Swedish and Norwegian states stand behind. Such perspective challenges the Centre-Periphery dimension in relation to the State-Centric perspective, since one according to such view would expect more conflicting interests between the centre and periphery.

The analysis furthermore shows how in the case of Norway and Sweden, the regions near the centre have more similar interests to the national authorities in their work towards the EU. Still, the analysis confirms former empirical findings which stated how the Northernmost regions work more proactively with influencing activities in Brussels. According to the analysis, the regions in North Norway and North Sweden have more peculiar regional interests which motivates them to work more strategically both through the state and directly towards the EU. Such arguments weaken the idea of the EU as a matter of state-centrism since the regions can work directly at the EU level, despite the form of affiliation and geographical position.

H4 is thus partially confirmed. In the cases for the analysis, ORE and SRE seem to be more in line with the state-centrism perspective. These regions work more in line with their state since their interests often is more similar. The analysis thus finds that their office does not work very active and strategically with influencing activities even though they still participate in several networks with the aim of presenting a common point of view towards the EU. One can through the results in the analysis argue that these are represented through much of their states' work towards the EU,

and that the need to work more strategic and bypass the state has not been as necessary. My findings show how offices in the North on the other hand, are geographically distant from both the political centre in their respective countries as well as Brussels, and that such distance generates a strong engagement. In sum the analysis clearly finds that regional activity towards the EU vary, the next hypothesis investigates if the geographical position matters for regional mobilisation in Brussels.

The fifth and final hypothesis investigates the MLG theory concerning the Centre-Periphery dimension. According to the MLG framework the regions' geographical position is not a particular topic within this theory. One can thus assume that the Centre-Periphery relations is not relevant to explain differences in regional activity in Brussels.

Based on the four cases examined in this report, the northernmost regions in Sweden and Norway are more active towards the EU. The analysis shows how such work is driven by a solid regional cross-border community in the North based on shared historical and cultural bonds and a strong desire to solve similar challenges. Former studies have shown how NNEO have a strong political mandate that is based on a strong political apparatus in the region. The analysis demonstrates how North Norway and North Sweden's activity towards the EU has steadily increased, as they for a long time, have felt distant from continental Europe and its national authorities. The analysis also demonstrates how presence is crucial for these regions and that they for many years have built up critical networks, contacts, and channels of information, primarily through the NSPA network. Furthermore, the study concludes that specialisation, continuity, and long-term thinking are highlighted as crucial to success in Brussels, which NNEO and NSEO have managed very well. The NNEO is thus given unique access to the EU system and politicians in the EU through the NSPA network and co-location with other actors in Brussels. This is demonstrated through how the Swedish politicians in the EU institutions from the northernmost regions underline how their work is based on a common interest that applies to northern Norway and northern Scandinavia.

The findings show how the two peripheral regions stand out as more active towards the EU level, and they work more strategic with influencing activities. Such findings break with a traditional State-Centric

perspective and the Centre-Periphery dimension. The fact that the analysis shows how these regions work independently at an EU level, underpins the MLG perspective.

Furthermore, the two regions near the centre are not as active in directly influencing activities, but they still participate at an EU arena through various networks and associations with other capitals, particularly the Nordic ones. This can to some extent be explained through the Centre-Periphery dimension since their regional interests are more similar to the state-level. One can thus argue that these regions do not feel the urge to secure their interests directly at the EU level. The study shows how in the case of North Sweden and North Norway, much of their work is linked to keep their special exceptions as regions from sparsely areas. For North Sweden, the structural funds are also highly important. Arguably, these peculiar interests force forth a strong engagement.

In sum one can argue that H5 to a certain extent is confirmed in relation to the cases in this study. The analysis shows how the geographical position does not limit the regions, in contrast, peripheral regions with special needs are more active towards the EU. There are opportunities to influence for regions despite the form of affiliation and geographical position. It is basically related to the aim of the region, and how the region utilizes the opportunity space.

7.1 Summary

This report has used an original design with its focus on two dimensions which have not been analysed together before, namely the membership dimension and the Centre-periphery dimension. The analysis has shown that regions have gained a more prominent role and thus can operate towards the EU, without the state, and that this also applies to administrative regions. Furthermore, the analysis shows how membership and geographical position can affect how regions work at a European level.

Regional advocacy is essentially a matter of how the regions exploit the opportunities in the EU. This study shows how regions from both member states and non-member states can bypass its own government and work directly towards the EU, which testifies that the EU is a matter of MLG. If

the EU was a case of State-Centrism, there would be no room for regions to influence EU policy directly. The study can thus conclude that in the case of EU as a matter of MLG, affiliation is not very important.

Even though regions from member states will possess some advantages through representatives in the EU institutions and thus access relevant information, there is a space of opportunities for regions from non-member states, particularly from closely affiliated countries such as Norway. The analysis shows that the EU does not discriminate in the informal structures and since the study shows how the EU institutions are open and accessible to actors from Norway, the state-dominated perspective is even more weakened.

In sum, the main findings concerning geographical position concludes that the EU has clear MLG features and that the Centre-Periphery dimension is thus not relevant, since all regions are given the opportunity to provide input towards the EU level. According to this study, the peripheral regions are not more strategically disadvantaged in their work towards the EU level. The northernmost regions in Sweden and Norway are working quite actively with political advocacy and work both together with the state and more directly towards the EU. Such engagement is based on their position in the outskirts of Europe, a strong political mandate, and their common challenges.

