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# Regional Participation in EU Policy-Making

Democratic Effects

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# Abstract

The European Union and the discussion on its democratic deficit is the central theme to this thesis. Democracy is traditionally discussed based on the nation-state but here the debate on how democratic legitimacy can be achieved in a globalized society, where political issues transcend borders, is utilized. Regionalization is a central concept in globalization because it is transnational to its nature and sometimes by-passes the nation-state in its influence on EU policy-making. It is investigated whether the lobbying activities of regional offices can be democratically justified and the case of the South Sweden European Office is used for empirical observations. Further, the participation of regional offices suggests helping the democratic legitimacy of the European Union. This is investigated using a Multi-Level Governance approach together with a discussion on lobbying as a means of democratic participation.

*Keywords:* regional lobbying, Multi-Level Governance, democratic deficit, civil society participation, European integration

# Table of contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
1.1	Background and Purpose .....	1
1.1.1	The Research Question .....	2
1.2	Assumptions and Limitations .....	2
1.3	Outline .....	3
<b>2</b>	<b>Methodology</b> .....	<b>4</b>
2.1	Research Philosophy and Approach .....	4
2.2	Method and Material .....	5
2.2.1	The interviews .....	5
2.2.2	Secondary sources .....	6
<b>3</b>	<b>Theoretical Framework</b> .....	<b>7</b>
3.1	Analyzing Democracy in the European Union.....	7
3.2	Multi-Level Governance and Networking.....	8
3.3	Democracy Theory .....	10
3.3.1	Deliberation and participation .....	13
3.3.2	The participation of civil society .....	13
3.4	Information and Democracy .....	15
3.4.1	Lobbying.....	15
<b>4</b>	<b>Regional Lobbying in the European Union</b> .....	<b>17</b>
4.1	Regionalization.....	17
4.1.1	Regional Policy.....	18
4.1.2	The Policy Process for Regional Policy .....	19
4.2	Regional Influence at the Sub-Systemic Level.....	19
4.3	Formal Influence in Policy-Making .....	21
4.3.1	Committee of the Regions .....	21
4.4	Informal Influence in Policy-Making.....	22
4.4.1	The role of Regional Offices in Brussels.....	22
<b>5</b>	<b>The South Sweden European Office</b> .....	<b>25</b>
5.1	Tasks of the South Sweden European Office .....	26
5.2	The Relationship With the Swedish National Government.....	28
<b>6</b>	<b>Conclusions</b> .....	<b>29</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>References</b> .....	<b>32</b>

7.1	Bibliography .....	32
7.2	Other sources .....	34

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background and Purpose

From the signing of the Nice Treaty to the Convention on the Future of Europe the debate on the distance between the European institutions and the citizens of Europe has been evident and caused concern. We cannot describe the European Union as a representative democracy in the usual terms. A discussion of the democratic deficit in the European Union must take a different turn as governance and democracy has moved beyond the nation-state. A suggested solution to the democratic deficit has involved the participation of civil society and I want to investigate this further to see what implications for democracy that brings.

The sensitivity of lobbying as a function in a democratic system is evident. There is a discussion about its impact on democracy in Sweden, which has evolved from a corporatist system to a more pluralist with informal pressure now being accepted in the system. In the European Union, influence from several different actors, both public and private, are invited in order to enable the work of the institutions, and lobbying seems to be regarded as a positive force to enhance democratic legitimacy.

Regional lobbying in the European Union is interesting as lobbying first of all is controversial in a democratic aspect, while as the regions have been invited to participate in the decision-making. Through the Committee of the Regions, these have a formal channel of influencing the policy-shaping, but they also exercise informal participation through lobbying by the regional offices. I have chosen to analyze the activities of regional offices because they portray unusual characteristics on the lobbying arena. Lobbying activities are usually associated with business interests and non-profit organizations (NGO) that work for a special interest, while regional offices represent a more collectivistic interest, which may point to difficulties in forming the same. Because they lobby on behalf of elected governments, they also hold an element of accountability. They are however representing civil society and the function of civil society participation is a focus of this thesis. The regions also add a dimension to European politics that involves an alternative aspect of the European Union, the view of the EU as a multi-level system instead of an arena for intergovernmental bargaining. This also contributes to an opening of the discussion of democratic legitimacy.

### 1.1.1 The Research Question

Deriving from the discussion above I have identified the following research question to guide my analysis.

*Can civil society participation in the form of regional lobbying help the democratic legitimacy of the European Union?*

This broad question can be taken apart and forms the following questions:

*Can lobbying be seen as democratic?*

*What are the lobbying activities of the regional offices?*

*Can participation replace representation?*

This requires a theoretical discussion on democracy and civil society participation with a further analysis of the lobbying activities of regional offices. Multi-Level Governance provides an opportunity to discuss the involvement of the regions as well as the democratic deficit. I have used South Sweden as an empirical example, drawing observations from this particular case as well as from the literature on regional office lobbying in general.

The choice of using research questions is based on the opportunity for a more open discussion of results as I am using a qualitative method with a hermeneutic research approach. There are many assumptions around what democracy is and how it should be conducted. To falsify or verify hypotheses therefore seems bold and the research question leaves more room for interpretation. The conclusions can be developed around what activities help democracy as well as what activities may be questionable from a democratic point of view.

## 1.2 Assumptions and Limitations

The following discussion highlights assumptions and limitations I find important. Several aspects of the debate on the democratic deficit and lobbying in the European Union are fascinating to investigate but I have limited my discussion to regions. They are alternative actors in civil society participation as they represent a common interest to a larger extent than other actors on the lobbying arena. I have assumed that regions do represent civil society in a broad sense. In this thesis ‘civil society’ and the ‘public’ are consequently territorially divided in regions and are therefore used as a reference to citizens in general as well as citizens of the particular region that the office represents.

I have limited my study to investigating lobbying at the sub-systemic level where policy-shaping takes place as this is the access point where lobbying is

most effective. Once a proposition has been made by the Commission, there is not much room to influence the format.

Regions also lobby their national governments, to make sure their interests are preserved in the EU. There is no possibility to elaborate on this in depth, but I have instead focused on the regions' efforts to by-pass the nation-state and influence EU decision-making on their own.

## 1.3 Outline

This thesis aims to explain how regional lobbying can help the democratic legitimacy of the European Union and I have used the South Sweden Regional Office as a single case study to provide an empiric example for my analysis. Chapter 2 discusses the methodology and research approach I have used to achieve my results together with a brief introduction of first-hand sources. Chapter 3 continues with the construction of a theoretical framework for analysis, where I confer to Multi-Level Governance and Networking together with concepts from Democracy Theory. I move on to a deeper investigation of regional lobbying applied to the European Union, explaining regionalization, Regional Policy as well as formal and informal channels to influence policy-making. Further, I investigate the case of the South Sweden European Office in-depth and its relation with the Swedish government. The thesis concludes with analysis and results.

