

Danish Paradiplomatic Activities in Brussels:

Does the Danish Regional Governments have an independent influence on the EU Common Agricultural Policy or not? Case study on the Region of Central Denmark.

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Preface

This Master Thesis is written by Peter Kristoffer Rødbro Hansen, 10th semester student at Aalborg University. The thesis supervisor is Wolfgang Zank. The thesis was written during the period between February 1st – May 28th, 2021.

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Abstract:

This master thesis research question is *Does the Danish Regional Governments have an independent influence on the EU Common Agricultural Policy or not?* This master thesis examines Region Midtjylland as an integrated case study to scrutinize whether that specific region is in particular able to influence the EU CAP. I select Region Midtjylland as a case study due to personal experiences as an intern at the Central Denmark EU Office establishing presumed thoughts of the region's work with the green agenda. In the introduction, I present paradiplomacy as the overall thematic framework. I explain the thematic tendency of paradiplomacy and illuminate how sub-state actors increasingly engage in international and European affairs and why this phenomenon remains as important in today's diplomatic activities in Europe. Lastly, I explain why I have limited myself to focus on the danish regions as the analyzed sub-state actors and why I focus on the EU CAP.

After the introduction, I conduct an 'empirical overview' providing descriptive explanations of initially the EU CAP at a glance, an overview of the lobbying phenomenon in Brussels, as well as descriptions of key pathways for danish regions to presumably influence the EU CAP. This counts for danish lobbyist offices such as Kommunernes Landsforening, Danske Regioner, Danish Regional EU Offices as well as the danish MEPs in the parliament and the Danish Royal Embassy in Brussels. Among European organizations, I present the Committee of the Regions, the Council of European Municipalities and Regions, and The European Council Congress for Local and Regional Authorities. I selected these actors as they all have a common interest in pushing for a green agenda in Europe and all work to influence the EU's Green Agenda.

Hereafter, I conduct the 'theoretical overview' where I present, explain, and discuss the concept and theories that both provides the theoretical framework of this master thesis as well as the theoretical basis for the analysis. I initially present and discuss the concept of paradiplomacy and the theory of Multi-level governance theory remaining as the overall theoretical structure of this thesis. Then, I present the theories of social constructivism and rational choice remaining as the theoretical basis for the hypotheses I later seek to test.

Hereafter, I turn to the methodological section carefully explaining my initiate methodological considerations causing my respective research method. I explain how my initial thoughts of the overall subject emerged, how it affected my theme selection, and how caused my theoretical selection. This initiated a deductive research method departing from existing theories leading me to formulate two hypotheses; 1) *Danish regions, and in particular Region Midtjylland, pushes for a green agenda based on beliefs*, 2) *Danish regions, and in a particular region, Midtjylland pushes for a green agenda based on commercial interests*. Here, hypothesis 1 is conducted on the theoretical basis of social constructivism, and hypothesis 2 is based on rational choice theory. To test these theories, I conduct an expert interview to retrieve data that either rejects or confirms my hypotheses. Here I also illuminate the use of qualitative research from which the data-collection methods were based.

The analysis is conducted on the two hypotheses and tests whether they can be rejected or supported when applying both the retrieved data and the theory of social constructivism and rational choice theory. I analyze the presented empirical evidence from the empirical overview through further examination, apply it to the theory and the data, and thereby establish an argument, that either supports or rejects each hypothesis. Here, I clarify which arguments that support hypothesis 1 or 2 and which that does not support.

I hereafter conclude on my analytical findings and determine which hypothesis is rejected and which is confirmed or if both are rejected or confirmed. Based on the testing, I conclude that hypothesis 1 is being rejected and hypothesis 2 confirmed. Initially, I conclude that danish regions, in general, are pushing for a green agenda based on commercial interests. In terms of examining the particularity of Region Midtjylland, I also conclude, that within hypothesis 1, Region Midtjylland does not become 'the particular'. However, within hypothesis 2, I conclude, that Region Midtjylland in particular pushes for a green agenda. Lastly, I conclude, that based on these results, danish regions can independently influence the EU CAP which is evident due to the data collection and the empirical evidence.

1. Introduction:

Today, a tendency has emerged in which regions, provinces, cities, and local communities seek to promote their interests regarding trade, investments, cross-border partnerships, and political influence. According to Jorge A. Schiavon (2019), sub-state actors such as regions and local communities are increasingly becoming a part of international and European competition, by arguing, that in a globalized world with increasingly open and competitive national and regional economies, sub-state actors with higher levels of international activity attract more foreign direct investments, open markets for their products and increase exports and receive more international decentralized cooperation generating local welfare. The internationalization of regions and communities has emerged as a trend raising important questions regarding domestic issues and interference in international relations, which takes local and regional concerns to the central stage of international politics. Today, sub-state actors have marked their importance in international relations and European affairs and have become an evolution both academia and diplomatic practitioners no longer can ignore. As Michele Acuto argued "The city and region has progressively resurfaced in politics and expanded its reach to international relations thinking" (Michele Acuto, 2017 Pp. 16).

Based on this, this master thesis will analyze the following research question; *Does the Danish Regional Governments have an independent influence on the EU Common Agricultural Policy or not?* Here, the thesis will integrate the Region of Central Denmark as a case study and examine whether they in particular can influence the EU Common Agricultural Policy (EU CAP). The reason why the thesis will focus on the EU CAP is due to the fact, that 76% of Danish legislation is influenced by EU concerns about climate and agriculture (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Trade Council, 2021). Based on this, it can be presumed, that the larger percentage of influence EU legislations have on Danish legislations, the danish national, regional and local governments will have more interest in influencing EU legislations.

Furthermore, due to the Danish Structural Reform in 2007, the establishment of Danish regions, and the decrease of local municipalities meant, that Danish Regional governments acquired a larger extent of responsibilities partly autonomous from the state, which also counts for agricultural policy.

“The municipalities have increased their portfolio and they are now responsible for most of the welfare related tasks. They have become the citizens’ main access point to the public sector. Responsibilities of the municipalities include healthcare, social services, collective transport and roads, and employment. The five regions will primarily be responsible for healthcare, preparation of regional development plans and solutions to certain operational tasks for the municipalities” (Danish Ministry of Interior and Housing, 2021)

Due to the structural reform in 2007, it can be presumed, that the more responsibility Danish regions have acquired the bigger interest to influence legislation within their acquired areas.

2. Empirical Overview

2.1 EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)

The EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is one of the EU's most wide-affecting and most debated common policies within the green agenda. Since agriculture is one of the largest export markets among the EU member states, regulations and policy developments can be very sensitive and impactful. Launched in 1962, the EU's common agricultural policy is a partnership between agriculture and society, and between Europe and its farmers. It aims to: Support farmers and improve agricultural productivity, ensuring a stable supply of affordable food; safeguard European Union farmers to make a reasonable living; help tackle climate change and the sustainable management of natural resources; maintain rural areas and landscapes across the EU; keep the rural economy alive by promoting jobs in farming, agri-foods industries, and associated sectors. The CAP is a common policy for all EU countries. It is managed and funded at the European level from the resources of the EU's budget (European Commission, EU CAP, 2021). According to the EU commission, the EU supports farmers with 57.98 billion Euros in 2019 in which 14.18 billion Euros supports Rural development, 41.42 billion Euros for Income support, and 2.37 billion Euros for Market measures (European Commission, EU CAP, 2021). Additionally, 57.98 billion Euros was retrieved from the overall EU budget consisting of 103.08 billion in 2019 to support EU farmers (European Commission, EU CAP, 2021). The CAP is furthermore financed through two funds as part of the EU budget; the European agricultural guarantee fund (EAGF) provides direct support and funds market measures; the European agricultural fund for rural development (EAFRD) finances rural development (European Commission, EU CAP, 2021). Concerning the EU CAP funding scheme, the funding system is divided into 2 pillars, which pillar 1 concern the direct payments and market measures. The measures under pillar 1 include the continuation of external convergence of direct payments – essentially, narrowing the difference between actual and average

direct payments to farmers across the EU (Kathleen O-Sullivan, 2020). Pillar 2 aims to aid development in rural areas through economic and social schemes, through the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) consisting of €77,850 million allocated (O'Sullivan, 2020).

However, to outline some of the challenges of the EU CAP today, *The Post-2020 Common Agricultural Policy: Environmental Benefits and Simplification* plan presents certain challenges that the EU CAP will pose for member state' farmers in the future. The report illuminates, that farmers as well as national and regional administrations complain of the policy's complexity in certain respects and have asked for this load to be lightened (European Commission, *The Post-2020 Common Agricultural Policy: Environmental Benefits and Simplification*, 2020). This complexity also counts for danish farmers, which is evident in the interview:

"Okay, so for the current agricultural policy it seems that one of the biggest problems is the extensive 'red tape' that's put-on farmers, so I think they have like 200 requirements that they have to do a specific thing on their farm and their fields on a specific date – they have 200 date requirements that they have to comply with – that's quite a lot... I think that this is one of the big issues and then the farmers have to apply for a delegation every time they cannot comply with the date requirements" (Appendix 1, 2021).

Based on this, one of the biggest issues is for the danish farmers to comply with the date requirements to access agricultural funding from the EU CAP. However, the interviewee presents yet another major issue:

Then it's also difficult for farmers to have more green elements on their farms, so if for example if they want to seed some trees and more scrubs on their fields, they have to deduct this in their application to get CAP support, so they actually have to deduct the areas where they have bio-chips from their applications, and that's also a negative incentive to have more biodiversity and green elements on their fields... so I think that it 2 of the main elements here, the 'red tape' and the lack of possibilities to actually make green elements on their fields" (Appendix 1, 2021).

These challenges presented in the interview are in general present concerning the regulations and economic incentives that currently mark the framework of the EU CAP. National and regional politicians have to strive to regulate and influence the current framework to push for a sustainable and less complex CAP funding system and regulatory condition.

2.2 Lobbying in Brussels

As previously argued, due to rising paradiplomatic activities in the EU, we are now witnessing a tendency of increased lobbying activities among sub-state actors such as regions and municipalities in Brussels. However, what is lobbying exactly? What does 'lobbying' mean and why is it such as popular phenomenon in Brussels? A general definition of 'lobbyism' refers to the process of groups or individuals

influencing public and government policy at all levels. According to Artur Victoria (2019) the word lobby, originating in the English language and referring to the lobby in a public building, adopted the conception of a particular group of people who represent a particular interest in persuading, influencing, government decisions. Victoria (2019) furthermore claims that the word lobby was adopted etymologically as lobbyists stood in the lobby of American Congress in search of those who would be able to approve or reject measures that would benefit or harm the interests of a particular group. According to Victoria, lobbying emerged as a phenomenon explaining a group of people seeking to influence government decisions to benefit their interests. Here, Victoria (2019) presents 3 ideas explaining the origins of lobbyist practices.

"The first one states that the most organized and professional practice occurred in Washington DC, during the term of office of President Ulysses Grant, who went down to the Willard Hotel Lobby at the end of the day to smoke cigars and found people who tried to persuade him of important demands. The second argues that the lobby began in the nineteenth century as a result of a group of farmers from the state of Virginia, USA, who sent representatives of their interests to try to influence the congressmen. The third theory adopted as to origin goes back to the post-1896 period in which the United States reorganized itself politically and began to expand its interests around the world" (Artur Victoria, 2019, pp. 4-5).

The concept of 'lobbyism' gained a practical or physical notion, in which lobbying became a certain type of activity. Lobbying refers to the idea of 'advocacy' that in general terms means to advocate for something, to someone. According to Victoria (2019), the word 'advocacy refers to public support for an idea, plan, or medium to do something that furthermore refers to the meaning of advocating causes or ideas through the awareness of society, intending to influence the formatting of public policies. Lobbying or advocating became an activity in which groups of people or individuals tried to promote individual opinions on policies of interest. Advocating for interests is based on certain views on society and a perception of how society should be constructed and controlled. Lobbying activities thereby refers to an attempt to control government and regulate policymaking. Victoria (2019) argues that the term of advocacy is endowed with the conception of social control, in which society organizes itself to try to control the behavior of the government as asserted in popular councils. In this regard, Victoria present 4 different types of lobbying activities that carefully explains the practical effort to persuade government policies.