Furthermore, the analysis underlines the strong Scandinavian and Nordic community which has contributed to Norwegian regions gaining a clearer voice together with their neighbouring countries which are member states in the EU. Such common Nordic and Scandinavian community are accurate for all the regions in this study, but maybe even more for the regions up in the North, which through the NSPA network have gained a common voice towards the EU.

The analysis also shows how formal membership is not necessarily crucial in regional activity towards the EU. Presence in Brussels and active networking can according to this analysis provide access to the informal parts of the system and can thus also make up for some of the disadvantages of not being a member. Such work just demands more, and most importantly it requires a constant work on improving the knowledge in the region and in Brussels to keep up with this dynamic system. The

analysis also finds that presence is especially crucial for regions from the outskirts of Europe regardless of the form of affiliation – and particularly crucial for Norwegian actors. In sum this report has raised the question of what informal networks and presences really means in connection to regional activity in Brussels. In the next section, some ideas for further research will be accounted for.

7.2 Ideas for Further Research

With more time and resources, it could be interesting to include more regions and states. It would be particularly relevant to involve Finland and the East and North Finland EU Office, the third and last part of the NSPA network. The Arctic dimension is highly relevant these days due to the war in Ukraine, and that both Finland and Sweden will apply for NATO membership.

It could also be interesting to include another closely affiliated non-member state, such as Switzerland, which also has a more federal structure. It is not a part of the EEA but is still closely affiliated with the EU through the EFTA Secretariat. On the other hand, it could also be interesting to include a European state to get a clearer picture of regional mobilisation in Brussels for non-member states without a particular affiliation to the EU. Norway is not the best example of a non-member state since its relationship with the EU is a matter of a close affiliation, giving some room for manoeuvre. In addition, Norwegian regions and other levels of government have adapted themselves to the EU standard. Since it existed an expectation that Norway would join the EU for several years, and the basis for cooperation at different levels was already made.

The fact that the Nordic community is quite strong in the EU could also be interesting to investigate further. Some theorists have argued that the EU is going towards a Europe of the Regions where regions refer to larger units consisting of several countries in the same geographical area. Based on this analysis and the fact that the EU consist of a diversity of various states, one can assume that the geographical, cultural, and historical community is strong and that such common features affect the way one works internationally.

One final idea for further research builds on bypassing and conflicting interests. The cases for this analysis do not demonstrate regions which work directly towards the EU due to conflicts with their state. It could have been interesting to investigate some regions from a country with a more federal structure, where the region and the state are in more conflict. Such perspective could potentially demonstrate the dividing lines between centre and periphery more sufficiently. The autonomous regions in Spain, e.g., the Basque Country and Catalonia or different regions in Belgium could demonstrate possible cases.

Chapter 8

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Chapter 9

Appendixes

9.1 Appendix 1

Interview Guide Regional Offices Sweden

Oppvarmingsspørsmål:

- Hvor lenge har du arbeidet for kontoret?
- Hvor lenge har det aktuelle regionskontoret vært stasjonert i Brussel og hvorfor fikk regionen et behov for å etablere seg i Brussel? (Før eller etter EU-medlemskap?)
- Hvordan er kontoret oppbygd? Har kontoret medlemmer eller er kontoret eid av kommuner/bedrifter/regionen?
- Hvem er deres oppdragsgivere?
- Har dere et mandat?
- Hvordan bruker deres medlemmer kontoret? Hvordan bruker dere det regionale mulighetsrommet i EU?

Arbeid/Aktiviteter

- Hva er målet til det aktuelle regionskontoret i Brussel? Hva arbeider dere for? Gjerne beskriv deres arbeid litt?
- Hvordan oppnår kontoret målene sine?
- Hvordan vil du karakterisere regionenes rolle i EU?
 - Hvordan vil du karakterisere rollen til nettverk i EU?

- Hvilke nettverk deltar kontoret i, og hvilke nettverk har kontoret/regionen mest nytte av?
- Hvordan brukes nettverk i forhold til kontorets oppgaver og funksjon?
- Informasjon
- b. Overvåkning
- c. Innflytelse
 - Hvilke andre aktører i Brussel samarbeider kontoret/regionen med?
 - Jobber dere annerledes enn de andre svenske kontorene?
 - Jobber du mye med å samle informasjon om kommende lovverk?
 - Jobber du med nettverks- og finansieringsmuligheter for dine kunder hjemme?
- Forholdet til EU-institusjonene
 - Hvor ofte har kontoret kontakt med de ulike institusjonene?