## 2 Methodology

The intention of research is to increase our knowledge about reality, leading us to an ability to behave in it with a constructive approach. Reality is characterized with complexity, contradictions and ambiguity, which will shine through in the research process. The method states what is necessary or appropriate for the researcher to acknowledge when collecting material, analysing it scientifically, and presenting the results. The angle of approaching the problem is of great interest and the core of the method; the common sense used by the researcher. (Lundquist 1997: 96-97) (Wallén 1996: 11)

### 2.1 Research Philosophy and Approach

This study utilizes a qualitative research method deriving from a hermeneutic philosophy of reality; it is assumed that the human intellect does not have the capacity for an objective comprehension of the world around us. Objectivity is difficult to reach, as we cannot understand anything without being affected by the language used and the experiences gained over time. With a hermeneutic approach to reality, understanding can be reached by interpretation of experiences, and the understanding of people and their dialogue is central. The purpose of this investigation is therefore to understand and interpret the social phenomena for analysis, and provide an explanation that is dependent on my interpretations of the language and relationships between actors. Thus, my interpretation is colored by my understandings and provides one angle of this issue that I find the most appropriate. (Marsh, Stoker 2002:21-28) (Wallén 1996: 33-34)

I have constructed a theoretical framework based on Multi-Level Governance and Networking together with a discussion on transnational democracy derived from traditional democracy theory and their concepts, in particular representation and participation. To add further, the theoretical discussion on the importance of information in a democracy concludes with a discussion of lobbying as such an informational activity in a democratic environment. This framework is constructed in order to analyze the lobbying activities of regional actors, with the case of South Sweden as an illustrating example. The framework is designed to provide variables that can later be tested on my observations. Different theories may imply different connections between variables that lead to a particular result. A linked series of causal hypotheses that indicate how connections among variables are made can be appropriate in this case. (King, Keohane, Verba 1975: 225)



## 2.2 Method and Material

The qualitative method of using a case study, which includes interviews, use naturalistic and uncontrolled observation of a topic, which means that reality is subjective. I cannot escape this in my research and recognize the subjectivity of my results from both interviews as well as secondary material.

Even though I am using a single case study I can make observations from general information of lobbying activities of regional office as they have several common characteristics and a common purpose in representing civil society in Brussels. My conclusions are therefore drawn upon regional office lobbying in general and I have used the case of South Sweden to gain a deeper insight into these unusual actors. Therefore I suggest that using a single case in this study will not serve any methodological uncertainties. Instead I can use the case study to make additional observations that would not have been evident by using secondary material. By direct interaction and interviews with people on the edge of this activity, valuable information has been collected. (King, Keohane, Verba: 1994: 208-210)

### 2.2.1 The interviews

I attended a presentation of Sydsam and the South Sweden European Office (SSEO) in Brussels held by Frida Bergman, administrative official at the office. It took place in a small group and gave me lots of opportunities to ask questions, in order for her to elaborate further on a topic. To initiate the research process for the case study in this way was positive as it gave me the opportunity to see how they present themselves to the public rather than to a researcher on democracy.

For the interview with Roger Kaliff, the president of the executive committee of Sydsam, I used open-ended questions to allow him to talk at length on a topic. These methods are common within qualitative research where the researcher are looking for interpretations of human actions and relationships rather than quantitative data that can be generalized from. Throughout the research process I also had the help of Annica Olsson, administrative official at the Sydsam secretariat.

### 2.2.2 Secondary sources

Interviews have been conducted with several regional offices, including South Sweden, by Magnus Jerneck and Janerik Gidlund using a qualitative method (2001). Having access to this secondary material was very helpful since I did not have the opportunity to conduct so many interviews myself. Choosing South Sweden for my case study was due to proximity. I've taken into consideration my own subjectivity in my understanding of their results but I am able to compare them with mine and draw general conclusions. A more quantitative survey on lobbying in Brussels was performed by Irina Michalowitz (2004) among regional offices, political consultants and lobbyists from private firms. From this survey I was able to collect valuable information about types of activities that regional offices are involved in.

## 3 Theoretical Framework

Democracy has traditionally been discussed using representation in a nation-state as a precondition; hence the discussion on the democratic deficit in the European Union has taken a turn where the solution would be to increase representation. But the European Union is not a state, although the discussion on the democratic deficit often leads to conclusions where the EU is looked upon as an expansion of the nation-state democracy. The polity portraits problems with citizen participation, accountability, political competition, transparency and European identity. The debate then often concludes that in order to solve the democratic problem, EU has to evolve into a federal state where these democratic values can be safeguarded, or reduced to a confederation where member states are responsible for the democratic legitimacy of the Union.

The EU must naturally be defined in order to analyze its structure. The problem is however, that the European Union, as we have concluded, is not a state. Some scholars have chosen to analyze the system looking upon it as an international organization. I have chosen to look upon the EU as neither a state nor an international organization. In this study I have chosen the view of the EU as a multi-level system, especially since I will discuss the influence of sub-national governments on policy-making in the system and the implications of democracy this involvement brings.

### 3.1 Analyzing Democracy in the European Union

A lot of the debate on the democratic deficit of the European Union focuses on input-legitimacy and the lack of it. I have used Jachtenfuchs definition of democracy as:

*“the institutionalization of a set of procedures for the control of governance which guarantees the participation of those who are governed”* (1998: 47)

The definition by Jachtenfuchs is emphasized because it highlights participation and not just representation.<sup>1</sup> Theoretically there are many ways to

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<sup>1</sup> although I want to discuss the concept of democracy further in order to present several views.

make sure citizens participate in governance and in this definition parliamentary democracy where majority versus minority rules does not necessarily induce democracy. Over the last decades, efforts have been made to create some kind of representative governance structure in the EU to achieve legitimacy. (Jachtenfuchs 1998: 47) It is generally agreed among scholars that the European Parliament does not have enough power to solve this problem, and there are many arguments against an increase of their power. The power of the European Parliament is not essential for this analysis; instead the focus will lie on the Commission and the sub-systemic level of policy-making where influence by civil society is focused. As the theory and practice of democracy has always been closely tied to the state, it causes problems for the debate on democratic legitimacy in a transnational organization such as the European Union in an era of globalization. (Dryzek 1999: 30) (Newman 2004: 357-358) Globalization is a relatively new phenomenon and can be suggested to mean that “social, political and economical activities have become world-wide in scope and that levels of interaction have become more intensified and interconnected. Political issues that are important for society transcend to a level where nation-states cannot control them and the traditional concepts of democracy are no longer sufficient enough to analyze this situation. (Held 1996:21)

As discussed in the introduction, I want to suggest that the participation of civil society helps contribute to input legitimacy in the European Union. Regional governments are essential for this discussion as they can be defined as civil society in a broad sense. They also represent both public and private interests and are closest to the citizens. In order to explain their importance as actors in the European Union it is necessary to take a standpoint that does not necessarily emphasize the EU as an arena for intergovernmental interaction. Multi-Level Governance can help explain the importance of actors of different kinds and on different levels.