- A) Parliamentary affairs advisory services or Social Communication of Ministries (Public lobbying)
- B) Government relations executives located in departments corporate/institutional affairs (Lobbying institutional)
- C) Class entities, (Class-based lobbying)
- D) Lobbying and consulting offices (Private lobbying) (Victoria, 2019, p.2)

These 4 types refer to different ways to influence policies, either through ministries or parliamentary bodies seeking to influence regulatory processes to plead for a new regulation on certain areas. Lobbying can also occur through class entities, institutional lobbying, and consulting offices, in which interest groups from

corporate sectors and private companies lobbying through respective relations to governmental bodies. The lobbying offices and groups are broad, and it, therefore, becomes difficult to distinguish between the different actors. Victoria (2019) argues, since the activity is not and due to the stigma of marginality that lobbying advertising agencies, communication agencies, advertising agencies, public relations, law firms, and political consulting firms act in the sector, the universe of consulting and lobbying offices is broad and at the same time very difficult to grasp.

Within the EU, among over 30,000 lobbyists in town, Brussels is often called the European capital of lobbying (Sylvain Laurens, 2018). This is not a coincidence since every EU member is obliged to legally implement certain EU regulations within certain policy areas. In the EU, lobbying is of great importance to influence the decision-makers to make policies that are in the stakeholders' interests (Anna Yvonne Fast, 2016). According to Laurens (2018), where Brussels is concerned, the general public is almost certainly more familiar with the reputed influence of lobbies than with the precise functioning of the European institutions. Today, Brussels has become a lobbyist center in Europe. The competition among the lobbying offices in Brussels is tough and the ability to influence the European Commission, parliament, or the Council is of high interest among all the lobbying offices. According to Fast (2016), the stakeholders are many and there is severe competition in whose interests will gain the most attention.

2.3 Kommunernes Landsforening (KL) and Danske Regioner

Within the lobbying arena in Brussels, Danish offices such as KL and Danske Regioner are highly important for danish regions and municipalities to influence EU policy. Since danish regional governments and municipalities independently are not parties of consult during a consultation period in the parliament, KL and Danske Regioner become important actors since they remain parties of consultation during drafting sessions. Alternatively, danish regions and municipalities can propose policy input to KL and Danske Regioner who thereby can channel it through to the parliament. "An important task of the Brussels Office is to have a meeting with different EU actors... moreover, our Brussels Office assists KL's member of the Committee of the Regions in their efforts to influence the institutions regarding matters of relevance" (KL, Brussels Office, 2021). This remains an important channel for danish regions and municipalities to influence EU policy on sensitive policy matters.

To clarify KL's work on EU cases and policies, one may look at Appendix 2 which is an overview of KL's prioritized EU cases for 2021. Some of the initiatives KL seeks to prioritize and influence is for example initiative 1 concerning the financial framework for the period after 2020 and concerns the EU budget for 2021-2027 and the EU Recovery Plan; Next Generation EU (Appendix 2, KL EU Cases). Initiative number 3 shows KL's priorities towards the European Green Deal (Appendix 2, KL EU Cases). These examples show how the danish public lobby organization KL works with EU legislation that is sensitive to the resort area and which future EU cases they seek to prioritize. Danske Regioner's lobbying activities are

evident through their consultation responses regarding the EU Commissions Cohesion Policy 2021-2027 (Appendix 3, Danske Regioner, 2018). Here, Danske Regioner explains their position on the future EU Cohesion Policy 2021-2027 which is a regional sensitive matter due to the EU structural fund's importance to the danish regions. Danske Regioner claims, that they through the region's administrative assignments and the regional development strategy supports the region's competencies about responding to the EU's regional policy after 2020 (Appendix 3, Danske Regioner, 2018). Danske Regioner furthermore claims in the consultation response to the EU, that the danish regions support the EU Commissions proposal for the program period 2021-2027 since existing regulations are not to be changed, in which beneficiaries from the EU structural funds are already familiar with the regulations (Appendix 3, Danske Regioner, 2018).

These examples apply to Victoria's (2019) "Public Lobbying" referring to the activities of Ministries, Companies, Municipalities, Regulatory Agencies, and other state bodies, put pressure on Executive and Legislative branches (Victoria, 2019).

2.4 Danish Regional EU Offices

The Danish Regional EU Offices is yet another pathway for danish regions to influence EU policy primarily through the work with EU structural funds. The EU structural funds consist of; The European Fund for Regional Development; The European Social Fund; Cohesion Fund; The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development; The European Sea- and Fishery Fund. EU's structural funds support the economic development in regional and local areas by investing in 5 different policy areas; Research and Innovation; Digital Technology; Low Emission Economy; Sustainable Administration of natural resources and SME's (Small and Medium Enterprises). The EU Structural Funds are administrated by the individual EU member states through partnership agreements, in which financial capital is channeled to different regions and for a project covering the mentioned policy areas.

However, The EU Structural Funds furthermore enables danish regional governments and municipalities to influence EU policy and participate in European partnerships and collaborations. The way danish regional governments primarily are working with EU affairs and partnerships is through project development and project application concerning the EU Support Programs. The EU support programs are financed by the European Economic Committee and the financial outcome from the long-term budget and provide regional and local actors financial support to the regional development issues. A few times a year the support programs open up "calls" for applications wherein danish regional and local actors can apply for funding to support development projects. When danish regional and local actors apply for specific funding support they must be aware of certain criteria. First of all, each project must in general aim to support the development of a certain area, for instance, to tackle climate changes in rural areas or support the development of a specific product. No matter what, all projects must contain a long-term objective and goal that aims to create sustainable changes for society. The project's success is therefore mainly measured by its long-term impact and

sustainability which after project implementation is being evaluated by EU Officials. If the EU evaluators conclude the success of the project, they report this to the commission. This arguably marks an indirect way of influencing EU policy, namely through EU-funded development projects. This is furthermore evident in one of the policy notes/articles from 2021 made by the Central Denmark EU Office positioning their representative region's view on the future EU Green Deal (Central Denmark EU Office, 2021)

2.5 Committee of the Regions

One of the most well-known channels for regional and local actors to influence EU policy is the European Committee of the Regions (Committee of the Regions, "About", 2021). The CoR is an organization within the EU system connecting local/regional actors to EU politicians and decision-makers. The CoR was established in 1994 and figures as an advisory body consisting of locally and regionally elected representatives from all 27 member states. The CoR invites regional and local authorities to mark their opinions on EU legislation and regulations that directly impact regions and cities (CoR, "About", 2021). At an administrative and political level, the European Commission, the EU Council, and the EU Parliament must consult the CoR when drawing up legislation on matters concerning local and regional authorities such as health, education, employment, social policy, economic and social cohesion, transport, energy, and climate issues (CoR, "About", 2021). CoR forwards regional and local political opinions to the parliament during the consultation period of a bill. The Danish regional governments are very well represented in the CoR and are working to secure regional and local influence on the policy-design process. Denmark has 9 seats and 9 deputy seats in the CoR. Since up to 50% of the regional government's political cases remaining on the agenda during meetings in their respective regional council meetings are affected by EU decisions, it remains as well as becomes more important for the Danish regional governments to actively take care of the regional interests in the EU. It remains highly important, that EU legislation to a certain extent corresponds with the Danish regional interests especially regarding major policy areas such as public health, regional growth, and development as well as skilled labor and education. CoR figures as one of the most important channels for Danish regional and local actors to influence EU policy and decision making which is a clear response to the natural relation of how deep EU legislation interferes within member states.

2.6 Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR)

The Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) is the oldest and broadest European association of local and regional governments (CEMR, "Introduction", 2021). The organization gathers local and regional governments from 41 EU countries and represents local and regional interests. The CEMR's function is divided into 2 main pillars. 1; *Influencing European Policy and Legislation*, 2; *Providing a forum for debate between local and regional governments via their national representative*

associations. The work of the CEMR covers several policy areas that remain sensitive to regional and local matters. These are Governance democracy and citizenship; Environment, Climate, and energy; International engagement and cooperation; Economic, social, and territorial cohesion; Local and regional public services management, and CEMR statutory affairs, general CEMR affairs (CEMR, "Introduction", 2021). Danish regional governments are also represented in this organization by 2 designated members and 2 deputies. The lobby organization of the danish regions, Danske Regioner, is working closely with CEMR with relevance to EU legislation with a direct effect on local and regional political matters.

2.7 The European Council Congress for Local and Regional Authorities

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities is an institution of the Council of Europe, responsible for strengthening local and regional democracy in its 47 member states and assessing the application of the European Charter of Local Self-Government. The congress believes that local and regional authorities should have a forum to have their say in the early stages of the European integration process. As the voice of Europe's municipalities and regions, it works to foster consultation and political dialogue between national governments and local and regional authorities, through cooperation with the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers (European Council Congress for Local and Regional Authorities, "About", 2021). The congress represents over 150,000 local and regional authorities in the Council of Europe's 47 member states. The congress seeks to strengthen local democracy across the member states by assessing and evaluating local and regional elections. Besides, the establishment of cooperation and partnerships counts for some of its core activities in which knowledge-sharing and networks become the premise for healthy cross-border democratic partnerships. Here, the Danish Regional governments are well represented in which they have 2 representatives and 3 deputies.

2.8 European Parliament

Yet another natural path for danish regions and municipalities to influence EU-policy making is through danish elected MEPs in the parliament. Despite that danish regions and municipalities have the opportunity to meet with KL or Danske Regioner, they 'cut out the middleman' by engaging directly with danish politicians in the parliament. Since Danish MEPs directly work with policymaking and development within certain policy areas they can directly persuade decision-makers in the parliament, which makes it an important pathway for danish regions and municipalities. Danish regions and municipalities can directly engage with danish MEPs instead. This way of direct policy advocacy is crucial for regions and municipalities since it creates a natural channel to promote regional political interests to decision-makers in the parliament.

2.9 The Royal Danish Embassy in Brussels

Danish regions and municipalities are furthermore able to engage in political discussions with the Danish Embassy in Brussels where employed attachés first and foremost are a party of consultation during policy-consultation in the EU, which therefore makes them important actors for danish regions and municipalities. Danish regions and municipalities as well as their respective Regional EU Office in Brussels can thereby provide input to the embassy regarding sensitive policy areas to the regions. The Danish Embassy in Brussels, therefore, becomes yet another natural gateway for danish regions and municipalities to channel their regional political interests to the EU decision-makers through actors who act as a party of consultation during EU policy consultations and thereby has established direct contact to EU decision-makers as well as to the danish elected MEPs'.

2.10 Climatorium in Lemvig Municipality

In the municipality of Lemvig within the Region Midtjylland, one can discover Denmark's first international climate center: Climatorium. Climatorium figures as a forum for Climate Adaption Projects and Climate Prevention. The mission is to develop and disseminate new solutions to challenges within the areas: Coastal Climate Challenges, Green Energy, Circular Economy, Water, and Environment – through collaboration (Climatorium, 2021). According to their website, they argue.

“Water and climate have a global market of 3000 billion DKK and Denmark will face a huge export adventure, if the market is accessed correctly. Through multidisciplinary collaboration, based on the Quadruple Helix mindset, Climatorium will develop innovative climate solutions nationally and internationally” (Climatorium, 2021).