a. Kommisjonen

b. EP

c. Rådet

d. CoR

Geografisk/demografisk posisjon

- Hvilke oppgaver har kontoret? Hvilke fokusområder arbeider dere mest med? Eventuelt hvorfor akkurat disse?
- Har deres geografiske posisjon og demografiske situasjon en innvirkning på prioriteringene? Eller er det eventuelt andre ting som har en innvirkning? Hva er agendaen i EU?
- Hvilket forhold har kontoret til staten? Arbeider dere tett opp mot statsapparatet?
- Vil du si at dere har andre lokale interesser i deres arbeid som ikke staten er like opptatt av, eller er det internasjonale arbeidet en del av et større nasjonalt svensk prosjekt?
- Har dere som region tilgang til andre kanaler for innflytelse som ikke staten har? Eventuelt motsatt? Har staten egne kanaler som ikke regionen har?
- Er deres arbeid mot EU og institusjonene noe dere gjør helt uavhengig fra staten?
- Arbeider kontoret mer direkte på institusjonene i EU, eller er arbeidet en del av et større nasjonalt prosjekt?
- Hvilke kanaler bruker dere i arbeidet for å sikre regionens interesse? Uformelle kanaler? Går dere utenom statsapparatet? Med statsapparatet, eller en kombinasjon?
- Hvor ofte kommuniserer dere med det statlige apparatet i deres internasjonale arbeid? Departmentene eller den Permanente Representasjonen i Brussel?
- Opplever dere at regioner har tilgang til andre kanaler for innflytelse sammenliknet med den svenske stat?

Kanaler for innflytelse

- Hvilke kanaler for direkte påvirkning bruker dere i arbeidet deres?
- Hvordan benytter dere de direkte påvirkningskanalene dere har tilgjengelige?
- Kommisjonen?
- Regionskomitéen?
- Parlamentet?
- Ministerrådet?
- Hvilke former for ikke-direkte påvirkning bruker dere i arbeidet?
- Nettverk/assosiasjoner? Hvilke er dere medlem i?
- Hvor effektivt er dette? Fordeler/ulemper?
- Hvis du skal trekke frem noen av de viktigste sakene dere har arbeidet for de siste årene hva vil det ha vært?
- Hvordan foregikk påvirkningsprosessen i disse sakene?
- Hva er dine tanker rundt hvorvidt EU kan sies å være et flernivåsystem – vil du si at dere tar del i dette systemet?

Avslutning:

- Noe mer du ønsker å legge til?
- Har du noen tips til andre jeg bør snakke om?

9.2 Appendix 2

Interview Guide Members/Co-owners Sweden

Generell informasjon:

- Navn:
- Arbeidstittel/posisjon:
- Institusjon/arbeidssted:
- Hvor lenge har du arbeidet med internasjonalt for regionen?
- Hvor lenge har dere vært medlem/partner i kontoret?
- Hva vil du si er deres største fordeler ved å være medlem? Hva får dere mest utbytte av?
- Hvordan arbeider dere spesifikt opp mot Brusselkontoret?
- Hvilke regioner i Europa er deres viktigste samarbeidspartnere?

Internasjonalt arbeid/nettverksarbeid

- Arbeider dere med å påvirke politikken og vedtak i EU? Direkte eller indirekte? Gjennom nettverk?
- Hvilke nettverk deltar regionen i, og hvorfor akkurat disse?
- Drar regionen/fylkeskommunen fordel av arbeidet/samarbeidet i nettverk?
- Er regionen i kontakt med EUs institusjoner gjennom disse nettverkene? Hvis ja - hvor ofte?
- Opplever dere at dere drar nytte av medeierskapet? Kan dere vise til noen konkrete eksempler?
- Hvordan opplever dere tilgangen til de ulike EU institusjonene?
 - CoR
 - Parlamentet
 - Kommissjonen
 - Ministerrådet
- Hvor ofte er dere i kontakt med disse institusjonene?
- Hvor ofte er dere i kontakt med svenske MEPs eller eksperter i kommisjonen?

Kapasitet og prioriteringer

- Hvor mye kapasitet har dere til å prioritere det internasjonale arbeidet?
- Hvem er pådrivere for det internasjonale arbeidet?
- Opplever dere et sterkt politisk apparat (regionen/kommunen) som er positive og fremmer det internasjonale arbeidet?

-Er dette en utfordring? Hvis ja, på hvilken måte?

-Hvis ja, hvordan kompenserer dere?

Geografisk/demografisk posisjon

- Kan du si noe om regionens geografiske posisjon i forhold til det internasjonale arbeidet?
- Arbeider dere ulikt fra andre svenske regioner?

-Hvis ja, kan du si noe om disse forskjellene? Hvorfor?

- Er dere noe i kontakt med andre svenske regioner i forhold til det internasjonale arbeidet? Gjennom nettverk eller andre plattformer? Hvor ofte?
- Hvordan er samarbeidet med den svenske stat i deres internasjonale arbeid?
- Hvordan er relasjonen til det statlige styringsnivået i det internasjonale arbeidet?
- Hvor ofte kommuniserer dere med det statlige apparatet i deres internasjonale arbeid? Departementene eller den permanente representasjonen i Brussel?

Avslutning

- Er det noe mer du/dere ønsker å legge til?
- Er det noen andre viktige aktører jeg burde snakke med? Kontaktpersoner i Sverige, Brussel eller i nettverkene?

9.3 Appendix 3

Interview Guide Regional Offices Norway

Oppvarmingsspørsmål:

- Hvor lenge har du arbeidet for kontoret?
- Hvor lenge har det aktuelle regionskontoret vært stasjonert i Brussel og hvorfor fikk regionen et behov for å etablere seg i Brussel?
- Hvordan er kontoret oppbygd? Har kontoret medlemmer eller er kontoret eid av kommuner/bedrifter/regionen?
- Hvem er deres oppdragsgivere?
- Har dere et mandat?
- Hvordan bruker deres medlemmer kontoret? Hvordan bruker dere det regionale mulighetsrommet i EU/EØS?