## 3.2 Multi-Level Governance and Networking

European integration together with regionalism has changed the political implications for the nation-states as it has formed decision-making levels above as well as below the state-level. Multi-Level Governance (MLG) provides an alternative perspective on the European Union, differing in its interpretation of the system as intergovernmental. It does not deny the importance of states as actors, but argues that national governments are not able to control the supranational institutions they have created. The specialization of EU policy-making is increasing and the European Council, which is the arena for intergovernmental

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bargaining, relies on the Commission to set the agenda, forge compromises and supervise compliance. MLG thus points out that there are several points of access in the system that are not restricted to state actors but also to sub-national and transnational interest groups. (Hooghe, Marks 2003: 309-311) (Keating, Hooghe 2004: 240)

An important feature of the MLG theory is its reflections around 'government' and 'governance'. Government is too narrowly defined, connected to the nation-state and the regulation of access to scarce resources and conflict over fundamental values. Governance on the other hand, refers to a broader sense of politics where the production, accumulation and regulation of collective goods at all levels are noted. It sees power relations as "structured by reciprocal interdependence on each other's resources." MLG takes a normative stand, promoting the idea that this approach to understanding the European Union brings in a dimension that is closer to the people. Due to its predisposition that the policy process in the European Union can be described more accurately through a multi-level system, it opposes an intergovernmental approach. Because it recognizes multiple forms and levels of decision-making it provides a basis for enhancing democratic legitimacy and effective policy-making in a globalized society. (Marsh, Stoker 2002: 37-38)

The European Union is characterized by negotiations between several independent actors and cannot be seen as a hierarchical decision-making body based on majority. Decisions taken on the higher levels are dependent on the consent of the lower and it has an important consequence; the institution's self-interest is often more important than the substantive interests. Because political parties and beliefs based on ideology do not have the same importance as it does on a national level this competition is missing. The relationship between the actors within the EU is characterized by loose coupling; information exchanges between the different levels play a key role in the system. (Jachtenfuchs, Kohler-Koch 2004:103-105) In Multi-Level Governance, different levels such as international, national, regional and local, with networks in addition to these, possess authority. Hence power can be derived from all of these levels and not just the centre. Regions can be defined broadly as a part of civil society and these have increased access to funds from the EU. Academics debate the ability of sub-national actors to develop channels to EU policy-making independent from the national governments, meaning that the national governments are able to restrain their access. However, this intergovernmental approach can be challenged by MLG that recognizes several players on the EU arena. (Bache 1998: 156) (Pedler 2002:4)

The involvement of external actors in the European policy-making process is determined by the value they are able to contribute to efficient problem-solving as well as the resources they have to influence. The Commission has invited external experts to strengthen its role as a political entrepreneur. In this sense the involvement of interest groups and experts at this stage does not only serve the

purpose of increasing input legitimacy, there have also been suggestions that the policy-making has increased in quality. (Mauer 2003: 168)

The system with a multitude of different expert committees to prepare policy-making gives EU governance a distinct networking feature. This culture of consultation and communication between the committees and external actors is essential for two major reasons. Firstly, different interests based on ideological positions through party competition do not push decision-making forward because the Commission is to remain a non-political technocratic body. Secondly, because of the complex nature of our society today, along with the complexity of the involvement of 25 national political systems, the system needs extensive resources to rely on. Defining the problem and analysing the given situation must be a priority for the institution. Gathering information in the form of expertise and argument is the most striking pattern of interaction and the Commission is able to take the lead when negotiations take a turn to analysing the factual aspects of a decision. Advisory committees are geared to support the decision-making process by providing this much-needed expert knowledge and the Commission even has a legal duty to consider any new development based on scientific facts.<sup>2</sup> (Christiansen 2004: 100-102)

Fragmentation is also an essential feature of the EU political system as there are massive cross-sectoral differences in policy-style. There are policy areas that are seen as best dealt with at the European level and policy areas that are to be solved on a national or regional level, which means that power and authority is to be divided and shared for efficiency. Even if the debate in some hesitant member states revolves around the loss of sovereignty there is still a consensus among the elite that decision-making authority must be spread across the different European levels of government. (Falkner 1997: 5) (Hallström 2003: 2)

The main critics of MLG are unsurprisingly intergovernmentalists, who discuss the 'joint decision trap'.<sup>3</sup> They claim that too many participants, multiple arenas and several potential combinations of policy-making processes creates deadlock. A greater complexity in the decision-making process creates opacity and thus the accountability is lost and this decreases democratic legitimacy. (Marsh, Stoker 2002: 38)

### 3.3 Democracy Theory

When looking upon the European Union as a multi-level system with points of access for several non-state actors to exercise pressure, it becomes interesting to

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<sup>2</sup> see also EC Treaty, Art 95, 3

<sup>3</sup> see Moravcsik 1993

develop the discussion on the proposed democratic deficit in the system further. The analysis in this paper is derived from the view of the EU as a multi-level system with networking features. In order to provide a framework I also intend to discuss democracy theory by using concepts from several different democracy theories and create a tool for analysing democracy and lobbying in the EU. Recently, the academic discussion on democracy has begun to develop concepts surrounding this essential feature of politics. Society is changing and globalization brings with it issues concerning democracy that cannot easily be solved. I do not attempt to contribute to the 'redefining' of democracy but rather discuss elements of the existing democracy theory as well as draw upon the quite recent scholarly discussion on democracy in a globalized world. This should build an adequate framework to base my analysis upon. I intend to establish a connection between the activities of sub-national actors such as lobbying with the debate on the democratic deficit in a non-state polity such as the European Union.

Democracy is a form of government that is founded on the citizen's consent and is crucial for legitimizing government. The political elite compete for power and need to follow the public will. It is first hand carried out through elections where the citizens choose their representatives to make political decisions for them. However, democracy is also about what happens between the elections, such as demonstrations, referendums and the discussion of the public agenda. Lobbying is one form of trying to influence from underneath. There are two main ways of thinking within democracy theory. One looks at democracy as a form of decision-making of the issues that are important to society. The other emphasizes the extent to which citizens get their needs fulfilled in the decision-making; it is the content of the decisions taken that are of importance. (Larsson 1998, 18) The democratic system does not presume that every individual agrees to every public decision taken at every moment and conflict and a critical debate is essential to sustain the energy of the system. In a democracy based on indirect influence or representation such as elections, the citizens' political power is limited to choosing persons that best represent their interest and can be held accountable for the policy-making. Most states do not rely solely on this representative system but also encourages participation in the policy-making through the formation of pressure groups. (Weale 1999: 85)

The classical liberal theory, first represented by Mill and Rosseau, emphasizes the importance of widespread political participation by individuals. Both found it important that individuals were actively participating as citizens if true democracy was to be achieved. Other recent liberal theorists have argued that regular competitive elections is the key to a democratic government, however several suggest that the importance of opinion through pressure groups as well as open elections are the key features of a democracy. Interest groups have formed and acted alongside the formal governmental institutions in western industrialized societies and have come to play a very important role in the decision-making. First it was the development of employer and employee organizations, as the government, which was to manage economy, had to negotiate with producer

groups in order to make decisions accepted by these groups and as such were essential for decision-making. The evolution of the welfare state stimulated action from consumers, such as tenants, patients and parents, and the political parties had to negotiate with them to remain in power of government. (Ham, Hill 1993: 27)

Robert Dahl argues in “Who governs” (1961) that power in western industrialized societies is widely distributed among different groups and referred to the system as a “polyarchi”. No groups are without power to influence and no group is necessarily dominant. Dahl, together with Nelson Polsby representing a pluralistic view in democracy theory has defined power as “when person A can make person B do something he otherwise wouldn’t have done”. However, power has many dimensions and Dahl develops further; “power can be investigated in a society’s politics by looking at who participates, who wins and loses, and who is successful in carrying through his will in the decision making.” (Gaventa 1980: 29) Any group can ensure its political preferences if it is determined enough. These pluralist tendencies can be found and recognized also in the writings of political theory in Western Europe. Their pluralistic position does not hold that power is equally distributed among the participating groups in a specific arena, but rather argues that individuals and different groups in society do not have the same degree of power and the ability to influence. (Ham, Hill 1993: 27) For this thesis, three forms of power are essential:

- Political power - control of the government and the political decisions made
- Economic power - financial resources are needed for power and the distribution of resources is essential
- Normative power - the ability to influence through information and language, to persuade

There is one key factor in their discussion; no one is considered completely powerless. Everyone, including groups and individuals, do have power at some stage of the decision-making process, be it small or very significant. The pluralist theory does not see the sources of power, such as information, capital and expertise to be accumulated to one group or individual, instead power is fragmented and diffused. The idea of a political market place is an essential basic idea of the pluralists. What a group can achieve depends on its resources or sources of power. (Ham, Hill 1993: 27) Here, democracy can also be described as an arena where actors are allowed to test the force of their arguments, or as a prize to be gained by the actors that are most successful in stating their arguments. However, it is important to realize that because of the distribution of the different kinds of powers discussed above, the arena is structured to favor some contestants over others. (Rubin 2001: 712)

In this paper the democratic implications of lobbying activities are essential. We have seen the problems of establishing democratic legitimacy through a representative system on an international level such as the European Union.