Climatorium in the municipality of Lemvig has emerged as a front-runner initiative to create first-hand solutions and research to tackle current and future climate-related challenges. Climatorium will be a pillar for research and education in the field of climate challenges. The purpose of Lemvig Climatorium's research projects is to find specific solutions to climate challenges. The research projects' results are translated into products through Climatorium's network of companies, which results in new jobs and knowledge dissemination (Climatorium, 2021).

2.11 Greenlab Skive

Greenlab Skive in the municipality of Skive is a green industrial part, a national research facility, and a technology enabler. They constitute the framework for the world's first full-scale P2X facility, and they offer a unique, intelligent energy platform. Greenlab is a truly green industrial part in which it hosts the world's first green industrial space. The businesses are located in their industrial part which is all supplied

with sustainable energy from multiple energy sources in the form that suits their production best. Moreover, they are all connected to the SymbiosisNet™ - a unique smart grid solution that lets them share their surplus energy resources with each other, thereby providing a cost-effective set-up that results in maximally green end products for consumers (GreenLab Skive, 2021). Greenlab's mission is to inspire others all over the world to build business parks based on GreenLab's concept (GreenLab Skive, 2021).

The integration of 'Climatorium' and 'GreenLab Skive' in this thesis was due to its presumed indication of Region Midtjylland's particular push for a green agenda. This specific evidence was retrieved from personal experiences and beforehand established knowledge. This empirical evidence was illuminated to presents supportive evidence of Region Midtjylland's particularity among other danish regions, which in line with the other empirical evidence presented in this section, will be analyzed.

3. Theoretical Overview

3.1 Paradiplomacy

The concept of paradiplomacy is generally understood as sub-states international activities and practice of foreign policy. Paradiplomacy reflects upon the transformation of cities and regions as pure domestic actors towards becoming actors involved on the international stage in terms of attracting investments, partnerships, and cross-border relations to support local and regional economic wealth and development. In academics, the concept of paradiplomacy has emerged as a widely recognized concept within the study of comparative politics and federalism with particular attention to globalization. According to Stephane Paquin (2020), the neologism "paradiplomacy" appeared in the scientific literature in the 1980s, during a revival in the study of federalism and comparative politics. Paquin furthermore argues that it was used to describe the international activities of Canadian provinces and American states in the context of globalization and an increase in cross-border relations in North America.

The concept of paradiplomacy was introduced by Panayotis Soldatos, who defined paradiplomacy as "a direct continuation, and to varying degrees, from sub-state government, foreign activities" (Soldatos, 1990, Pp. 34). Soldatos hereby claims that the preliminary understanding behind paradiplomacy is the expansion or widening of a state's foreign political activities through sub-state governments. Paradiplomacy's mere etymological form must within this context be revised and understood to which the word; "para" In Greek, introduces several synonyms such as 'alongside' and 'besides' expressing parallel processes. According to Ivo D. Duchacek (1990), adding "para" before "diplomacy" clarified which actors are involved, namely, sub-state actors operating in parallel with their respective central government within international political matters. According to Soldatos and Duchacek, the concept of paradiplomacy refers to foreign political activities practiced by sub-state actors in parallel with the central government. This legitimizes the claim, that paradiplomacy expresses an expansion of the central government's foreign political activities. This can furthermore be perceived as a natural process of a genuine transformation due to the global and European

political environment. According to Brian Hocking (1993), diplomacy in its natural form must be perceived as a system intermingling actors from different levels of government and ministries. Hocking furthermore extends on this claim by arguing, that actors change according to issues, interests, and their ability to operate in a multi-tiered political environment (Hocking, 1993). Without neglecting or ignoring Soldatos' conceptualized neologism of paradiplomacy and the parallel process within, Hocking emphasizes the importance of viewing paradiplomacy and sub-state actors in its political context and setting. Hooghe and Marks (2001) agree on this by arguing, that within academia a multi-level approach must be integrated into the general understanding of paradiplomacy and puts forward the framework of the European Union. This rather politicized approach to understand paradiplomacy becomes nevertheless important when understanding the parallel process of sub-state actors' foreign political activities aside from the central governments.

According to Emmanuelle Pinault, paradiplomacy must be understood as well as studied within its political context. Pinault (2018) claims, that paradiplomacy is undoubtedly one of the major political innovations of our generation. He argues, "that for the long-term observers of the international system, it is stunning to see that mayors are now everywhere on the global stage" (Pinault, 2018, pp. 75). He furthermore argues that this shall be seen as a natural phenomenon for the 21st century, an era both largely urban and globally connected (Pinault, 2018). Today, cities and regions are increasingly engaging in international politics whereas urban as well as domestic issues have been recognized as global issues. According to Acuto (2016), the city has progressively resurfaced in politics and expanded its reach to international relations thinking, whilst urban disciplines have been considering the potential of seeing the city as an actor in international affairs. For Acuto and Pinault, it becomes important to perceive paradiplomacy in its political context and understand how regional government's international strategies emerge. Today, the so-called 'political spirit' among cities and regions has expanded and today, the emergence of regional government's international strategies appears in the light of the global consensus. Regional governments seeking global partnerships and collaborations have become an essential part of their international strategy, which in the words of Sassen (1991) allows the global to 'hit the ground' and thereby create natural relations and synergy between the international political arena to current domestic/urban issues. Paquin (2020) agrees with Acuto and Pinault's more politicized view on paradiplomacy by claiming that international policies of federated states are an important phenomenon involving all international spheres of action, including economic and trade policies, promoting exports, attracting foreign investments and decision-making centers, science and technology, energy, the environment, education, immigration, and the movement of people, bilateral and multilateral relations, international development, and human rights.

Cities and regions are extensively taking part in major international political concerns which arguably enables them to themselves in decision-making processes. A great example of this is the CoR who unifies regional government representatives and EU politicians to discuss regional and local issues. This supports Paquin's claim, that due to the current paradiplomatic scene, regions and cities are well represented and

extensively positioned in global political decision-making centers and forums. Today, the concept of paradiplomacy has increasingly been integrated into the study of international relations. Recognized by modern international relations scholars and academics, paradiplomacy has emerged as an important subject in the interpretation of current international political arenas and their actors. The emergence of paradiplomatic activities, which according to Cornago (2010) has been recognized and normalized, must within international relations academia be perceived as an equal subject of analysis parallel to the central state. Paradiplomacy's pluralistic approach to international politics and actors has over the past 30 years received increasing attention, and the words of Robert Dahl have resurfaced in the concept of paradiplomacy in which he argued that no group is without power to influence decision-making, and equally, no group is dominant... Any group can ensure that its political preferences and wishes are adopted if it is sufficiently determined (Robert Dahl, 1958). Neglecting and ignoring paradiplomatic actors and their activities in current international politics is according to Sarquis (2016) the same as neglecting the true reality of today's international political sphere and its increasing variation of involved actors. Paradiplomacy has become a natural part of understanding international relations by introducing new levels of analysis, new actors, and new inter-governmental structures.

Since the concept of paradiplomacy refers to the integration of supranational actors in political decision-making and the general participation of regions and cities in global politics, one may wonder where this leaves the national government? Since Soldatos introduced the concept of paradiplomacy, there has been an increasing critique of rather vague positions on the role of central governments. Soldatos argued that the idea behind paradiplomacy refers to the regional representation of the state's foreign political activities and diplomatic engagement. This questions whether regional foreign political representation has been practiced in parallel to the central government or if they had been acting upon pure autonomy. Within the EU, it is a fact, that many decision makings and policy outcomes directly impact regional competencies which makes it natural for regions to provoke the EU by claiming their autonomy on their competencies. In this case, regional actors try to influence the EU decision-making to gain and acquire their rights over their respective policy areas. This rather natural phenomenon, therefore, legitimizes paradiplomacy's claim in which regional governments seek to practice foreign political activities abroad with particular attention to the EU. However, as Frederic Eggermont (2011) argued, giving the regions the possibility to directly influence EU decision-making is a politically sensitive matter because the national states' (exclusive) competence to entertain the country's external relations is, in a way, ignored. Eggermont presents a critical view on the concept of paradiplomacy with special attention to how regional governments seek to influence EU decision-making and therefore practice the national state's foreign political activities. Eggermont raises an important question regarding the unspoken fact within paradiplomacy of whether or not regional governments' foreign political representation creates a political distinction to the national government. Departing from the framework of the EU, the EEC treaty provided that the European Council consisted of representatives of the Member States in

which each government delegated one of its members (Eggermont, 2011). Therefore, it became clear that representatives in the council among member states primarily consisted of central government representatives on the highest political and administrative level. The EEC Treaty furthermore stated that the respective representative in the Council had to be one from the national government despite any internal power struggle within the member state (Eggermont, 2011). However, as Eggermont furthermore argued, "an opening was provided by the Council Rules of Procedure which stated that subject to the provisions of Article 5 on the delegation of voting rights, a member of the Council who is prevented from attending a meeting may arrange to be represented" (Eggermont, 2011, pp. 4-5). Eggermont refers to the fact, that if the national representative is unable to represent the national government at Council meetings regional ministers can become a substitute. In other words, the EEC Treaty becomes quite flexible in terms of who in reality can represent national governments in the Council. Regional governmental representatives can become a substitute for the state representative, which allows regional governments to engage in direct discussions with EU decision-makers in the Council and thereby push regional politics to the agenda-setting.

Is the regional government capable of practicing foreign political activities on the same level as the central state? Are regional politicians able or are they well-seen in negotiating with EU or UN officials despite their indifference regarding political/administrative level? These questions are important considerations to interpret in terms of fully understanding regional actors' concrete role in the international diplomatic arena. Interpreting paradiplomacy evokes several 'pluralist' assumptions with particular attention to Robert Dahl's notion of no actor is without power to influence decision/policymaking. Essentially, then, in a pluralist political system power is fragmented and diffused, and the basic picture presented by the pluralists is of a political marketplace where what a group achieves depends on its resources and its decibel rating (Hill & Varone, 2017). Based on this, it can to a certain extent be argued, that paradiplomacy reflects upon essential assumptions from the theory of pluralism which furthermore could explain why regions seek to engage internationally. If one assumes, as what Hill and Varone (2017) argue, that the political system consists of groups equally seeking power and influence however limited to their resources, it raises the consideration, that not all actors in society have the same opportunities or resources. If one takes this perspective, it can be argued that regional governments are lacking the same kind of political power compared to the central government when it comes to global diplomatic engagement and negotiation, which therefore legitimizes the claim, that it hereby becomes natural for regional governments to seek separate internationalization.

3.2 Multi-level governance theory

Within international relations academia, the concept of paradiplomacy has introduced new processes that rethinks the traditional state-centric view on governance and decision-making processes. Today, as Liesbet Hooghe and Gary Marks (2003) frames it, new forms of governance and dispersion of decision-making away from central states have gained the attention of a growing number of scholars across political science. Hooghe and Marks (2003) furthermore argue that modern governance is - and according to

many, should be – dispersed across multiple centers of authority. Interpreting Hooghe and Marks' assumptions, the word "multiple" must be considered. In general, the word "multiple" refers to the notion "of more than one" which, that in comparison with the concept of "governance", refers to more than one governance structure or a widening of existing governance structures. Initially, the term of multi-level governance (MLG) was developed by the political scientist Gary Marks in 1993. The concept aimed in particular to capture and understand political processes related to the emergence of supranational institutions such as the European Union and to facilitate analysis of decentralized decision-making processes, in which sub-national or sub-state level governments and civil society have come to have increasing influence (Moeko Saito-Jensen, 2015). Referring to the word "multilevel", the concept of multi-level governance integrates numerous actors counting both state and non-state actors in decision-making processes as well as into political and administrative structures. This multi-tiered approach was theorized, and MLG emerged as a recognized theory among political scientists. One of the preliminary reasons why MLG became a theory was that MLG theory contradicted traditional state-centric governance structures by presenting new and diverse levels of governance structures. According to Saito-Jensen (2015), the challenge that pinpointed MLG theorists is that these diverse levels of government must somehow be aligned to enable the definition of collective goals. MLG theory argues, that states are no longer the center of analysis in policymaking, and states' monopolized power has diffused over domestic and foreign political agendas. "Instead, the power of government is increasingly shaped by and shared between actors operating at multiple levels" (Saito-Jensen, 2015, pp. 2). The initiate beginning of MLG theory, therefore, states, that current governance structures today are witnessing a diffusing transformation or revising of the relationship between the central-state and sub-state actors.