Arbeid/Aktiviteter

- Hva er målet til det aktuelle regionskontoret i Brussel? Hva arbeider dere for? Gjerne beskriv litt deres arbeid?
- Fortell litt om hvordan dere jobber.
- Hvordan oppnår kontoret målene sine?
- Hvordan vil du karakterisere regionenes rolle i EU?
 - Hvordan vil du karakterisere rollen til nettverk i EU?
 - Hvilke nettverk deltar kontoret i, og hvilke nettverk har kontoret/regionen mest nytte av?
 - Hvordan brukes nettverk i forhold til kontorets oppgaver og funksjon?
- Informasjon
- b. Overvåkning
- c. Innflytelse
 - Hvilke andre aktører i Brussel samarbeider kontoret/regionen med?
 - Jobber dere annerledes enn de andre norske kontorene?
 - Er kontoret mye i kontakt med EU institusjonene?

Geografisk/demografisk posisjon

- Hvilke oppgaver har kontoret? Hvilke fokusområder arbeider dere mest med? Eventuelt hvorfor disse?
- Har deres geografiske posisjon og demografiske situasjon en innvirkning på prioriteringene? Eller er det eventuelt andre ting som har en innvirkning? Agenda i EU?
- Hvilket forhold har kontoret til staten? Arbeider dere tett opp mot statsapparatet?

- Vil du si at dere har andre lokale interesser i deres arbeid som ikke staten er like opptatt av, eller er det internasjonale arbeidet en del av et større nasjonalt svensk prosjekt?
- Vil du si at dere som region har tilgang til andre kanaler for innflytelse som ikke staten har?
- Er deres arbeid mot EU og institusjonene noe dere gjør helt uavhengig fra staten?
- Arbeider kontoret mer direkte på institusjonene i EU, eller er arbeidet en del av et større nasjonalt prosjekt?
- Hvilke kanaler bruker dere i arbeidet for å sikre regionens interesse? Uformelle kanaler? Går dere utenom statsapparatet? Med statsapparatet, eller en kombinasjon?
- Hvor ofte kommuniserer dere med det statlige apparatet i deres internasjonale arbeid? Departementene eller delegasjonen i Brussel?
- Opplever dere at regioner har tilgang til andre kanaler for innflytelse sammenliknet med den svenske stat?

Kanaler for innflytelse

- Hvilke kanaler for direkte påvirkning bruker dere i arbeidet deres?
- Hvordan benytter dere de direkte påvirkningskanalene dere har tilgjengelige?
- Hvilke former for ikke-direkte påvirkning bruker dere i arbeidet?
- Hvor effektivt er dette? Fordeler og ulemper?
- Nettverk/assosiasjoner? Hvilke er dere medlem i?
- Hvor effektivt er dette? Fordeler/ulemper?
- Hvis du skal trekke frem noen av de viktigste sakene dere har arbeidet for de siste årene hva vil det ha vært?
- Hvordan foregikk påvirkningsprosessen i disse sakene?
- Hva er dine tanker rundt hvorvidt EU kan sies å være et flernivåsystem – vil du si at dere tar del i dette systemet?
- Opplever dere at det at Norge ikke er EU-medlem, begrenser dere i arbeidet?

-Er dette en utfordring? Hvis ja, på hvilken måte?

-Hvis ja, hvordan kompenserer dere?

Avslutning:

- Noe mer du ønsker å legge til?
- Har du noen tips til andre jeg bør snakke om?

9.4 Appendix 4

Interview Guide Members/Co-owners Norway

Generell informasjon:

- Navn:
- Arbeidstittel/ posisjon:
- Institusjon/arbeidssted:
- Hvor lenge har du arbeidet med internasjonalt for fylkeskommunen/kommunen?
- Hvor lenge har dere vært medlem/partner i kontoret?

Kan du si noe om hvorfor dere fikk et behov for å bli medlem i kontoret?

- Hva vil du si er deres største fordeler ved å være medlem? Hva får dere mest utbytte av?

Vil du si at dere har stor grad av nytte av å være medeier i kontoret?

- Hvordan arbeider dere spesifikt opp mot kontoret?
- Hvilke regioner i Europa er deres viktigste samarbeidspartnere?

Internasjonalt arbeid/nettverksarbeid

- Hvordan utnytter dere Norges handlingsrom i EU?
- Arbeider dere med å påvirke politikken og vedtak i EU? Direkte eller indirekte? Gjennom nettverk?
- Vil dere si litt om hvordan dere bruker kontoret til å mobilisere i politikkkutforming i EU?
- Opplever dere at EU er interessert i deres innspill, opplever du et EU som er mottakelig for det?
- Hvilke nettverk deltar regionen i, og hvorfor akkurat disse?
- Drar regionen/fylkeskommunen fordel av arbeidet/samarbeidet i nettverk?
- Er regionen i kontakt med EUs institusjoner gjennom disse nettverkene? Hvis ja – hvor ofte?
- Opplever dere at dere drar nytte av medeierskapet? Kan dere vise til noen konkrete eksempler?
- Interessene deres i Brussel, er det særlige regionale interesser eller er det en del av et nasjonalt interessearbeid?
- Ser dere et stort behov for å være til stede der beslutningene tas? Hvorfor?

Kapasitet og prioriteringer

- Hvor mye kapasitet har dere til å prioritere det internasjonale arbeidet?