Modern thinking within democracy theory argues that the essence of democratic legitimacy on this level is to be found in deliberation, rather than in voting or representation of persons or interests. Deliberation or communication is the key to democracy, as the output may be perceived as legitimate as long as the process leading to it has involved the participation of the people subject to it. (Dryzek 1999: 44)

### 3.3.1 Deliberation and participation

Democracy theory varies in the perception of what constitutes a democracy. For a non-state polity such as the European Union where representation is not sufficient, participation becomes essential in the debate over citizens' control of the political agenda. The theories based on Rosseau emphasizes participation as central to the concept of democracy because it moralizes citizens and enables them to form an opinion on what is important for the common good. By participation I use a rather broad definition by Perry, Moyser and Day where participation means; "taking part in the process of formulation, passage and implementation of public policies." (1992: 16) For this thesis, it is the formulation stage of a policy process that is the main focus. This means that participation is not just the voting directly on issues of decision-making but also to exercise control of the political agenda by initiating what issues is to be dealt with and the details of proposals for legislation. (Weale 1999: 84-85)

Deliberative democratic theory uses the pluralist insight that citizens are often organized in political, social, or religious groups which constitutes much of the politically oriented activity performed by the citizens. The participation in such groups provides an opening to the investigation of social interchange, opinion formation, and conceptual development among the common citizens. This notion is something that other theories of democracy tend to give little importance or completely ignore. (Rubin, 2001:727)

### 3.3.2 The participation of civil society

The concept of civil society is central to the deliberative theory and to participatory democracy as this is where public reasoning takes place. The common goal for civil society is working towards the common good through public reasoning. However, associative democracy treats civil society differently and sees organizations or associations which have gained political functions through the delegation from authorities as more democratic. They are accountable both to their members as well as the public authorities, which ensures a high degree of responsibility towards its sponsors as well as members. (Michalowitz 2004: 150-153) The role of a transnational civil society is largely about questioning, criticizing and publicizing the politics of the European Union. These

actions can help change course of action and even if civil society's participation is based on a consultative relationship with the institutions, their communicative power still serves a democratic function. (Dryzek 1999: 45)

Using deliberative democracy doesn't necessarily explain the Commission's relationship with civil society because the institution does not aim to create a space for public reasoning but rather a dialogue between the institution and the groups within civil society in the form of consultancy. The Commission stresses the role of the consultation process in the relationship with civil society. To achieve input legitimacy, accountability is necessary, something that is difficult to achieve with lobbying as those who represent the members usually cannot be removed. (Michalowitz 2004: 154) Lobbying opens a second channel to influence policy-making, something that helps legitimise a transnational system that lacks representation possibilities. There are however several democratic problems with the phenomena of lobbying as it requires resources that are unevenly distributed across society and because there are usually no possibilities to hold influencers accountable.

Pluralists such as Schattschneider who followed Dahl and Polsby, later argued that the political arena on which organized interests compete for influence was characterized by inequality. Different groups had different possibilities to uphold their interests on this arena depending on their resources such as political, normative and economical power. He also stated that participation in organizations executing pressure contained an upper-class bias. Organizations from the economic life and corporations dominate the system and also have the most resources in form of capital. Research on individual participation in voluntary organizations also back up Schattschneider's theory as it shows significant class distinction:

*“the notion that the pressure system is automatically representative of the whole community is a myth fostered by the universalizing tendency of modern group theories. Pressure politics is a selective process ill designed to serve diffuse interests. The system is skewed, loaded, and unbalanced in favor of fraction of a minority...Probably about 90% of the people cannot get into the pressure system.”* (Schattschneider 1960: 35)

There are differences at the individual level when it comes to the ability and will to participate in organizations that carry out pressure in a political system. It has been suggested that members of such organizations are usually from a higher socio-economic group. (Naurin, 1999: 30) Also, interest groups that follow their own interests rather than those of the public cannot be regarded as contributing to democratic legitimacy, as they do not work towards the common good. (Michalowitz, 2004: 156)

## 3.4 Information and Democracy

The development of the Information Society, with better communications that give us access to more information creates new demands for politics. There is an explicit connection between democracy and information, where free speech is often said to be the “cornerstone of a democracy.” Without unrestricted access to information, the political agenda cannot be controlled and it is therefore important to discuss the increased importance and dominance of information in our society today. (SOU 2000:1: 53) Information can be described as the strategic messages that will lead to increased knowledge, or what reduces uncertainty and changes previous knowledge.

In a democratic society there are a number of ways to keep informed about what is going on in the political system; through experience, literate sources, associations and mass media. It is a must for democracy that its citizens have access to channels that can increase their knowledge and initiate debates concerning important issues in society. (Johnson 1999: 31-32) The development of the information society brings an enlargement of the political agenda and the struggle of what issue is to be debated and processed becomes even tighter. More issues are discovered, brought to the agenda and demand a solution. The increasing speed, knowledge and levels of politics demand more time and energy from the legislators on every political level; local, regional, national and international. Hence the ability to reach the attention of the legislators becomes more difficult, especially on the European level as this has been introduced as yet another level above the national, even further away from the citizens. Thus discussions and debates with the citizens are very rare and people might feel left behind in the decision-making. (SOU 2000:1:53) The information society creates a new market for political influence and it is important to have access to the information in order to make your needs become a priority. Normative power is important, as you can more easily influence someone when you have sufficient and quality information to persuade.

The increased need for information by legislators creates a demand for participation by citizens and creates an exchange relationship between the decision makers and the public. Decision makers rely on the public for information, which in turn creates access to them and the decision making.

### 3.4.1 Lobbying

Lobbying is a way for special interests and pressure groups to influence the political decision-making process using information as a tool. There is a tension about the word as it is often associated with pressure on the decision-making system by financially powerful institutions and multi-national companies rather

than with the ability of economically weaker groups in society to influence. Actors representing these groups must therefore be present on the lobbying arena in order to safeguard democracy and competition between the different interests can be seen as beneficial for democracy. It is crucial that competition is open to everyone and that new actors may enter the scene. (LOGON 2002: 37) Lobbying can provide the legislator with information that will benefit the provider in the output of the political system, in legislation and the implementation of decisions. There are three concepts that define the core of lobbying activities:

- Information – the strategic messages that will lead to increased knowledge.
- Communication – the process of messages founded on interaction among those who participate in the process and lead to certain attitude, opinion and behavior.
- Relation – the purpose of the information activities – mutual engagement and mutual tasks that lead to actions and results.