Despite this, the theory of MLG was developed by Gary Marks aiming at the European Union. In the '90s, Gary Marks used the phrase multi-level governance to capture the development in EU structural policy following its major reform in 1988 (Ian Bache & Matthew Flinders, 2004). According to Marks, MLG sought to theorize the EU and its decision-making processes more sufficiently, since traditional approaches to EU studies were dominated by International Relations theories and concepts. According to Bache and Flinders (2004), previous approaches to EU studies were dominated by IR theories, such as Pluralism, neo-functionalism, and state-centered realism towards intergovernmentalism. The classical approaches to EU studies deriving from IR theories primarily sought to cover the concerns regarding European integration and the role of the state within. IR approaches to EU studies rather sought to take a state-centric approach in the interpretation of European integration, in terms of covering possible conflicts of interests and pooling of sovereignty. However, as Bache & Flinders (2004) state, the development of multi-level governance within EU studies was part of a new wave of thinking about the EU as a political system rather than seeking to explain the process of integration. MLG theory explains the design and function of the EU political system as well as the development of EU decision-making. Besides, MLG theory does not completely ignore the European integration process as part of its analysis but seeks to uncover the evolution of it. According to Bache and

Flinders (2004), the new wave of thinking followed swiftly from the accelerated deepening of the integration process in the mid to late 1980s. The deepening of European integration was exemplified during the agreement to the Single European Act (SEA) in 1987. The SEA agreement impacted how member states and their respective government should engage in the internal market and how the future decision-making process should appear. As the EU attempted to strengthen the internal market, the EU Structural Policy was amended to integrate Greece, Portugal, and Spain. According to Bache and Flinders (2004), as a side-payment to poorer member states for the anticipated consequences of the internal market program, governments agreed to double allocations of structural funding to assist the development of disadvantaged regions. Concerning this, the European Commission proposed that the success of the allocation of further structural funds had to be administrated by not only the state itself but of regional and local representatives as well.

As to MLG theory emerged as a theoretical approach to EU studies with particular attention to European integration and policy processes, Paul Stephenson (2013) argued, that from the outset, MLG was used to analyze institutional arrangements for the implementation of structural funds in cohesion policy, uncovering diverging formal and informal rules at the national and supranational level to explain multi-level tensions. The functional use of MLG theory has in the EU system been integrated as a recognized approach or system among supranational bodies integrating national, regional, and local institutions in the making of EU policies. According to Stephenson (2013), MLG was so successful that it entered into the language of policymakers. The Committee of the Regions today organizes annual ateliers to bring together scholars and practitioners to celebrate – and in so doing legitimize – multi-level governance. MLG theory has become a highly praised coordinated action among supranational actors within the EU that it has become a standardized procedure for drawing up EU policies and during the evaluation of certain policy implementations. Extending on MLG theory's practical understanding, MLG presents two different important focuses on governance. According to Hooghe and Marks (2001), the first type refers to governance with a clear structure and a vertically tiered hierarchy, in which only a limited number of authorities have actual decision-making powers. Hooghe and Marks' description of the vertical structure focuses to a certain extent on the inter-linked relations between different levels of governance and different levels of actors in terms of especially policy outcomes and decision-making.

However, as Saito-Jensen (2015) argues, local governments and non-state actors are viewed as having varying degrees of agency and ability to influence policymaking. It can be argued, that in certain instances local and regional governments can bypass the state of the central government regarding certain policy areas. This means, that despite the central government has the mandate to set the overall policy objective and definition, local and regional governments can define their issues and policy objectives in local terms. This "multiple" contradiction to the first type of MLG theory is furthermore perceived as the 'polycentric' model of MLG theory. Elinor Ostrom (2010) defined the second type of MLG theory as the polycentric governance system, in which she argued that polycentric governance must be viewed as multiple governing

authorities at different scales rather than a monocentric unit. This contradicted the vertical governance structure in which the hierarchical system is, as Ostrom (2010) states it, blurred, or even disappeared. According to the polycentric governance approach, this is a result of the different interactions between different governing bodies and authorities on both regional and local levels.

Within the political science academia today, MLG theory has been very little contested, and the theory has only received a sparse minimum of the contrary. However, in terms of viewing MLG theory within the framework of the EU and the specific role of member states, state-centrist has put forward several critics. State-centrists or nation-state followers within political science academia remain quite skeptical when it comes to the discussion of nation-states in the EU and the emergence of supranationalism since the nation state experiences a diffusion of its power and control. It is true, that national governments are the key actors in negotiating treaties, but since the tumultuous reception of the Maastricht Treaty in 1993, they have to contend with the participation of many kinds of domestic powers (Hooghe & Marks, 2001). Supranationalism and sub-state actors have naturally found their way into the general understanding of the nation-state's interactions within the EU system. However, from a state-centric point of view, the pooling of sovereignty among member states into the EU system and the diffusion of national power and control is only being strengthened by integrating domestic sub-state actors into the decision-making process. The deepening or widening of European integration has for state centrists been a diffusion of national power. Despite that MLG theory presents a new level of analysis to understand European integration and governance within decision-making processes, MLG theory has furthermore been criticized because of its rather superficial approach. Some scholars argue, that MLG theory is not merely a 'new' theory or evolutionary theory, but instead a transformation or unification of the roots of other regional integration theories and concepts. Some critics argue, that MLG theory departs from early neo-functionalism regarding certain crucial aspects. According to Arne Niemann and Phillippe C. Schmitter (2018), MLG theory can be found in the roots of early neo-functionalism in which a very general assumption common to many social science theories, namely that the consequences of some behaviors can explain their existence and trajectory. Niemann and Schmitter (2018) furthermore argued, that for whatever reason – organic, mechanical, ideological, or ethical – human beings decide to resolve their problems by engaging in specific tasks ("functions"), and this usually involves cooperation with others.

3.3 Social Constructivism

The theory of social constructivism was developed by the Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky who introduced social constructivist theory as a 'learning theory'. In his famous book from 1978 "Mind in Society: The development of higher psychological processes", Vygotsky claim, that individuals are active participants in the creation of their knowledge. Vygotsky assumed that individual learning and cognitive development takes place in social environments and cultural settings where interpersonal interaction determines the outcome and result of the individual's learning. Vygotsky furthermore argued that all cognitive

functions originate in and must therefore be explained as products of social interactions and that learning did not simply comprise the assimilation and accommodation of new knowledge by learners; it was the process by which learners were integrated into a knowledge community (Vygotsky, 1978). These reflections were backed up by later academia where Matthew D. Johnson and Thomas N. Bradbury (2015) argued that the social constructivism theory focuses heavily upon dyads and small groups. According to Johnson and Bradbury, small groups have always been key elements in the understanding of social constructivism theory which agrees with Vygotsky's illumination of the student-classroom environment. Vygotsky presented the example of a classroom with students and a teacher, in which he suggested that learning takes place through the interactions students have with their peers, teachers, and others (Vygotsky 1978). Vygotsky believed the classroom to be the determining environment for knowledge construction in which each student engages in interpersonal interactions. Vygotsky claimed this to be developing learning communities. This means that the development of skills and knowledge are acquired through communities where individuals engage in the same social environment where interactions and communication with others determine each individual's learning. Vygotsky's early reflections were backed up by Powell and Kalina (2009), who reflected upon cognitive approaches to social constructivism in which they argued, that students learn primarily through interactions with their peers, teachers, and parents, whereas teachers stimulate and facilitate conversation through harnessing the natural flow of conversation in the classroom. According to Powell and Kalina, interactions with individuals within the same social context will only enhance an individual's learning possibilities.

This can be referred to as the mere socio-cultural approach towards social constructivism stressing the importance of examining the intercultural and social context individual engages in. According to the most recent studies on social constructivism, Rishabh Kumar Mishra (2014) presented in his article important reflections on the importance of analyzing the socio-cultural context individuals engage in as a determiner for learning. Mishra (2014) argues that learning involves negotiating understanding through dialogue or discourse shared by two or more members of the community who are pursuing shared goals. Mishra (2014) furthermore distinguish between 3 tenets of the socio-cultural approach towards social constructivism: A) learners construct their knowledge, participating in authentic activities, and internalizing the tools of practices, B) learners are reflective beings, they can think and reflect on their lived experiences, C) social interaction/dialogues play a crucial role in learning. The socio-cultural approach to social constructivism mainly agrees with Vygotsky's introduction of the theory. However, the socio-cultural approach reflects upon the community as a setting for dialogue among individuals pursuing shared goals reflects furthermore upon some organizational approaches and contexts.

According to Kenneth J. Gergen, social constructivism is an important theory when understanding knowledge and information dissemination in an organizational context. Gergen (2009) argued, that from a social constructivist perspective, organizations are seen as a potentially fluid field of meaning-making. This assumption is shared by Celiane Camargo-Borges & Emerson F. Rasera who in their article

from 2014 argued, that in the realm of professional practices within organizations, social constructivism brings in concepts such as dialogue, imagination, co-creation, and meaning-making, creating a hybrid toolbox. According to this claim, social constructivism from an organizational approach reflects upon meaning-making in a common context, which presumably could refer to the idea of a community and socio-cultural context based on shared values and beliefs. Carmargo-Borges and Rasera (2014) furthermore argue the societal landscape within organizations is determined by the environment, practices, and people involved. The impact of this informed, interconnected, and more participatory organizational structure encourages value creation (Carmargo-Borges and Rasera (2014)). From a community or organizational context, the shaping of common values and beliefs is determined by the way individuals engage within the organization. One of the interconnective structures that shape common beliefs and values within the organization is dialogue, which from a social constructivist perspective refers to the practical interactions between individuals within the same social context and setting. Carmargo-Borges and Rasera (2014) argue, that dialogue is an ongoing interactive process happening in conversation, where the focus is on the potential of multiple local realities that can be shared. Dialogue and interactions within organizations establish common core values and beliefs that furthermore become the common structure and agenda individuals within the organization engage in.

In this way, one could argue, that interactions with other individuals within the same social setting or in this case an organization establish a certain context for motivation. Within social constructivism, motivation is viewed as a provided factor that emerges from social interactions within a shared and common cultural context. Eva Sivan (2010) argues that social constructivist theory provides a framework for conceptualizing motivation as socially negotiated by the participants in the classroom. The classroom, as is the shared setting and context, establishes the framework for individual motivation. However, the key driving force behind the establishment of common motivation is a shared set of values, beliefs as well as cultural norms. Sivan (2010) argues, the culturally determined joint activity between student and social context results in an internal state of interests and cognitive and affective engagement, and motivated behaviors, both of which can be considered cultural norms. The establishment of a determined joint activity establishes, according to Sivan, an internal state of interests and shared cognitive engagement that in the end shapes the common internal motivational behavior. Sivan's assumptions arguably emerge from Vygotsky's early reflections regarding the 'discussion-based classroom', in which he states, that discussion-based classrooms provide the right framework that can lead each student to feel like their contributions are valued resulting in increased motivation (Vygotsky, 1978). Discussion-based environments facilitate the motivation to pursue a shared goal or achievement, which from an organizational approach, means that an internal shared set of interests and values between colleagues becomes the main facilitator for a motivating environment.