- Hvem er pådrivere for det internasjonale arbeidet?
- Opplever dere et sterkt politisk apparat (fylkeskommunen/kommunen) som er positive og fremmer det internasjonale arbeidet?
- Opplever dere at det at Norge ikke er EU-medlem, begrenser dere i arbeidet?

-Er dette en utfordring? Hvis ja, på hvilken måte?

-Hvis ja, hvordan kompenserer dere?

Geografisk/demografisk posisjon

- Hva er deres viktigste saksområder i det internasjonale arbeidet?
- Kan du si noe om regionens geografiske posisjon i forhold til det internasjonale arbeidet?
- Arbeider dere ulikt fra andre regioner i Norge?

-Hvis ja, kan du si noe om disse forskjellene?

- Er dere noe i kontakt med andre fylkeskommuner i forhold til det internasjonale arbeidet? Gjennom nettverk eller andre plattformer? Hvor ofte?
- Samarbeider dere med noen av departementene, direktorater eller andre statlige aktører i det internasjonale arbeidet?
- Hvordan er relasjonen til det statlige styringsnivået i det internasjonale arbeidet?
- Hvor ofte kommuniserer dere med det statlige apparatet i deres internasjonale arbeid? UD, KDD eller delegasjonen i Brussel f.eks.
- Har dere tilgang til andre kanaler for innflytelse som ikke den norske stat har?

Avslutning

- Er det noe mer du/dere ønsker å legge til?
- Er det noen andre viktige aktører jeg burde snakke med? Kontaktpersoner i Norge, Brussel eller i nettverkene?

9.5 Appendix 5

Interview Guide Jeanette Lund, The Permanent Representation of Sweden to the European Union

Introduksjon

- Hvor lenge har du arbeidet i Brussel?
- Kan du si noe om den regionale dimensjonen i EU?
- Den regionale dimensjonen i Sverige?
- Hvorfor har det vært et behov for en slik stilling ved delegasjonen?
- Hvor ofte er du i kontakt med regionene hjemme?
- Regionkontorene i Brussel?
- Opplever du at regionalpolitikk er høyt på agendaen i EU? Og at dette preger Sveriges regioners forhold til EU?
- Vil du si litt om forholdet mellom de svenske regionene/regionkontorene og representasjonen?
- Hvem er det som er driverne bak dette svenske regionale arbeidet?

Regionenes Europa

- Vil du si at regionkontorene hadde en viktig rolle som politisk aktør i Brussel?
- Er denne rollen ulik fra den svenske representasjonen sin?
- Opplever du tettere kontakt med visse regioner? Og mindre med andre?
- Opplever du at enkelte regioner arbeidet mer aktivt mot EU enn andre? Hvilke geografiske forskjeller ser du?
- Hvordan arbeider representasjonen for å fremme norske regioners synspunkt i EU? Mobiliseringsarbeid?
- Opplevde du et EU som var inkluderende med regioner og regionale saker?
- Var du som regionalråd mye i kontakt med EU-institusjonene for å bidra inn og fremme svenske regioners sak?
- Er mobiliseringsarbeidet til den svenske stat ulikt fra regionenes måte å arbeide på?
- Har representasjonen andre kanaler tilgjengelig for innflytelse, som ikke regionene har? Eventuelt motsatt? Opplevde du at regionene hadde andre innflytelseskanaler som ikke staten har?
- Mitt teoretiske grunnlag baserer seg på teori om flernivåstyring. Vil du si at Sverige tar del i EUs flernivåstyring?
- Eller er det slik at statene i høy grad dominerer i dette systemet?

Avslutning

- Er det noe mer du ønsker å legge til?
- Er det noen andre viktige aktører jeg burde snakke med? Kontaktpersoner i Sverige, Brussel eller i nettverket

9.6 Appendix 6

Interview Guide Eivind Lorentzen - Former Counsellor for Regional and Local Affairs, The Mission of Norway to the EU

Generell informasjon:

- Navn:
- Arbeidstittel/ posisjon:
- Institusjon/ arbeidssted:
- Hvor lenge arbeidet du i Brussel?
- Vil du si litt om din jobb som Kommunal og regionalråd i Brussel? Beskriv din rolle. Hva var din viktigste oppgave?
- Hvorfor har det vært et behov for en slik stilling ved delegasjonen?
- Hvor ofte var du i kontakt med regionene hjemme?
- Regionkontorene i Brussel?
- Opplever du at regionalpolitikk var høyt på agendaen i EU? Og at dette preget norske regioners forhold til EU?
- Vil du si litt om forholdet mellom de norske regionene/region kontorene og Norges delegasjon til EU? Staten/ departerementene?

Regionenes Europa

- Vil du si at regionkontorene hadde en viktig rolle som politisk aktør i Brussel?
- Var denne rollen ulikt fra delegasjonen sin?
- Opplevde du tettere kontakt med visse regioner? Og mindre med andre?
- Opplevde du at enkelte regioner arbeidet mer aktivt mot EU enn andre? Hvilke geografiske forskjeller så du?
- Hvordan arbeidet delegasjonen for å fremme norske regioners synspunkt i EU?
- Opplevde du et EU som var inkluderende?
- Var du som regionalråd mye i kontakt med EU-institusjonene for å bidra inn og fremme norske regioners sak?
- Hvordan går dere frem for å påvirke en sak i EU?
- Er mobiliseringsarbeidet til delegasjonen/ departementene ulikt fra norske regioners måte å arbeide på?
- Har departementene/ delegasjonen tilgang til EU-institusjonene?
- Har delegasjonen andre kanaler tilgjengelig for innflytelse, som ikke regionene har? Eventuelt motsatt? Opplevde du at regionene hadde andre innflytelseskanaler som ikke staten har?