The information activities fulfils an important function in every organization, be it a business, an institution, an authority or an association. Information serves different interests in an organization; it's a tool to develop knowledge, attitude and commitments among its interest groups. It is also a tool to participate and is a condition for a democratic decision process. There are different ways of reaching legislators through information. Informal ways to reach decision-makers and to influence their decisions are separated in two categories; direct and indirect contacts.

Direct contacts are usually associated with the concept of lobbying because it means direct contacts with the political decision-makers. This form of exercising political pressure is usually the most successful but not available to everyone. A personal network is very important, but pressure can also be executed through simply providing the legislator with convincing written material and information about a topic to make sure they set their mind in the right direction and make the desired decision. Those groups that do not have the possibility to interact with the legislators in person often execute this second form of direct lobbying. The decision-maker often relies on this type of resources of information in order to be able to make up their mind and make decisions as they often lack the time to research for background material regarding every single decision they make.

Indirect impact can be described as molding public opinion through media's attention and make media deal with a special issue. This is performed through targeting the media and providing them with press releases, press kits and even video material that enables journalists to produce a proper news piece about the issue. Internet is also used as a forum for reaching the public. (SOU 1999:121: 149-154)

# 4 Regional Lobbying in the European Union

The EU helps form, design, implement and influence about 80 per cent of all the economic decisions as well as around 50 per cent of all the political decisions taken within the Union. Not only private companies but also civil society, including local governments and their associations need to be in direct contact with Brussels and the EU institutions. The arena where lobbying takes place is defined by the institutions that the campaigns work to influence, by their importance in relation to each other, and the form of their decision-making process. Numerous players seek their place in the European Union arena, not just commercial interests or NGO's but also other governmental institutions such as member-state governments, third country governments as well as regional and local governments within the member states which are the focus of this thesis. Due to their positions close to the citizens, local governments are essential in the EU decision-making process. (Pedler 2002: 1) (LOGON 2002: 37) Warleigh has claimed that the lobbying community in Brussels can never account for a democratic participation of civil society because they will only represent their active members and never all citizens with an interest in their issue. (2001: 623-624)

This chapter aims to provide the essential observations regarding regions and their influence in policy-making.

## 4.1 Regionalization

Regionalization is a natural consequence of further European integration because work on regional development is promoted through the Structural Funds (see 4.1.1). Programming funded by these is expected to involve agents from regional and local levels and regions are bound to form an interest in lobbying at the European level. The Commission pushes increased regionalization through the power to redistribute regional funds, but forces from the bottom are also contributing to increased regional cooperation. Cultural and ethnic objectives are additional reasons, as well as competition between urban regions. Regional boundaries are bound to become increasingly flexible in the future, opening up possibilities of new coalitions and cooperation, linking regions closely together across and within regional boundaries with several different interests, although

most will remain economic. This development is likely to affect the structure of power within the EU. (Häggröth 1999: 160) In addition to their own individual interests, regions have a common interest in regionalism being promoted in the EU; like the institutional design of their influence, the design of partnerships in policy implementation and the interpretation of the principle of subsidiarity. There is a constant strain between the promotion of regionalism and the pursuit of the individual interests. (Keating, Hooghe 2004: 243)

Two reactions from the regions to the furthering of European integration can be identified. The transfer of competencies from national to European level, which directly influence them has caused both rejective and welcoming responses. The rejectionist view, which is still present in Scandinavia, fears a loss of democratic control. However, some regions see the transferring of competencies to this level as a source of political and economic opportunities, especially underdeveloped regions. Regions with a strained relationship to their central governments are also responding more positively. (Keating, Hooghe 2004: 241-242)

#### 4.1.1 Regional Policy

Although several areas of policy-making are of interest to the regions, regional policy development is the number one priority for the regions. In order to make the understanding of the involvement of regions in EU policy-making more comprehensible I want to describe Regional Policy as well as the process for its decision-making in more detail.

Regional policy stands for more than a third of the EU budget and its priority is job creation in order to strengthen the political, social and economic possibilities of all 254 regions in the European Union. The redistribution of the funds available is a tool for solidarity, which is even mentioned in the preamble of the Treaty of the European Union. The Treaty specifies that; “the Community acts to strengthen its economic and social cohesion and specifically to reduce the gaps among levels of development in the various regions.” Together with the funds provided by the Member States, regional policy is co-funded by the European funds, Structural Funds and the Cohesion fund.

The Structural Funds sponsors four thematic areas where the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) finances infrastructure, job-creating investment, local development projects and aid for small firms. The European Social Fund (ESF) sponsors unemployed and disadvantaged groups’ access and return to the workforce. The Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance (FIFG) works to modernize fishing and the Guidance Section of the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF-Guidance) finances rural development measures and provides aid for farmers, mainly in severely underdeveloped regions. They have three objectives; to help regions lagging behind economically to catch up, to support economic and social conversion in

industrial, rural, urban or fisheries dependent areas facing structural difficulties and thirdly to modernize systems of training and promoting employment.

Four Community initiatives have been developed to solve problems facing all Member States and regions. Interreg III supports the development of crossborder, interregional and transnational cooperation and Urban II supports the innovation in urban areas. Leader+ aims to promote rural development initiatives and EQUAL serves to combat discrimination on the job market.

The Cohesion Fund is designated for the least developed Member States, before 2004 these were Greece, Portugal, Ireland and Spain. Between 2004 and 2006 a third of this budget is reserved for the 10 new Member States. This fund does not finance programmes but rather projects or stages of projects that have been identified beforehand. They are managed by national authorities that then submit the projects to the Commission. (European Commission 2005)

#### 4.1.2 The Policy Process for Regional Policy

A proposal for the rules guiding the use of the Structural funds and the budget is proposed by the Commission after a negotiation with the European Parliament and the European Council decides upon the proposal. The funds are allocated by country and priority objective. The Commission defines which areas can take advantage of a form of aid in agreement with the Member States and it also defines common thematic guidelines for the states to accept. Taking into account the Commission's thematic guidelines, the states and regions then gathers and formulates proposals in a plan to support the regions. Once established, the plans are presented to the Commission who then reaches an agreement with the states before it adopts the plans and programmes. It provides an advance to the states in order to initiate the programs. National or regional authorities decide the details of the programs, which don't need to be negotiated with the Commission but are sent to it for informational purpose. The authority responsible for administration of the funds selects the projects and distributes the funds. It is responsible for monitoring the progress and keeps the Commission informed on the usage of the funds. The Commission makes sure that the control system for the spending of the funds is working properly and organizes exchanges on certain themes. It is also a task of the Commission to keep the authorities informed about of any new priorities within the Community that has an impact on regional development. (European Commission 2005)

## 4.2 Regional Influence at the Sub-Systemic Level

The sub-systemic level where policy-shaping takes place is where regional actors such as regional offices have an ability to influence and the Commission is therefore the primary partner for the regions. The policy-shaping decisions do not decide EU policy, instead policy-shaping decisions are taken early in the policy-making process, at the formulation stage. What policy options will be pushed forward in the process, and what options will be cast aside as well as the details of the policies are determined at this stage and are still rather flexible. Later on at the systemic level, policy becomes inflexible because modification means that the bargaining have to start over. After the Commission has presented a proposal there is hardly any room left for external influence. (Peterson, Bomberg 1999: 21-22)