However, despite that social constructivism theory is difficult to criticize because of its universality and broad perceptions, there remains yet one issue, social constructivism does not confer to, which is the more pragmatic view on the theory. Among the critics towards social constructivism, the majority

argues, that social constructivism primarily tends to focus on the external surroundings that shape's individual's learning development and how other people shape individual thinking. The theory argues that the interactions with other people within the same social environment is a premise for individual learning and supports the individual in acquiring understandings of the world. Social constructivism thereby ignores the individual pragmatic perspective by claiming, that individual understanding and conceptualization are parasitic upon this extra-individual scientific domain (Mark McMahon, 1997). Social constructivism ignores the individual point of view within learning developments and does not view the individual as the premise for individual learning. According to McMahon (1997), this is a mistake in which he claims that social constructivism is an old unpalatable, empiricist wine in a new bottle. Despite the fact, that parts of social constructivist theory refer to elements within cognitive psychology, the theory does not in practical terms evaluate and integrate the individual mind at the center of analysis but concentrates on the external surroundings as determiners for individual learning. This is backed up by Charlotte Hua Liu and Robert Matthews (2005) who argued that their mechanistic underpinning by an orderly, predictable, and controllable view of the universe proved inadequate to capture the active and social characteristics of learners. Liu and Matthews (2005) claim, that social constructivist theory ignores social characteristics of learners and neglects to capture individual learning mechanisms. Liu and Matthews present the assumption, that the view social constructivism has on learning development is rather 'mechanic', meaning that individuals acquire knowledge on the same level, in the same way within the same social environment.

3.4 Rational Choice Theory

Today, the theory of rational choice has emerged as of the most dominating theories within political science. Despite its engagement within many social science disciplines such as criminology, sociology, and even psychology, rational choice theory has emerged as a dominant thought within political science during the 20th century. The presumed understanding of 'rational choice theory' relates to the study of human behavior and individual decision-making. The core idea of rational choice theory was introduced by the Italian philosopher Cesare Beccaria and Jeremy Bentham during the late 18th century, who introduced the theory in terms of understanding human behavior within the discipline of criminology. According to Richard T. Whright & Scott H. Decker (1994), both men were mainly interested in the control of crime through the manipulation of penal sanctions rather than the direct observations of criminals or the analysis of aggregate crime data. Both furthermore argue that firm adherents to the free will philosophy that was fashionable in Enlightenment Europe, believed that man could determine his destiny by the use of reason and knowledge. These early criminal laws and penal reformers defined crime in legal terms and regarded the offender as morally guilty because he had freely chosen to commit a criminal act (Richard T. Whright & Scott H. Decker (1994). The foundation of rational choice theory was hereby introduced to understand the rational thinking of criminals in terms of committing crimes. Both argued that the core element of understanding the physical act of crime is, that criminals are responsible for their destiny. Their commitment to a criminal act is therefore

based on a specific set of rational choices, in which their choices determine a certain destiny or 'outcome'. In this sense, the rational choice theory starts with the idea that individuals have preferences and choices and choose according to those (Levin and Malgrom, 2004). Jon Elster (1989) agrees with this assumption by arguing, that rational action is concerned with outcomes. He furthermore argues that “if you want to achieve Y, do X” (Elster 1989, pp. 1).

The theory nevertheless emerged as an integral part of late 19th and early 20th-century political science studies by introducing key development within the study of decision-making and political choices. Beccaria and Bentham's idea of the individual 'free choice' can be related to modern decision-making thinking which has become crucial when conceptualizing rational choice theory within political decision-making academia. According to Levin and Malgrom (2004), in the standard view, rational choice is defined to mean the process of determining what options are available and then choosing the most preferred one according to some consistent criterion. According to Levin and Milgrom, rational choice theory relates to the individual cognitive process where individuals evaluate which options they have and then base their action upon these available options. According to Michael Roskin (2020), for rational choice theorists, history and culture are irrelevant to understanding political behavior; instead, it is sufficient to know the actors' interests and to assume that they pursue them rationally. Rational choice theory within the discipline of political science seeks to provide a conceptualized and theorized understanding of political behavior in terms of illuminating the preliminary behavioral factors behind political decision-making and political strategy etc. Within the academics of political science, the rational choice theory attempts to apply a much more formal theory to the analysis of political decision-making, which according to Roskin often involves the use of economic and mathematical modeling (Roskin, 2020). This view is shared by Joe A. Oppenheimer, who in 2008 perceived this as a matter of collective action to solve political problems. He presents the 3 classical positions of rational choice contributions to understanding political action and behavior:

1) Social cooperation through what is usually referred to as the logic of collection action, 2) the behavior of collective actors (for example unions and governments) through what is usually referred to as a social choice theory, and spatial modeling, 3) what might constitute a metric of social or collective well being and hence a yardstick for political performance" (Oppenheimer, 2008, p. 7).

This model presented by Oppenheimer (2008) gives a good understanding of how political behavior is driven and what could motivate certain collective political actions towards a common agenda. This relates very well to Levin and Malgrom (2004), who argued, that political actions primarily are determined by “what is the greatest good for the greatest number” (Levin and Malgrom, 2004, p.1).

Oppenheimer presents what some academics would call micro-level approaches to determine political behavior, which according to Barry R. Weingast (1996) refers to positive political theoretical approaches towards rational choice theory. As to what Levin and Malgrom (2004) argued, that political rational

choices always is determined by the outcome of political action or behavior, one may always choose the most 'positive' outcome. According to David Austen-Smith (1997), positive political theory is concerned with understanding political phenomena through the use of analytical models which, it is hoped, lend insight into why outcomes look the way they do and not some other way. According to this, the political rational choice must be perceived within the realms of positive political theory, whereas rational choice theory provides an analytical perspective to analyze and understand political behavior and actions, with the basic idea, that political rational choices are always determined by what options are available and which are most satisfying.

The classical rational choice theory was hereby presented by Beccaria and Bentham, who introduced the mere philosophical understanding of individual rational choices within the study of crime and criminal activities. The foundation of rational choice theory thereby emerged as one of the most popular theories within political science in the 19th century since it presented an analytical perspective to understand political behavior and choices. Today, the rational choice theory has emerged and been introduced in various academic principles and the basic elements of the theory can be applied to a variety of degrees. However, the rational choice theory has nevertheless met some academic critique, whereas one of the major critics concerns the fact, that rational choice theory does not account for any intuitive reasoning or decision making. The rational choice theory presents a clear modeled decision-making model in which individuals or groups base their decision by 'muddling through' several calculations and estimated outcomes. Michael I. Ogu presents here an important critical claim, where he argues.

Despite the steps involved in reaching rational decisions, choices and decisions are made simply by muddling through, as long as the decision made would likely lead to the perceived best possible outcome. Individuals hardly follow the steps provided in the rational model to reach decisions that they regard as rational. Rationality hence is a subjective phenomenon, since an individual from time to time can be both rational and irrational in reaching decisions" (Michael I. Ogu, 2013, p. 1).

Here Ogu (2013) presents an important contradicting assumption to rational choice theory, in which individuals often make irrational decisions. The rational choice theory does to a certain extent tend to ignore this factor, in which it through a modeled perspective assumes, that individuals always base their decisions on calculated outcomes and anticipated results. Here, rational choice theory neglects the situational basis of decision-making and only focuses on a generalized cost-benefit decision-making model. Here Ogu (2013) extend on his claim by arguing, that rational choice does not seem applicable when analyzing decisions made within intuitive, situational, or even emotional states, that from an irrational point of view often refers to decisions made without further long-term calculations but instead departures from an intuitive consciousness. According to Levin and Malgrom (2004), this relates to the notion of behavioral criticisms of rational choice, whereas they agree with Ogu (2013) by arguing, that a main criticism of the most basic rational choice model

is that real-world choices often appear to be highly situational or context-dependent (Levin and Malgrom, 2004). Here, the emotional state of consciousness of the individual or group is ignored, which often may affect individual decision-making. Here, Levin and Malgrom (2004) extend on this by arguing, that how a choice is posed, the social context of the decision the emotional state of the decision-maker, the addition of seemingly extraneous items of the choice set, and a host of other environmental factors appear to influence choice behavior. Despite the critique of rational choice theory's rather ignorant approach towards situational-based decisions, the core concepts within rational choice theory remain as a great analytical model or conceptualized determiner for understanding political decision making.

4. Methodology

4.1 Initial thoughts

Before carefully explaining the technicalities of my research method and illuminate the specific methods in use, I initially seek to clarify the research process of this thesis in more general terms. Before initiating the research methods and the collection of data I started by choosing a subject. The overall subject regarded the concept of paradiplomacy. This gave me an initial idea of what this thesis will concentrate on and could furthermore provide an idea of which themes I was able to limit myself to and concentrate on. Since paradiplomacy in its general terms reflects upon the integration of sub-state actor's involvement in international and EU politics I was hereby able to narrow down the actors that would be integrated into this thesis. Based on my previous experience as an intern at the Central Denmark EU Office I gained first-hand experience in the area of practicing foreign policy activity within a sub-state setting, whereby I gained great interest in the theme of sub-state foreign policy representation in the EU. I, therefore, focused on the danish region's involvement in the EU, and because of my first-hand experience, the case study focused on Region Midtjylland. Having narrowed me down to a certain thematic I was thereby able to select the theories that would theorize the theme. Here, I choose to focus on Multi-level governance theory, social constructivism, and rational-choice theory which presumably before analyzing, would provide a great theoretical and conceptual understanding of 'what was going on. After being able to select the theories, it became imperative to test these theories to see whether they would apply to my thesis or not. This initiated the ability to conduct a certain research design and select the research methods that would help me uncover the 'puzzle' that up to this point only were theoretical ideas and thematic assumptions. During the process of selecting a subject, theme, and theory I researched secondary literature which became the initiating basis of my data collected. Here, secondary literature supported my limitation from subject to the theme to theory.

4.2 Deductive Research

Based on this, I was able to conduct a deductive research approach, in which I from the existing theory sought to formulate 2 hypotheses based on this existing theory. The first hypothesis is; *Danish*

regions, and in particular, Region Midtjylland pushes for a green agenda based on beliefs. The first hypothesis integrates the theoretical framework of Social Constructivism theory and seeks to test this respective theory within hypothesis 1. The second hypothesis is *Danish regions, and in particular, Region Midtjylland pushes for a green agenda based on commercial interests*. This hypothesis integrates Rational Choice theory as the theoretical framework and seeks to test this theory within hypothesis 2. The formulation of these hypotheses was based on presumed thematic assumptions in which preliminary research enabled me to question the behavior behind the region's actions. Since hypothesis 1 is based on 'beliefs' and that hypothesis 2 is based on 'commercial interests' was intentionally selected based on my personal experiences as an intern at Central Denmark EU Offices where I acquired the first-hand experience in supporting Region Midtjylland to push for a green agenda through a variety of assignments covering both commercial intentions and purposes based on certain 'beliefs'. The particularity of Region Midtjylland refers to the previously mentioned case study approach, in which both hypotheses presume, that Region Midtjylland in particular pushes for a green agenda compared to the other danish regions. After formulating the two hypotheses, I collect data through a compiled semi-structured expert interview in which I engaged in a face-to-face interview with a certain respondent. This interview was hereafter transcribed to gain the most accurate data. After seeking to test the hypothesis with the collected data, this thesis seeks to analyze the results and evaluate whether or not the hypotheses can be rejected or supported.