EU-medlemskap

- Opplever du at det at Norge ikke er EU-medlem, begrenser dere mye i arbeidet i Brussel?

-Er dette en utfordring? Hvis ja, på hvilken måte?

-Hvis ja, hvordan kompenserer dere?

Opplevde du et EU som var interessert og villig til å høre Norges nasjonale interesse?

- Mitt teoretiske grunnlag baserer seg på teori om flernivåstyring. Vil du si at Norge tar del i EUs flernivåstyring? Siden vi har en fot innenfor og en utenfor?
- Eller er det slik at statene i høy grad dominerer i dette systemet?

Avslutning

- Er det noe mer du/dere ønsker å legge til?
- Er det noen andre viktige aktører jeg burde snakke med? Kontaktpersoner i Norge, Brussel eller i regioner?

9.7 Appendix 7

Interview Guide Jan Edøy - Former Counsellor for Regional and Local Affairs, The Mission of Norway to the EU and Former director of the ORE

Generell informasjon:

- Navn:
- Arbeidstittel/ posisjon:
- Institusjon/arbeidssted:
- Hvor lenge arbeidet du i Brussel til sammen?

Arbeidet som regional- og kommunalråd ved Norges delegasjon til EU

- Vil du si litt om din jobb som Kommunal og regionalråd i Brussel? Beskriv din rolle. Hva var dine viktigste oppgaver?
- Hvorfor har det vært et behov for en slik stilling ved delegasjonen?
- Hvor ofte var du i kontakt med regionene hjemme? Opplevde du tettere kontakt med visse regioner? Og mindre med andre?
- Regionkontorene i Brussel?
- Opplever du at regionalpolitikk var høyt på agendaen i EU? Og at dette preget norske regioners forhold til EU?
- Vil du si litt om forholdet mellom de norske regionene/regionkontorene og Norges delegasjon til EU?
- Hvordan arbeidet delegasjonen for å fremme norske regioners interesser opp mot EU-systemet?
- Er mobiliseringsarbeidet til delegasjonen/ departementene ulikt fra norske regioners måte å arbeide på?
- Var du som regionalråd mye i kontakt med EU-institusjonene for å bidra inn og fremme norske regioners sak? Hvilke institusjoner?

Arbeidet som direktør ved Osloregionens Europakontor

- I forhold til den geografiske posisjonen til Osloregionens - det at kontoret representerer hovedstadsregionen, har det noe innvirkning for hvordan kontoret arbeidet?
- Hvilke saker var høyt på agendaen for kontoret under din tid som direktør?
- Vil du si at regionkontorene hadde en viktig rolle som politisk aktør i Brussel?
- Var denne rollen ulik fra delegasjonen sin?

- Opplevde du at enkelte regionkontor arbeidet mer aktivt mot EU enn andre? I så fall, hvilke geografiske forskjeller observerte du?
- Opplevde du et EU som var inkluderende og lydhøre for norske regioners innspill? Og norske nasjonale interesser
- Opplevde du at regionene hadde andre innflytelseskanaler som ikke staten har tilgang til? Eventuelt motsatt - har delegasjonen i Brussel andre kanaler tilgjengelig for innflytelse, som ikke regionene og regionkontorene har?

EU/EØS og EUs struktur

- Opplever du at det at Norge ikke er EU-medlem - men nært knyttet til EU gjennom EØS -begrenset dere mye i arbeidet i Brussel? (Dette er ikke et politisk spørsmål knyttet til din mening om stridsspørsmålet, men mer dine tanker rundt eventuelle begrensninger, basert på dine erfaringer i Brussel, og hva du har observert av regional mobilisering osv.).

-Er dette en utfordring? Hvis ja, på hvilken måte?

- Baser på dine erfaringer, hvor viktig er tilstedeværelse for norske aktører i Brussel?
- Mitt teoretiske grunnlag baserer seg på teori om flernivåstyring. Vil du si at Norge tar del i EUs flernivåstyring, da vi har en fot inne i systemet og en fot utenfor?
 - Eller opplever du at det er slik at statene i høy grad dominerer i dette systemet?

Avslutning

- Er det noe mer du/dere ønsker å legge til?
- Er det noen andre viktige aktører jeg burde snakke med? Kontaktpersoner i Norge, Brussel eller i regioner?

9.8 Appendix 8

Interview Guide Erik Bergkvist, European Parliament

Introduksjon

- Hvor lenge har du arbeidet i Brussel? Og hjemme i regionen?
- Fortell litt om dine oppgaver som MEP i parlamentet?
- Du arbeider først og fremst for staten Sverige, tar du med mye av det regionale perspektivet fra din region og kommune med inn i arbeidet?
- Kan du si noe om den regionale dimensjonen i EU?
- Den regionale dimensjonen i Sverige?
- Er du mye i kontakt med Regionkontoret i Brussel?
- Opplever du at regionalpolitikk er høyt på agendaen i EU? Og at dette preger Sveriges regioners forhold til EU?
- Vil du si litt om forholdet mellom de svenske regionene/regionkontorene og parlamentet?
- Hvem er det som er driverne bak dette svenske regionale arbeidet i Brussel?