It has been established that in order to secure influence in EU policy-making it is important to focus efforts to influence as early as possible in the process, further emphasizing the importance for lobbying activities at this stage. The earlier one can identify the upcoming issues on the political agenda the better opportunities one has to actually make a difference. In the European Union this means that the lobbyist should react to the Green papers circulating in the Commission that later on are developed into White Papers. Close connections with lower officials at the Commission are therefore often fruitful. Monitoring informal channels within interest groups, in addition to the overall lobbying community or other EU institutions, also reveals issues that potentially may reach the political agenda. (Jerneck, Gidlund 2001: 118-121)

The Single Market program from the mid 1980s to the early 1990s marked the high point of the Commission's power and influence and since then the member governments have strongly emphasised the intergovernmental aspect of the European Union through the Treaty of Maastricht. The member states through the Council of Ministers are setting the EU's agenda through summits of the European Council. In addition, the crisis in the Commission in 1999 further decreased its reputation and influence. However, the Commission is still the key player in initiating policy and implementing decisions that affect the citizens of the EU. As the Commission is the sole initiator and drafter of legislation it holds a powerful tool in a polity such as the European Union that involve so many actors. It can amend or withdraw legislation at any point in the policy-making process. It annually produces between two and three hundred reports, white papers, green papers and other studies and communications. This requires good access to information. Because regions can be defined broadly as a part of civil society and these have increased access to funds from the EU, their participation in decision-making is crucial. Academics usually describe the Commission as the key-player in the involvement of sub-national actors because of its agenda-setting function. The relationship enables the regional actors to bypass the national government in the initial policy-making. (Pedler 2002:4) (Hooghe, Marks 2003: 294-295)

To resolve the conflicts that arise with the EU's redistributive policies is important. Regional policy redistributes resources of specific groups and



individuals at the expense of others. The power to distribute funds, for example to regions and local authorities is an important source of legitimacy. It is something that the Commission as well as the member states' governments are eager to control. (Héritier 1999: 62-64) The logic for EU regional policy is the same as national regional policies; because of economic restructuring some regions are suffering and it is a social compensation for these. It is also a means to legitimise the European Union in regions where support for further integration is weak. An example being Great Britain as the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) was founded in order to compensate for the country's net contribution to the EU in the beginning of its membership. In the beginning the administration of the funds were handled on a national level but over the years the Commission has taken more and more responsibility in order to gain power. (Keating 1998: 173)

Through the Commission's working groups, representatives from regional and local governments have an opportunity to participate in the initiation process of policy-making, also known as the sub-systemic level where policy-shaping takes place. The invitations are sent to the Permanent Representation and they are forwarded to the national government for distribution among the ministries who then decide who participates. A good relationship with the national government is therefore an essential part of successful networking in Brussels. Even if regional governments have reasonable resources and have their own Brussels office they often have difficulties in determining a short list of priorities. They lobby mainly for subsidies and are invited to formal and semi-formal EU meetings and often succeed in presenting a European face when cooperating with other regions within Europe. However their government background with elected politicians and mass publicity essential on the home front often leaves difficulties in determining priorities beforehand as well as a critical evaluation of activities afterwards. (LOGON 2002: 40)

## 4.3 Formal Influence in Policy-Making

In order to bring the European Union closer to its citizens, the Commission has invited regional and local governments to formally participate in the decision-making. This represents formal civil society participation and is interesting for this analysis.

### 4.3.1 Committee of the Regions

The Committee of the Regions was established to give the regions a formal channel of influence and the members are representatives from regional and local government that are appointed by their central government. Because it is a form of organized formal participation in the policy-shaping process it does not hold evident democratic implications.

About 75 per cent of all EU legislation is implemented at a local level so it makes sense that the regions get a formal opportunity to voice their concerns to the Commission. To close the gap between the EU level and the citizens it made sense to include the elected governments closest to the citizens. The Treaties state that the Commission and Council must consult the Committee of the Regions whenever new proposals are made in areas that have implications for the regional and local level. The Maastricht Treaty set out five areas that require consultation; economic and social cohesion, trans-European infrastructure networks, health, education and culture. The Amsterdam Treaty added another five areas; employment policy, social policy, the environment, vocational training and transport. Outside the areas established in the Treaties the EU institutions can consult the CoR in any issue that concerns them and the Committee can draw an opinion on its own initiative, giving it an agenda-setting function.

Three main principles guide the work of this committee:

- Subsidiarity, which was written into the Treaties as the CoR was established. Decision within the EU should be taken as close to the citizen as possible and the EU should not take on tasks that are better suited for national, regional and local administrations.
- Proximity, which means that all levels of government should organize their work with transparency in mind so that the citizens know who is in charge and responsible for a particular issue.
- Partnership, which holds that all levels of governance should cooperate and be involved in the decision-making process. (Committee of the Regions, 2005)

## 4.4 Informal Influence in Policy-Making

In addition to these formal channels, regional and local governments have increased their participation through informal channels by establishing regional offices in Brussels.

### 4.4.1 The role of Regional Offices in Brussels

According to state-centric models of influence in the European Union, regions traditionally need to lobby their central state to maintain their interests in Brussels. But regions have created a new role for themselves and bypassed the dependence on central government for access to influencing EU policy-making, especially by opening their own permanent offices in Brussels. Even if they do not have equal formal power to influence, informal channels still play an important part in the struggle for power through information. (Stéclebout 2003: 3-5)

The Commission strongly encouraged the establishment of the Regional Offices, and there are several reasons for this encouragement. It is suggested to be a means for the Commission to maintain its power over national states through its control over the Structural Funds and its informal exchanges with the regional offices. The involvement of several interests diversifies the policy-shaping, makes the system more transparent to civil society and increases its control of the political agenda. The Commission strongly depends on external sources for information, as the organization is quite small in proportion to the wide range of issues and the amount of information that it processes in order to make decisions. To add to its sources from national government influence it encourages the emergence of lobbying in all fields, private as well as local and regional authorities that provide it with viewpoints on issues that concern them. They have even created formal channels of influence in order to achieve the above-mentioned goals. Regions are frequently invited to state their opinion on matters that are of interest to them, especially when it comes to regional policy. (Peterson, Bomberg 1999: 80-81) (Stéclebout 2003: 3-5)

Regions have established offices for different reasons and they also have different status just as the regions themselves are more or less powerful and established for different purposes. Some represent civil society to a large extent; some represent pure public interest while some combine the representation of the public with the private interests of the region. (Keating, Hooghe 2004: 245) The increased role of the regions in a globalized society leads to the natural consequence that regions need to protect their interests, which are becoming increasingly political and economical to its nature. The main purpose is to support the regions need for resources, political as well as economical, so that welfare and development can be developed in a society characterized by interdependence. The establishment of the integrated market means that local units need to take a larger economical responsibility apart from producing welfare. The increased activities of the regions and the regional offices means that they need to formulate their interest in amore precise manner which can turn out to be a difficult task because of the region's increasing agenda. Not only states, but increasingly regions, are competing for market shares and political influence. This competition is not limited to regions within the state, but also to regions within Europe which introduces a lot of issues on the region's agenda. (Jerneck, Gidlund: 2001: 164-168)

In a survey performed by Michalowitz (2004), lobbyists in Brussels, including regional offices, pointed out seven factors as essential for successful lobbying: representativity, professionalization, strategic advice, image-building, lobbying of other actors, and the delivery of expertise and contact provision. The investigation showed that lobbying in Brussels is very goal oriented and that the interest of public actors is well taken into account. The survey also showed that regional offices dealt with fewer activities than associations, firms or political consultants. Their operations were limited to lobbying for regional interests, promotion of EU

in their own region as well as promotion of the region in the EU and informal legislative negotiating. Michalowitz did however not include political monitoring as a variable. Perhaps because this is the foundation of any lobbying activity, as you need to be informed about what is going on in the political system to perform effective lobbying. (Michalowitz, 2004: 163)

## 5 The South Sweden European Office

In order to gain a closer insight in the activities of the regions and their regional offices I have used the region of South Sweden as an example. The regions and the regional offices represent civil society participation in the EU. This is a small case study in order to shed further light on the focus of this thesis; the democratic implications of the lobbying by regions for influence in the policy-making of the European Union.