4.3 Data Collection

4.3.1 Expert Interview

To collect further data that can be examined to either refute or confirm hypotheses 1 and 2, this master thesis conducted an expert interview with a political advisor to the danish MEP Asger Christensen. The political advisor in question wanted to remain anonymous which the person claimed before initiating the interview. The preliminary thought was to be able to interview Asger Christensen himself, but due to a busy schedule, I was able to interview his closest political advisor who by her best effort spoke on behalf of Asger Christensen. The interview was only able to last for approximately 20 minutes, which was the time the Asger Christensen's political advisor could spare for the interview due to a busy schedule. Yet another reason behind this interview was due to Asger Christensen and his administrative group's work with the EU CAP reform and his membership in the EU ENVI group. "We have been actively engaged in the negotiations CAP act of 2020" (Appendix 1, 2021). Due to these factors, Asger Christensen or his political advisor remained as an expert respondent to this interview which would provide this master thesis first-hand expert knowledge as data. "We participated actively in writing amendments to the draft legislative proposal presented by the Commission" (Appendix 1, 2021). These responses exemplify the expert and inside knowledge, Asger Christensen and his advisors possess regarding the EU CAP reform. The expert interview aimed, as previously argued, at collecting the needed data and information to initially exploring the needed information to map out

the challenges the current EU CAP reform poses to the danish regions and how the political advisor thought the danish regions could or were able, to influence the current and future EU CAP reform. Hereafter, the data collected from the interview should help to identify if Region Midtjylland, in particular, pushes for a green agenda in contrast to the other danish regions and if the political advisor could give some examples on how Region Midtjylland distinguishes itself from the other danish regions to push for a green agenda. In extension to this, the data collected should hereby also result in the clarification of whether hypothesis 1 or 2 can be rejected or confirmed.

The interview was based on a semi-structured interview model which is a model in which the interviewer does not strictly follow a formalized or standardized list of questions. The semi-structured interview model here was based on beforehand made open and open-ended questions that to a certain extent would lead to an open discussion. Here, the interviewer may prepare a list of questions but will not necessarily ask them all, or touch on them in any particular order, using them instead to guide the conversation (Alison Doyle, 2020). This interview made some prepared questions to keep the interview in some specific direction and maintain it within a specific knowledge area. However, all the questions were open or open-ended questions that enabled the interviewee to engage in a discussion rather than to engage in a straightforward question-format and strictly standardized model. Without ignoring the advantages of a standardized model, the semi-structured interview model became ideal since the idea is to explore the research area by collecting expert knowledge within a specific area. This, however, required to a certain level a previous study in the research topic area to establish the most sufficient and satisfying conditions for an open discussion with the interviewee. The use of semi-structured interviews requires a certain level of the previous study in the research topic because the interview questions are based on previous knowledge (Kallio, H., Pietila, A., Johnson, M., and Kangasniemi, M., 2016). By researching and studying the topic which will be the framework for discussion within the interview, the interviewer becomes able to improvise follow-up questions based on the participant's responses. To characterize the open questions presented within this semi-structured interview model, the initiate questions were *questions about knowledge*, which was employed to test the respondent's knowledge in an area (Alan Bryman, 2004). This was done by asking "Can you describe Asger's, yours and you're working group's main task in the parliament" (Appendix 1, 2021). These rather open questions hereby invited the respondent to explain their activities in the parliament which referred to the EU CAP. Other questions were to a certain extent aiming at *attitudes*, which was integrated to test the interviewee's attitude or meaning on a certain phenomenon, possibility, or presumed assumption. To exemplify this, I ask the respondent. "In your office or your working group, do you work closely or are you in perhaps close contact with the Danish Regional Governments or the municipalities, either in your daily work or in some specific political negotiations regarding the CAP or other environmental policies, can you maybe put a few words on that?" (Appendix 1, 2021).

Here I sought to acquire the respondent's attitude on a certain presumed possibility. A

presumed possibility regarding a calculated phenomenon the interviewer sought to address to direct the interview in a certain direction as well as direct a possible answer in a direction in favor of the interviewer. However, these examples of questions nevertheless offered the interviewee the opportunity to present a variety of reflections and answers he/she made during the interview or even during the mere 'reading' of the question. These open or open-ended questions nonetheless required me to carefully transcribe the interview, which has been done by transcribing the sound file by writing down the exact minute and second each question was asked, and each answer was provided. The transcription of the interview is based on a clean interview by ignoring all extra verbal distractions and transforms the audio file into an easy-to-read document. The clean transcriptions ignore taboo words since it within this thesis does not represent or signify any specific meaning. Taboos such as "Uhhh" etc. could in general present some specific "doubt" or "wondering" the interviewer willingly sought to catch or retrieve from the respondent to legitimize and emphasize a specific research puzzle or problem formulation.

To illuminate why I chose to conduct an interview with Asger Christensen's political advisor was due to their work and position in the parliament. This can be viewed at Asger Christensen and his groups' profile at the European Parliament website, where it shows which delegations and groups, they are a part of (European Parliament, Asger Christensen Profile, 2021.). Here, one can see, that their group takes part in panel debates in the parliament concerning legislation processes and drafting sessions. Due to the group's transparency, one can easily access Asger Christensen's declaration regarding their work (Appendix 4, Asger Christensen Declaration). This empirical evidence legitimizes this interviewee's credibility regarding applying the retrieved data from the interview in the thesis.

4.4 Research Method

The collection of qualitative data was retrieved through the initiation of the expert interview with Asger Christensen's political advisor. The expert interview is a part of the qualitative empirical research in which I intend to acquire empirical evidence to reject or support either of the hypotheses. As a qualitative method within political and social research, it aims at exploring or collecting data about a specific field of interest. (Gläser, J & Laudel G., 2004). The specific field of interest here is the EU CAP reform which became the framework and premises the interview was conducted within. According to Meuser and Nagel (2009), the expert interview as a qualitative interview is based on a topical guide, focusing on the knowledge of the expert, which is broadly characterized as specific knowledge in a certain field of action. Here, the certain field of action becomes the specific political actions MEP Asger Christensen, and his group takes to negotiate the future and current CAP reform. These actions are thereby seen as 'expert indications' since their political actions within the legislature processes makes them experienced within this specific area of action and interest. The presented secondary data retrieved from secondary material in terms of governmental reports, press releases, articles, and academic literature were primarily qualitative data in which it was non-numerical data. The qualitative data retrieved from these sources came in the form of descriptive

words and assumptions to which a specific pattern or meaning could be concluded. The concluded and retrieved pattern and meaning could hereby by thorough examination indicate whether the material either rejects or supports either of the two hypotheses. These narrative forms or descriptive forms of observation can thereby be compared to the interview and by comparing these, examine if a common and shared tendency occurs.

4.4. Limitations

One of the largest limitations within the master thesis is already present within the research question; "Does the Danish Regional Governments have an independent influence on the EU Common Agricultural Policy or not?". The research question hereby indicates that the master thesis primarily will be focusing on the EU Common Agricultural Policy and therefore also indicate the neglecting of other policy areas relevant as well as sensitive to the danish regions and in particular Region Midtjylland. The reason why this thesis solely focuses on the EU CAP is because of the thematic relevance of the 'green agenda' which has become universally acknowledge and currently remains as one of the most publicly debated issues. Another reason besides the universal and public interest lies in the realms of how EU regulations on the green agenda in terms of sustainability, green transitions, biodiversity, etc. has on agriculture, which undeniable not only remain one of the biggest businesses and markets among the European member states but also in Denmark. The Danish agricultural sector constitutes approximately 14% of total danish export, which therefore arguably becomes very sensitive to major EU regulations on agriculture and farming. Danish farmers and the whole agriculture sector have to adapt to continually changing EU regulations on the area which impacts their 'way of doing business in terms of changing production requirements and protection of biodiversity etc. As this also has been clarified in the empirical overview section, the interview with Asger Christensen's political advisor illuminates some of the challenges the EU CAP poses for danish farmers as well as for the danish regions; "Yeah it is true that of course the draft regulation is quite difficult to understand and the commission published, I think its 4 examples and how an eco-scheme could be designed, so in that way they don't necessarily have a lot of guidance..." (Appendix 1, 2021).

Yet another limitation to account for is to be found in the research question and the introduction as well, which is the fact, that this master thesis focuses on the EU and how danish regions and in particular Region Midtjylland can influence EU Agricultural policy. The preliminary reason why this thesis focus on the EU system is due to the fact, that EU regulations, legislation, and policies not only impact Denmark on the state level but also on the regional and local level as well. Since many national legislations and policies are of direct influence of EU legislation, regional and local policies have to adapt as well. This relation refers to the general idea of 'legal influence' in which Denmark due to their EU membership has to directly implement some EU legislation. This factor made it natural for this master thesis to solely focus on how danish regions and in particular Region Midtjylland can influence EU policy.

Additionally, this master thesis solely focuses on the perspective of the regional politicians

and regional governments in Denmark and ignores the Danish municipalities. This choice shall be seen in the light of the danish structural reform in 2007 where the establishment of the danish regions additionally gained a larger resort-area of responsibilities, including the area of 'regional development'. The secretariat of regional development among the danish regions handles the regions' international assignments and activities about EU cooperation, also within the area of the 'green agenda'. By the implementation of the structural reform in 2007, danish regions hereby acquired a larger amount of responsibility within international assignments, which also were the indicator for the establishment of the Danish regional EU Offices in Brussels. Furthermore, concerning the choice of focusing on the EU CAP, the danish regions are also responsible for developing the right incentives and make sure that danish farmers within the respective regions and local areas acquire the best opportunities. Additionally, the danish regions are also responsible for administrating the EU Agricultural Subsidies danish farmers acquire from the EU, which nevertheless is administrated in collaboration with the Danish Ministry of Agriculture, Fishery, and Food as well as the Danish Environmental Agency. These factors became the premise and preliminary evidence-based indicators for maintaining a primary focus on the danish regions.

5. Analysis

5.1 Hypothesis 1

Danish Regions, and in particular Region Midtjylland, are pushing for a green agenda based on beliefs: Social Constructivism

5.1.2 Committee of the Regions

As social constructivist theory claims, the shaping of individuals' perception of society occurs when individuals are engaged in social activities such as interaction and collaboration. Despite its rather pedagogical assumption, this remains yet another core element of the social constructivist theory that can be related to danish regions collaboration with international and European partners that shares the same set of ideas, values, and societal perception. One of the most obvious and highly important partners danish regions engage with to push for a green agenda is the Committee of the Regions. Despite the fact, that CoR remains as the channel for regional governments to influence EU policymaking during drafting session and they sort of has the 'obligation' to do so, they are according to empirical evidence, sharing the same political agendas in pushing for a green agenda. According to the CoR Political Priorities 2020-2025, evidence shows, that CoR is working to push for a green agenda in the EU system. The CoR established the Green Deal Going Local working group, which is a new initiative of the CoR that aims at placing cities and regions at the core of the European Green Deal and ensure that both the EU's sustainable growth strategy and the COVID-19 recovery plan translate into direct funding for cities and regions and tangible projects for every territory

(CoR, Green Deal, 2021). Furthermore, the working group has three specific objectives: 1) to provide a cross-cutting view on the numerous policy areas within the European Green Deal and ensure policy coherence and consistency across files and related opinions. 2) To reinforce the institutional outreach of the CoR on the Green Deal as to place cities and regions at the core of the path towards climate-neutrality. And 3) To channel the challenges that local and regional authorities are facing while implementing the green transition locally and communicate their achievements and best practices to facilitate its replication across the European Union. (CoR, Green Deal, 2021). The working group furthermore follows the following policy areas: Sustainable Energy, Circular Economy, Clean Transport, Nature and Biodiversity, Food and Agriculture, Green Finance, and Industry (CoR, Green Deal, 2021). This empirical evidence shows, that the CoR is a highly important partners and channels of influence for the danish regions to push for a green agenda, since they, as evidence showed, believe and work on the same set of values and ideas as to what the danish regions believe in regarding the green agenda. Retrieved from the empirical overview it becomes clear, that all the danish regions are sharing the same set of values and believes regarding the green agenda as the CoR. Despite the fact, that there remains a 'superficial and underlying obligation for the CoR to represent regions and cities within the member state's green agendas and political priorities regarding the green agenda, it nevertheless becomes clear, that the danish regions share the same set of values and believes as the CoR.