Regionenes Europa

- Vil du si at regionkontorene har en viktig rolle som politisk aktør i Brussel?
- Nettverk, er det en viktig arena for å påvirke politikken?
- Gjennom NSPA-nettverket, er du mye i kontakt med Norske regioner? NNEO F.EKS?
- Opplever du tettere kontakt med visse regioner? Og mindre med andre?
- Opplever du at enkelte regioner arbeidet mer aktivt mot EU enn andre? Hvilke geografiske forskjeller ser du?
- Opplever du et EU som er inkluderende med regioner og regionale saker?
- Hvor viktig er tilstedeværelse i Brussel? For regionale aktører?
- Er mobiliseringsarbeidet til den svenske stat ulikt fra regionenes måte å arbeide på?
- Mitt teoretiske grunnlag baserer seg på teori om flernivåstyring. Vil du si at Sverige tar del i EUs flernivåstyring?
- Eller er det slik at statene i høy grad dominerer i dette systemet?

Avslutning

- Er det noe mer du ønsker å legge til?
- Er det noen andre viktige aktører jeg burde snakke med? Kontaktpersoner i Sverige, Brussel eller i nettverkene?

9.9 Appendix 9

Interview Guide Jonny Lundin, Committee of the Regions

Introduksjon

- Hvor lenge har du arbeidet i Brussel? Og hjemme i regionen?
- Fortell litt om dine oppgaver som representant fra regionen i CoR?
- Hva er ditt mål i Brussel? Hvordan arbeider du for det?
- Du arbeider på vegne av din regions interesse, men hva med den svenske stat?
- Kan du si noe om den regionale dimensjonen i EU?
- Den regionale dimensjonen i Sverige?
- Hvor ofte er du i kontakt med regionen hjemme?
- Regionkontoret i Brussel?
- Opplever du at regionalpolitikk er høyt på agendaen i EU? Og at dette preger Sveriges regioners forhold til EU?
- Vil du si litt om forholdet mellom de svenske regionene/regionkontorene og CoR?
- Hvem er det som er driverne bak dette svenske regionale arbeidet?

Regionenes Europa

- CoR er jo et rådgivende organ, vil du si litt om hvordan du opplever deres makt til å påvirke politikken?
- Vil du si at regionkontorene hadde en viktig rolle som politisk aktør i Brussel?
- Er denne rollen ulik fra din som representant i CoR?
- Opplever du tettere kontakt med visse regioner? Og mindre med andre?
- Opplever du at enkelte regioner arbeidet mer aktivt mot EU enn andre? Hvilke geografiske forskjeller ser du?
- Hvordan arbeider representasjonen for å fremme Svenske regioners synspunkt i EU? Mobiliseringsarbeid?
- Opplever du et EU som er inkluderende med regioner og regionale saker?
- Er du som representant i CoR, mye i kontakt med de andre EU-institusjonene for å bidra inn og fremme svenske regioners sak?
- Er mobiliseringsarbeidet til den svenske stat ulikt fra regionenes måte å arbeide på?
- Vil du si at CoR har andre kanaler tilgjengelig for innflytelse, som ikke regionene har? Eventuelt motsatt? Opplevde du at regionene hadde andre innflytelseskanaler som ikke CoR har?

- Mitt teoretiske grunnlag baserer seg på teori om flernivåstyring. Vil du si at Sverige tar del i EUs flernivåstyring?
- Eller er det slik at statene i høy grad dominerer i dette systemet?

Avslutning

- Er det noe mer du ønsker å legge til?
- Er det noen andre viktige aktører jeg burde snakke med? Kontaktpersoner i Sverige, Brussel eller i nettverkene?

9.10 Appendix 10

Information letter covering relevant information in accordance with NSD's guidelines:

Vil du delta i forskningsprosjektet

'En kvalitativ studie av norske og svenske regionkontor i Brussel'?

Dette er et spørsmål til deg om å delta i et forskningsprosjekt hvor formålet er å undersøke *hvordan norske og svenske regionkontor arbeider og samhandler på et europeisk nivå, i Brussel*. I dette skrevet gir vi deg informasjon om målene for prosjektet og hva deltakelse vil innebære for deg.

Formål

Masteroppgaven er en del av et EU-finansiert prosjekt kalt: Differentiation, Dominance and Democracy (EU3D). Det er min veileder John Erik Fossum som er overordnet koordinator for prosjektet. Oppgaven skal publiseres i form av en rapport for ARENA i etterkant av innleveringen. Prosjektet tar utgangspunkt i å undersøke hvordan regionkontor arbeider og samhandler i Brussel, med søkelys på to overordnede spørsmål: hvordan medlemskap i EU og sentrum-periferi dimensjonen påvirker regionene/regionkontor arbeider i Brussel. I denne forbindelse skal jeg gjennomføre semistrukturerte intervjuer med de ansatte ved to norske og to svenske regionkontor i Brussel, i tillegg til ansatte fra kontorenes medeiere/partnere (fylkeskommuner, kommuner) og andre relevante aktører. Studien er et prosjekt i forbindelse med min masteroppgave i Statsvitenskap ved Universitetet i Oslo.