As regions in Sweden such as counties or municipals are quite small in a large polity such as the European Union several regional and local governments have created informal networks comprising a region that have no other defined political connection to each other. The limitations of what counties and municipals are to participate depends solely on their desire to access the decision-making in the EU. Hence, Sydsam was created to gain access to the Structural Funds within EU:s regional policy and the region of South Sweden that Sydsam represents is in this function solely founded on economical reasons even though there might be historical and cultural ties.

In the initiation phase of the regional office, Sydsam cooperated with an existing German office before establishing the office and the German model was used to create the operations. The establishment of physical resources took approximately 6 months, finding an office space, recruiting personnel and creating office material and brochures. An even more important issue was the establishment of a contact network and the marketing of the region through effective and appropriate communication channels. During this phase the activities of the regional office was labelled as informational activities rather than lobbying, this is due to the negative associations with the word lobbying that still exist, especially in Sweden.. (Jerneck, Gidlund 2001: 59-60)

The members of Sydsam are the County Councils in Jönköping and Kronoberg, the County Associations of Local Authorities in Jönköping and Kronoberg, The Regional Council in Kalmar County, Region Blekinge, Region Skåne and Halland Regional Development Council. The local authorities have several common interests but each region within the organization has different preconditions and potential. (Kaliff 2005)

The tasks of Sydsam are as follows

- To coordinate and uphold South Sweden's joint interests on the basis of an interregional/international approach and as a region in Europe

- To represent South Sweden in contacts with the EU, the Swedish Government and regional representatives in the other Baltic countries in discussions about the development of the southern Baltic region into a thriving growth region, in accordance with the intentions of its principals and in specific issues.
- To promote and increase knowledge about the importance of the region by working in various specialist fields in ways that complements the efforts of the members.
- To continue to build and consolidate the network in South Sweden with the aim to broaden the commitment to the interests of South Sweden and utilizing existing resources so as to avoid double work.

The highest decision-making body is the General Assembly with representatives appointed by each member. These are locally and regionally elected officials from all parties. In turn the General Assembly appoints the executive body; the Executive Committee. The organization can be portrayed as a network, where the pre-determined political issues to be focused on connect the local governments within the region and make them interdependent. The legitimacy of the organization is founded in the elected officials. Some of the regional offices in Brussels are sponsored by private interests who pay for their membership but this is not the case for any of the regional offices in Sweden. (Jerneck, Gidlund 2001: 89)

## 5.1 Tasks of the South Sweden European Office

The South Sweden European Office is an integrated part of the operations and its mission is “to support SydSam and its member organizations in the promotion of South Sweden as an active, thriving region in the South Baltic and Europe at large.” Issues important to the member organizations are largely handled at home, while the role of the Regional Office is to work with tasks that can only be handled in Brussels. It involves providing information about the European Union, project support, visitors’ service, monitoring the political scene and organize events. (Sydsam 2003: 19) Important for this thesis is to emphasize that the main task of the SSEO is to monitor the political scene in the EU, in order to initiate political activities that are essential for the region of South Sweden. Through the monitoring, and the relationship with the Commission, the regional office can provide information about upcoming legislation to the local governments in South Sweden. This is done independently, together with other regional offices and networks that have an interest in the issue at hand. The activities of the SSEO must be adapted to the interests of SydSam and are continuously changing because it prioritizes political issues that are of current importance to South Sweden. The SSEO also focuses its activities on monitoring what’s going on with issues that

involve the larger Baltic Region, not only because it is important to South Sweden but because the regions around the Baltic are its key cooperation partners. Important sources of information are the conferences arranged by EU institutions, regional offices, think tanks, network meetings, newsletters and the Internet. The role of expressing the view of South Sweden on a particular issue in the Commission is handled by the political representatives from the region. However, the officials at the SSEO also represent the views informally at events and conferences in Brussels. The Commission is increasingly arranging conferences to communicate new initiatives (Bergman 2005) (Kaliff 2005) (Sydsam 2002:14) (Sydsam 2003: 21)

Because Sweden was reluctant to membership this influenced the ability to create the office and the operation. Sydsam has since questioned the effectiveness of the initiating activities in receiving regional benefits from the Structural Funds. Roger Kaliff, the president of the Executive Committee compared the initial activities with the success of regional offices from Finland and concluded that the own office had not been as successful. He explains the poor success with the reluctance of the government and hence the regional and local authorities to a membership in the European Union. (Kaliff 2005) Also during this phase, the activities of the office were very much determined by the officials themselves but now the politicians decide on the agenda. The officials themselves find that this is positive because it creates more legitimacy for their operations and shows that there is a greater interest for the operations in the home region. (Jerneck, Gidlund 2001: 87)

Because the activities of the regional office mainly consist of monitoring of the EU political scene as well as informal networking in Brussels there are problems with evaluating the success of the activities. The regional office as well as Kaliff as the representative of Sydsam agrees that an evaluation of the activities would benefit the operations in order to increase efficiency. The regional office has a desire for clearer instructions on what issues to focus on. Sydsam is however satisfied with the performance of the office according to Kaliff and there are no plans on increasing the operations of the office in the form of manpower, capital or other resources. This is because the amounts of legislation on policies that concern the region as well as regions in general have decreased. Kaliff states that Sydsam is satisfied with the decreased activity when it comes to legislation from the EU, as Sweden is resisting legislation in further areas. (Kaliff 2005) (Bergman, 2005)

The office has produced a couple of press releases to Swedish newspapers but this activity does not occur very often. The reason for this is according to Bergman that Swedish newspapers are not interested in publishing what is going on at the EU level. (Bergman 2005) Together with monitoring the political scene and the production of a weekly newsletter that is sent home to the member authorities in South Sweden, visitors' service take up a substantial amount of time for the office. This stream of delegations, students, businesses and also tourists

usually come from the home region even though it can vary. This activity is part of the informational service the office is expected to perform and is also an important tool for creating legitimacy for the operations. (Jerneck, Gidlund 2001: 88)

## 5.2 The Relationship With the Swedish National Government

When the Swedish regions started to establish their own representations in Brussels through their regional offices the national government appeared surprised and that is possibly why no regulations regarding this activity was formulated. It did however not encourage this activity but the absence of regulations enabled the regions to create their own role on the European level. South Sweden chose to label its activities as ‘interregional’ in order to escape national government accusations of dealing with ‘foreign affairs’. (Jerneck, Gidlund 2001: 68-69)

During the first few years of the office’s activities in Brussels the relationship with the Swedish Permanent Representation was consequently very tense. The Permanent Representation found that they should represent the interests of the region in the EU through the influence and communication executed from the local governments to the central authority on the national arena. Today, there is a close cooperation between the regional office representing Sydsam and the Permanent Representation and they increasingly consider the opinions expressed by the region. Direct interactions between the representatives of both agencies take place regularly. The main tension between the region and the Swedish national government is the budget for the Structural Funds as these are contributed to by the member states. The negotiations for the next period of 2007- 2013 are currently taking place. The Swedish government wants to contribute to these with one per cent of the total budget to the EU while the region wants 1.14. Kaliff predicts a compromise where the final amount will land somewhere in between 1 and 1.14 per cent. (Kaliff 2005) (Bergman 2005)



## 6 Conclusions

The theoretical framework was designed to investigate democratic implications with regional lobbying activities. I intend to point to observations of the activities that create democratic legitimacy and those observations that may point to the opposite.