Additionally, 9 regional politicians from a variety of the danish regions have 9 seats in the CoR and 9 deputy seats. This indicates that it on a regional political and administrative level was politically prioritized, that regional politicians across the danish regions should pursue holding seats in the CoR to be able to have as much regional political influence as possible. This furthermore indicates the political will among the danish regions to engage in the CoR and push for a green agenda which remains one of the core policy issues CoR represents. The political engagement and willingness to push for a green agenda is something that Political Advisor to the danish MEP in the parliament Asger Christensen (Appendix 1, 2021) furthermore endorsed by stressing the importance for danish regional politicians to use the CoR in terms of improving legislation on certain areas with attention to the green agenda: "... They could of course if they want to improve legislation participate in the CoR in the European Union where I suppose they have a say, but that might mostly be in the drafting process of the legislated pieces..." (Appendix 1, 2021).

By assessing the theory of social constructivism, it becomes clear, that danish regions' collaboration with the CoR supports the claim in hypothesis 1. As social constructivism argues that individuals can create meaning when they interact with each other and with the environment they live in, and if collaboration with the CoR creates 'meaning' for the danish regions to push for a green agenda, this specific 'meaning' or perception will be transformed into a condition to which danish regions believe in the importance of pushing for a green agenda. Extending on a theoretical consideration, engaging in such a network will furthermore create key benefits regarding knowledge-sharing and information gathering regarding the green agenda. This arguably counts for both policy development on the topic in the EU towards legislation, revision of drafts,

etc. But also counts for the professional knowledge regarding specific subjects under the green agenda. One could argue that knowledge dissemination and sharing could become incitement for the willingness and belief in pushing for a green agenda among the danish regions when engaging in such networks with people from a variety of political and more professional backgrounds. Here, the theory of social constructivism argues, that social constructivism is based on specific assumptions about reality, knowledge, and learning (J. Sci, Lit & Lang, 2015), which could mean, that one's social perception of reality, society, and social environments are affected by increased knowledge and learning, that in the long-term would enable individuals to perceive surroundings from other perspectives. Here, social constructivist theory to a certain extent refer to the idea of enlightenment, that knowledge and learning create renewed meaning of the social reality individuals engage within. On this behalf, knowledge dissemination and sharing become driving forces and incitements for danish regions' willingness to push for a green agenda and support their belief.

This argument, therefore, supports hypothesis 1.

5.1.3 Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR)

Additionally, the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) becomes yet another collaborative partner of the danish regions on pushing for a green agenda. The CEMR, as argued in the empirical overview, is working on several of these within the green agenda. Within their working areas of Environment, Climate and Energy, CEMR is working on policy issues regarding Mobility, Climate & Energy transition, and Waste Management & Circular Economy (CEMR, "Activities", 2021). Especially within the policy issues regarding Climate and energy transition, CEMR is working from 2 objectives; 1) To express the political perspectives of local and regional authorities on resource efficiency and the environment at the European Level; 2) To contribute to both current and future discussions and decisions in Europe on key domains related to the environment and the rational use of natural resources (CEMR, "Activities", 2021). Under the policy issue regarding Waste Management and Circular Economy, CEMR has 4 key goals: 1) To promote the perspective of local and regional governments regarding the revision of waste legislation; 2) To contribute to the thought process of the European Commission's services to move towards a circular economy: improve the use of natural resources, the implementation of waste legislation and its possible revisions; 3) To raise legislator's awareness about measures to take at the beginning of a product's life cycle, particularly at the manufacturing stage (eco-design, packaging standards, preventative measures on waste, etc. 4) To present tangible proposals to reinforce the principle of extended producer responsibility. This principle lays out the responsibility of the producer concerning the management of manufactured products that the producer has put on the market. It is of particular relevance at the end of the product's life cycle when the product is ready to be thrown away (CEMR, "Activities", 2021).

Comparing the CEMR's objectives and goals about the green agenda they correspond with the goals of among all danish regions. Initially, this indicates there is a tangible relationship between what the

danish regions believe in and what the CEMR believes. To further legitimize their shared beliefs and values, 2 regional elected politicians across all the danish regions has 2 seats in the committee and 2 deputy seats. This indicates the preliminary political willingness to push for a green agenda through a collaboration with the CEMR as well as a belief, that by committing to this specific cooperation, they can push for a green agenda. As previously argued, knowledge and sharing of information by engaging in the CEMR are of high relevance for supporting the claim in hypothesis 1. As social constructivist argues that knowledge and learning are key prerequisites for the renewed perception of social reality, knowledge-sharing within CEMR might be a persuading force or incitement for danish regions willingness to push for a green agenda as well as an indicator for the belief in the green agenda. It can be argued, that from a social constructivist approach, danish regions by participating in the CEMR's work on the green agenda, which empirically focused on agriculture among others, may indicate their ability to influence EU CAP through the CEMR.

This argument, therefore, supports hypothesis 1

5.1.4 Danish Regional EU Offices

As argued in the introduction to the analysis, the arguments presented that supports hypothesis 1 will be based on the actual actions danish regional politicians take to push for a green agenda. As the danish regions' engagement in the CoR and the CEMR was based on political engagement from the danish regions in Denmark to which could be viewed from the different seats danish regional politicians were elected to acquire in each organization. Despite this, danish regions in Denmark took furthermore the political action of financing each region's own Regional EU Office in Brussels, which seeks to create synergy with the regional government and the EU institutions and other organizations in the EU through EU application and project work. The practical work in the EU offices is determined by development strategies that are amended based on political agreements and there indicates that their work is politically determined by their respective Regional Government in Denmark. As presented in the empirical overview, Danish Regional EU Offices main task is to support the regional government and belonging municipalities to gain as much benefit from EU cooperation as possible, which primarily contains the development of EU-application for the financing of domestic development projects as well as general policy advisory on areas of great interest to the regional government. Here, the Regional Governments in Denmark established the Regional EU Offices on a majority of the political mandate which indicates the concrete preliminary political action regional politicians took to establish their respective Regional EU Offices in Brussels. Each Regional EU Office works on a politically decided and determined policy area that is of great interest to the Regional Governments and undeniably to a certain extent follows the prioritized policy areas in the EU. To provide empirical evidence, an example is retrieved from the Central Denmark EU Office which states that; Central Denmark EU Office is dedicated to helping the entire Central Denmark Region with all of its municipalities, higher learning facilities, private companies, and other key players in playing as active a part as possible in the EU. The office

ensures that companies, organizations, and universities in the region maximize their EU benefits. Central Denmark has a special focus on innovation, healthcare, education, research, tourism, energy, environment, and culture (CDEU, "About", 2021).

Since the Danish Regional EU Offices initially were established based on concrete political actions among the Regional Governments, it indicates that there initially was a universal demand for the establishment of those offices to take part in the political representation of the danish region's policy work on the green agenda. Compared with the key elements from social constructivist theory, it furthermore indicates that there is and will be in the future, a political willingness and belief in pushing for a green agenda among the danish regions, since one may presume that despite a possible political demand, a certain belief became the preliminary premise for both the establishment of the EU offices as well as the belief in pushing for a green agenda by outsourcing regional political work on the green agenda to representation offices in Brussels. Here, Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivism can be applicable in terms of the interaction of individuals within the same social condition. All the consultants working at the danish regional EU Offices share the same responsibilities which are bound by the same belief; to help Region Midtjylland acquire as many benefits from the EU as possible (CDEU, About, 2021).

This argument, therefore, supports hypothesis 1

5.1.5 European Parliament

Yet another political action we can retrieve from the empirical evidence that indicates a tendency of danish regions pushing for a green agenda is their opportunity to reach out to the danish MEPs in the parliament. As argued in the empirical overview, danish regions can reach out directly to danish MEPs to discuss regional issues remaining sensitive to certain current or future legislation or policy proposals in the EU. In this way, the danish regions have established a direct way of advocating for regional issues to the danish MEPs in terms of certain legislation, which in this case makes this concrete political action a matter of policy influence. Extending in this, the danish regions' political action to engage in political discussions with danish MEPs on legislation on the green area with high sensitivity to the danish regions can hereby be perceived as policy influence.

But how do we indicate that direct policy influence opportunities for danish regions can become a motive for pushing for a green agenda? It is difficult to measure 'belief' as the driving force behind political action, but we can consider if direct policy advocacy is more encouraging than indirect policymaking. If the danish regions have the opportunity to engage in political discussions with individuals that has direct access to EU policymakers and are therefore able to channel regional policy issues to relevant decision-makers, it creates an incitement for danish regions to push for a green agenda. If danish regions solely had indirect policy advocacy opportunities it would arguably to a certain extent be less motivating to push for a green agenda, since it creates a 'longer' way into the parliament. Referring to the inventor of social constructivism theory, Lev Vygotsky, he claimed that "discussion-based dialogue promotes deeper understanding and

lead one to feel like their contributions are valued resulting in increased motivation" (1987). Even though Vygotsky's social constructivist theory departure from his investigation of social learning communities and collaborative learning, key elements in his argumentation can be applied in this case. Based on this argument, individuals would feel more motivated when engaging in direct dialogue since they feel like they contribute to a common goal. Applying Vygotsky's social constructivist theory and the evidence-based political action, danish regions would feel more motivated to engage in direct policy discussions with the danish MEPs in the parliament based on the direct policy influence opportunity. However, the determining factors then become, if the concrete policy advocacy danish regions practices through the danish MEPs have positive outcomes in terms of either the integration of concrete input from the danish regions into the EU legislation in question or just a slight integration of danish regional interests. If this is experienced, the danish regions would practically have contributed to a common goal by pushing for a green agenda into the parliament based on regional political interests, which according to Vygotsky, increases the motivation to do so (Vygotsky, 1978). The 'motivation' which Vygotsky (1978) presents can be applied to the concept of diplomacy and MLG as well. One could argue or presume, that the concept of motivation refers to a consciousness in which individuals feel inspired or driven to practice a specific action. Motivation, therefore, becomes a force that drives the concrete action individuals to seek to take. The fact that danish regional politicians seek to influence EU legislators through the danish MEPs in parliament, the naturalness concerning the opportunity for sub-state actors such as danish regional governments, therefore, becomes the specific 'motivation' that Vygotsky (1978) refers to.

Based on this assumption, it can be validated that concrete danish regional political action in terms of influencing EU legislation and policy through the danish MEPs can support hypothesis 1. If we consider, as to what Vygotsky argued, that direct dialogue provokes individual's motivation to contribute to common goals, then hypothesis 1 becomes valid in terms of the presumed argument, that increased motivation to push for a green agenda must be the driving force behind acquiring a certain 'belief' in pushing for a green agenda. Since, as previously argued, 'belief' is difficult to measure, this examination based on empirical evidence and social constructivist theory indicate a tendency, that Danish regions are more likely to push for a green agenda when acquiring increased motivation than less motivation.

This argument, therefore, supports hypothesis 1

5.1.6 The Danish Royal Embassy in Brussels

Yet another political action danish regional politicians take is to collaborate or discuss with specific advisors and consultants at the Danish Royal Embassy in Brussels. As clarified in the empirical overview, the embassy remains an important partner for the danish regional politicians since the embassy figure is a concrete 'channel of influence' into the EU. Since the embassy and primarily the top ambassador is a party of consultation during drafting sessions in the commission and legislative processes in the parliament,

they can proceed danish regional political agendas, interests, and opinions into the drafting session and legislative period which enables the danish regional politicians to 'have their say on the bill'. Since the Danish Embassy is primarily working with legislation processes in the EU, they naturally remain an important channel for danish regional politicians to push regional political agendas into the legislative process in the parliament.