Hvem er ansvarlig for forskningsprosjektet?

Jeg, Marte Christophersen Haugen er masterstudent Institutt for Statsvitenskap ved Universitetet i Oslo, og skal skrive oppgave ved universitetet som da fungerer som behandlingsansvarlig institusjon.

I tillegg skrives masteroppgaven i samarbeid med ARENA – senter for Europaforskning.

Hvorfor får du spørsmål om å delta?

Datainnsamlingen baserer seg på strategisk utvalg av enheter som er relevante for forskningsprosjektet. Jeg tar kontakt med relevante aktører og medlemmer/eiere i de ulike regionkontorene jeg har tatt utgangspunkt i. Dette innebærer ansatte ved regionkontorene, samt ansatte i fylkeskommunene og kommunene som er medlem eller medeiere i kontorene i tillegg til andre aktører som kan gi informasjon om den regionale dimensjonen i EU.

Hva innebærer det for deg å delta?

Dersom du velger å delta i prosjektet, innebærer det å gjennomføre et semistrukturert intervju. Intervjuet vil ta ca. 45 minutter. Intervjuguiden inneholder spørsmål om blant annet den

regionale dimensjonen i EU, arbeidsmåter og verktøy tilgjengelig, relasjonen mellom staten og regionene osv. Det vil bli benyttet båndopptaker og transkribering i forbindelse med intervjuene, for å være sikker på at jeg som forsker får med meg all nødvendig informasjon. Opptakene vil bli slettet ved prosjektets slutt. Gi beskjed dersom du ikke ønsker at det tas opptak av samtalen.

Det er frivillig å delta

Det er frivillig å delta i prosjektet. Hvis du velger å delta, kan du når som helst trekke samtykket tilbake uten å oppgi noen grunn. Alle dine personopplysninger vil da bli slettet. Det vil ikke ha noen negative konsekvenser for deg hvis du ikke vil delta eller senere velger å trekke deg.

Ditt personvern – hvordan vi oppbevarer og bruker dine opplysninger

Vi vil bare bruke opplysningene om deg til formålene vi har fortalt om i dette skrevet. Vi behandler opplysningene konfidensielt og i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

I dette forskningsprosjektet er det meg som student (Marte Christophersen Haugen) og mine veiledere: John Erik Fossum og Resul Umit Yazici ved ARENA – Senter for Europaforskning, som vil ha tilgang til dataene fra innsamlingen.

Da oppgaven ikke legger opp til å hente ut noe særlig personopplysninger utenom arbeidssted og arbeidstitel, og ingen sensitive opplysninger skal bearbeides, er det ingen behov for å kryptere data eller gjennomføre noen andre spesielle sikkerhetstiltak for sensitive opplysninger. Disse personopplysningene ligger allerede tilgjengelig for allmenheten på internett. Dersom du/dere ønsker å forbli anonyme i selve masteroppgaven så må dere opplyse om dette, og jeg vil da selvfølgelig kunne legge til rette for det.

Hva skjer med opplysningene dine når vi avslutter forskningsprosjektet?

Opplysningene anonymiseres når prosjektet avsluttes/ oppgaven er godkjent, noe som etter planen er august 2022. Personopplysninger, dokumenter av transkribering og opptak vil slettes ved prosjektslutt.

Dine rettigheter

Så lenge du kan identifiseres i datamaterialet, har du rett til:

- innsyn i hvilke personopplysninger som er registrert om deg, og å få utlevert en kopi av opplysningene,
- å få rettet personopplysninger om deg,
- å få slettet personopplysninger om deg, og
- å sende klage til Datatilsynet om behandlingen av dine personopplysninger.

Hva gir oss rett til å behandle personopplysninger om deg?

Vi behandler opplysninger om deg basert på ditt samtykke.

På oppdrag fra Institutt for statsvitenskap ved Universitetet i Oslo har NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS vurdert at behandlingen av personopplysninger i dette prosjektet er i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

Hvor kan jeg finne ut mer?

Hvis du har spørsmål til studien, eller ønsker å benytte deg av dine rettigheter, ta kontakt med:

- Universitetet i Oslo ved Marte Christophersen Haugen (student)
martecha@student.sv.uio.no
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Hvis du har spørsmål knyttet til NSD sin vurdering av prosjektet, kan du ta kontakt med:

- NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS på epost (personverntjenester@nsd.no) eller på telefon: 55 58 21 17.

Med vennlig hilsen

John Erik Fossum Marte Christophersen Haugen

(Forsker/veileder) (Student)

Samtykkeerklæring

Jeg har mottatt og forstått informasjon om prosjektet 'En kvalitativ studie av regionkontor i Brussel', og har fått anledning til å stille spørsmål. Jeg samtykker til:

å delta i semistrukturert intervjù

at opplysninger om meg publiseres slik at jeg kan gjenkjennes basert på arbeidssted – hvis aktuelt

at mine personopplysninger lagres etter prosjektslutt, til masteroppgaven er levert, publisert og presentert – hvis aktuelt

Jeg samtykker til at mine opplysninger behandles frem til prosjektet er avsluttet

(Signert av prosjektdeltaker, dato)



Contact

EU3D scientific coordinator: Prof. John Erik Fossum

EU3D project manager: Geir Kværk

ARENA Centre for European Studies, University of Oslo