Multi-Level Governance stresses the multiple points of access in the European Union, which enables several actors to exercise influence. This theory therefore justifies the participation of regional actors that by-pass the nation-state in their efforts to influence policy-making. This is an entirely different view of the system that intergovernmentalism tends to ignore through its emphasis on states as main actors on the European arena. Regions have created an additional communication channel with the European Union and do not rely solely on the central government to represent their interest and inform them of the EU's political agenda. The Commission has welcomed their participation in an effort to increase its own power, but also to achieve legitimacy by civil society participation. This creation of networks makes information and communication essential for the system as the different actors depend on each other's resources.

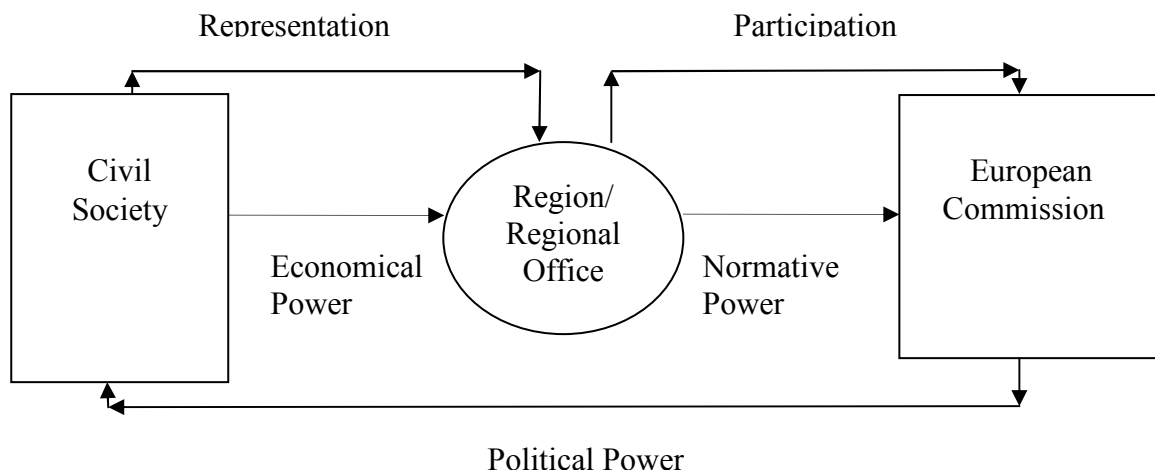
During the research process I found that regional interest was represented through both formal and informal channels. They are interdependent for the region's full participation, but the informal activities are emphasized as they bring democratic implications. The system has traits of a pluralistic system where the lobbying arena welcomes new participants with different interests and different resources to influence.

There is no pure democratic theory that explains transnational governance, but the use of concepts such as representation and participation is essential. It has been established that representation in the European Union is insufficient. Participation is a central theme to democracy, but democracy theory varies in its emphasis on its importance and some theorists even argue that representation is the only adequate way of achieving legitimacy. If we assume that participation is essential for democratic legitimacy, the lobbying activities by the regional offices can be justified. It is important for the regions representing a broad civil society to control the political agenda and this is achieved by being informed about what is going on at the European level. They do not rely solely on the central government to represent their interest in decision-making that directly affects them. Regional Policy is an example of a policy area that affects the regions directly and they need to stay informed on decisions taken in regards to this area although the monitoring includes other political issues.

The regional offices have been established mainly to monitor the scene and inform the regions back home so that they can take political action when needed. From a deliberative standpoint this informational activity is actually a desire for democracy to work. Citizens need to be as informed as possible in order to enable them to form an opinion on what is important for the common good and to control the political agenda as it helps increase transparency. This activity creates normative power, as you need to be in control of the information in order to influence.

Apart from the theoretical dilemma of democratic legitimacy through representation and/or participation, the democratic problem with lobbying also lies in its dependence on economical resources to exercise influence. Lobbying usually represents a special interest, where the collective interest is ignored and political power is limited to the members of the organization that manages to influence the decision-making. When it comes to regional lobbying we find variations, but most, including South Sweden, represent the public as a whole and not a specific interest.

A simple model explains the relationship between the different powers when it comes to regional participation in policy-shaping.



Pressure groups are dependent on capital resources to establish an organization that can exercise normative influence such as providing information and convincing legislators to make decisions that are beneficial to them. This normative power in turn leads to political power when the group is successful in their efforts to influence policy-shaping. Although business interests normally have more economic power than those representing the weaker groups in society, these groups gain normative power through their credibility as representing non-profit interest. They may therefore not need the same amount of economic power to begin with. When it comes to regional offices and especially South Sweden, my case study, it represents businesses in the region as well as the public. Its founding members do not include any paying members and they are therefore working for

the region in general and not for a specific interest. Because Sydsam's members are the elected officials of counties and municipalities this analysis actually includes an element of representation. This creates accountability which is one of the problems with lobbying or interest group participation. The model includes an indication of where representation and participation takes place. The officials working at the Regional Office are naturally not elected through a democratic process but are appointed by officials that in turn are responsible for the office's activities. Regional office lobbying activities therefore includes an element of accountability, even if it is not strong. Also I have chosen to combine the Regional Office with the term 'Region' in the model, since formal participation in the consultancy process with the European Commission is performed by the elected politicians from the region, while the Regional Office stands for the informal influence on policy-shaping by representing the view of the region on informal occasions. Economical power is needed to sponsor informational activities such as lobbying. The Regional Office is sponsored by Sydsam consisting of local governments and the activities are sponsored by civil society, here the citizens of South Sweden, through taxation. It is however the normative power of the region that is most important. Because it represents all groups within the region it holds credibility. This can be stated as the Commission encourages its participation.

Because the regions are participating in policy-shaping and representing the interests of the region, and working for the common good, this helps democratic legitimacy in the sense that it opens a communication channel for the region with the Commission. The normative power that the Region is able to exercise helps bring political power to the citizens.

During research I realized that there was a problem with evaluation of the lobbying activities, recognized by the regional office as well as Sydsam. There was no method in place to conduct this part of the operations. Lack of evaluation is however a problem for transparency, as there is no possibility of knowing how successful the lobbying activities are and it becomes more difficult to achieve transparency. In addition, the regional office mainly communicates their activities to the local governments and does not really use mass media. They rely solely on Internet as a forum to provide information directly to the citizens. Mass media is one of the most important channels for citizens to stay informed and create public discussion. On the other hand, the visitors' service that the office performs and that take up a lot of their time also help create legitimacy and provide information to the public.

The observations drawn from this research provide answers that both support the idea that the lobbying activities of the regions help democratic legitimacy in the European Union, as well as point to elements that may not.

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