However, since the embassy remains as a party of consultation during legislation and drafting sessions they are not able to vote, which does not make them a 'direct policy channel' as the danish elected MEPs in the parliament are. The embassy is close to the political negotiations and processes in the EU but does not have the final say when it comes to voting sessions in the parliament. From the regional politicians' perspective, the embassy, therefore, remains an indirect policy channel where the embassy arguably acts as a 'middleman' proceeding regional political interests further to the MEPs or other relevant stakeholders. Despite this, regional politicians still reach out to the embassy and are therefore still interested in engaging in political discussions and dialogues. According to Vygotsky (1978), multi-level dialogue remains highly important for the danish regional politicians in which they presumably would feel like their contributions are valued resulting in concrete motivation (Vygotsky, 1978). In this sense, despite that, the embassy remains as an indirect policy channel for the danish regional politicians they are still important actors in which they in collaboration with the regional politicians facilitates political dialogue and discussions concerning regional political issues which could a motivational factor for the danish regional politicians to practice such political action. In this way, as Vygotsky furthermore claims, social processes through collaborative activities are highly important factors for driving motivation for individuals (Vygotsky, 1978), which in this case means, that paradiplomatic meetings, discussions, and dialogues between the danish regional politicians and the embassy are highly important determiners for the motivation behind regional political actions. However, as the Danish national government is focused on the green agenda, the employees working at the embassy are therefore determined to push for a green agenda because of a shared 'belief' with the national government. Since this is the case, it indicates an opportunity for the danish regions to engage with the embassy and thereby collaborate on the same issue about pushing for a green agenda based on shared beliefs and values.

This argument, therefore, supports hypothesis 1.

5.1.7 Climatorium in Lemvig Municipality

As the previously presented empirical evidence was illuminated as indications that support hypothesis 1, it becomes rather important to reflect upon arguments that do not support hypothesis 1, to provide a well-reflected analysis. Within the empirical overview section, the Climatorium in Lemvig Municipality remains as a public-private research center that has become Denmark's first international climate center. The Climatorium figures as a forum for climate adaptation projects and as a research center developing climate prevention solutions. As argued in the empirical overview, Climatorium's mission is to develop and disseminate new solutions to challenges within the areas of coastal climate challenges, green energy, circular

economy, and water and environment (Climatorium, 2021). Despite the fact, that the Climatorium is partly a research center bound by the sharing of expert knowledge, the center still indicates that its mission not only is to facilitate 'learning communities' as Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivism would call it but also to develop innovative climate solutions nationally and internationally (Climatorium, 2021). One may perceive climatorium's mission as to a certain extent based on values and beliefs for a healthy green transition and therefore to push for a green agenda, but Climatorium furthermore seeks to sell climate solutions to national and international partners, which the following quote indicates: "Water and climate have a global market of 3000 billion DKK and Denmark will face a huge export adventure if the market is accessed correctly" (Climatorium, 2021). This quote indicates that Climatorium also has a more materialistic interest or commercial agenda behind its research center, in terms of being able to sell practical and physical solutions to national and international partners.

By extending on this, a press release from Region Midtjylland furthermore indicates that the specific initiative behind the establishment of Climatorium was backed up by the region, which indicates that there was political backing for the realization of the Climatorium. During the opening of Climatorium, Anders Kühnau, Regional Chairman in Region Midtjylland said in a press release that.

"Climatorium will be of great importance for the green transition. Both locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally. Our experiences from Climatorium will be precisely mapped, and we want to give our knowledge and experiences to the Danish Government and the EU. Climatorium is in many ways unique and that makes me incredibly proud" (Region Midtjylland, 2020).

This statement from the Regional Chairman in Region Midtjylland is highly important to disseminate since it, directly and indirectly, proclaims very important empirical evidence for this case. This empirical evidence initially legitimizes that Climatorium has full political backing from the regional politicians in Region Midtjylland which furthermore indicates a certain political action for the regional politicians' side. Another important aspect to account for here is his reference to the EU. As the statement clearly shows, that Anders Kühnau appeals to the EU by stating that Climatorium's solutions can become very important for pushing for a green agenda in Europe. The statement clearly shows the political action towards pushing for a green agenda in the EU as well as to advertise for the Climatorium. Extending on this, Climatorium is also proclaiming from the previous quote, that their company-idea is based on the Quadruple Helix mindset, which involves four segments: Research & Education, The Public/Government, The private/ Corporate, and Civil society (Climatorium, 2021). This empirical evidence indicates that the preliminary grounding idea of Climatorium and how it operates involves both private companies and governmental institutions, which could indicate a certain motive behind their actions. Therefore, it can be argued, that the Climatorium's own rather commercial proclamation and the political actions Anders Kühnau in his statement presents as well as with the Quadruple Helix mindset, indicates that the establishment of Climatorium primarily pushes for a green

agenda based on commercial and material interests that are politically backed. In this way, this indicates that the political actions from Region Midtjylland are focused on the political support of Climatorium's commercial interests nationally and internationally. The concrete political backing from Region Midtjylland can furthermore be seen within the latest 'Management Report': "... In parallel, we applied for funding from the Central Region of Denmark... We were granted 2.2 million DKK covering 3 years of work" (Climatorium, Management Report 2019, p. 2). The fact that the Climatorium was granted 2.2 million DKK from Region Midtjylland indicates the political action to which the regional politicians agreed on granting 2.2 billion DKK from their budget. A budget that is politically decided.

Despite that many of the actions Climatorium claims to be taken and despite the way they present themselves, there are still key elements that on the other hand could indicate that their actions are based on a certain set of values and believes. In Vygotsky's (1978) definition of social constructivism, he stresses the importance of promoting deeper learning through collaborative learning and learning communities. According to Vygotsky's idea of 'knowledge construction', he claims that knowledge construction transpires within social contexts involving student-student and expert-student collaboration on real-world problems or tasks that build on each person's language, skills, and experience shaped by each individual's culture (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 102). According to Vygotsky's idea of knowledge construction within his theory of social constructivism, knowledge is constructed or established when individuals combine individual skills to solve a shared and common task. With the activities of the Climatorium, Vygotsky's idea can be applied, in which the core task for the Climatorium is to establish collaboration between universities, private companies, government, etc. to collaborate on real-world problems such as climate challenges. One may hereby presume, that this specific facilitated collaboration is based on a certain set of shared values regarding producing a collaborative solution to fight climate challenges, but when it all comes down, the heavy argument still applies to that Climatorium primarily operates based on commercial and material interests.

Based on this, this argument does not support hypothesis 1.

5.1.8 Greenlab Skive

In the municipality of Skive geographically placed within the central region of Denmark, one can discover a national research facility called Greenlab skive. As explained in the empirical overview, Greenlab Skive facilitates the world's first full-scale P2X facility and offers a unique energy distribution platform. Greenlab Skive delivers green and sustainable energy for the park and other partners. Furthermore, SymbiosisNet is an intelligent grid of energy that lets Greenlab Skive share its surplus energy with the world. SymbiosisNet enables the export of the Greenlab (GreenLab Skive, "About", 2021). Greenlab Skive received political backing from Region Midtjylland who supported their work in line with the wishes of the region of reaching a goal, that by 2050 50% of the common energy consumption should come from sustainable energy

and in the long-term reach 100% (Region Midtjylland, 2017). The political backing can be seen in a press release Region Midtjylland posted during the opening of Greenlab Skive, which states.

"Greenlab Skive is a project that Region Midtjylland supports, and which is in line with the regional government's and Growth Forum's wishes of strengthening the green transition and development of businesses and jobs within these areas. The project will simultaneously contribute to the regional governments' long-term energy goals" (Region Midtjylland, 2017).

The empirical evidence retrieved from the press release shows Region Midtjylland's political backing of the GreenLab Skive project since the goals of the project go hand-in-hand with the political wishes in Region Midtjylland regarding their push for a green agenda. Furthermore, Region Midtjylland financially supports GreenLab Skive with a yearly amount of 3 Mio DKK supporting the development of the research center. This empirical evidence indicates the political action regional politicians in Region Midtjylland decided to take to strengthen the Regions own wishes of pushing for a green agenda nationally and internationally. This specific political action that supports the running of an energy research center binding the private and public sector together and with research institutions and universities to collaborate on common sustainable energy solutions may be the first glimpse seem like an action based on a 'belief' or a certain type of established values. However, as GreenLab Skive proclaims that the solutions and concept they produce, and initiates are thought to be 'exported' to other external partners. Based on a press release from the Danish Ministry of Business who contributed with the financial support of 9 Mio DKK, claims in the press release that, "GreenLab skive has attracted over 1 billion DKK of private investments" (Danish Ministry of Business and Financial Affairs, 2020). Furthermore, the Ministry of Business and Financial Affairs, Simon Kollerup states that "We happily congratulate the political focus and commercial interest of green solutions" (Danish Ministry of Business and Financial Affairs, 2020). Here, the Minister directly indicates the commercial value and material interest GreenLab represents and argues in this line "Greenlab Skive will be a business adventure in this area" (Danish Ministry of Business and Financial Affairs, 2020). Based on this press release, it becomes rather clear, that the establishment and operations of GreenLab Skive have clear commercial interests nationally and internationally.

This argument does not support hypothesis 1.

5.1.9 Sub-Conclusion:

Throughout this analytical section, empirical evidence and theoretical illumination were provided to indicate that danish regions and in particular Region Midtjylland pushes for a green agenda. This hypothesis departure from social constructivist theory saying that 'one does that because one believes in doing it. This claim refers to a specific set of actions that are based on certain values and beliefs that in this section became uncovered. Furthermore, this analytical section sought to examine the concrete political actions

and maintain this as a focal point for how we can validate hypothesis 1. The political actions were seen as evidential driving forces that should or should not indicate a certain tendency that could refute or confirm hypothesis 1. To conclude on the examination of hypothesis 1, that regarding pushing for a green agenda from a social constructivist perspective, Region Midtjylland does not become the 'odd-man-out'. Of all the evidence analyzed, Region Midtjylland as the particular incident does not seem to push for a green agenda based on a social constructivist approach. A key finding extracted from this analytical section is that all the danish regions can equally be applied to the empirical evidence. There is no region whose political action sticks out compared to the others, which for example can be seen in the variety and diversity among the regional politician's seats within CoR and CEMR etc. It cannot be claimed, that one danish region pushes for a green agenda more than the other, and according to the empirical evidence integrated all the danish regions have the same opportunities to influence policy through the danish MEPs or CoR or CEMR.

However, since the testing of hypothesis 1 is based on the examination of danish regions' political actions it can be concluded, that within hypothesis 1, Region Midtjylland does not become a 'particular' danish region in focus since its effort equally compels with all the other danish regions. Of course, by examining the political actions concerning GreenLab Skive and the Climatorium, Region Midtjylland in particular took certain political actions in practice to support these establishments. However, as empirical evidence showed, this specific examination indicated that the motives behind these political actions were not based on social constructivist approaches regarding 'belief' and 'values' but instead based on commercial and material interests. Climatorium in Lemvig does have several relations to Vygotsky's theory of social constructivism, but as the empirical evidence showed, the focus was on commercial interests nationally and internationally. Therefore, it cannot be validated, that particularly Region Midtjylland pushes for a green agenda regarding all the arguments. Region Midtjylland made significant political actions regarding Climatorium and GreenLab Skive through political and financial support, but according to the empirical evidence in terms of press releases from the regional government itself and the Danish Ministry of Business and Financial Affairs, commercial interest became the majority basis of action.

5.2 Hypothesis 2

Danish Regions, and in particular Region Midtjylland, pushes for a green agenda based on commercial interests: Rational Choice Theory

5.2.1 Climatorium in Lemvig

By analyzing which arguments that support hypothesis 2, we will start by extending on the last arguments presented under hypothesis 1 initially regarding Climatorium in Lemvig. As previously viewed, it was analyzed, that based on the empirical evidence, Climatorium in Lemvig did not support hypothesis 1 since the political backing from Region Midtjylland in terms of indirect political support in terms

of external legitimacy as well as direct backing in terms of financial support indicated political actions based on material and commercial interests. It became clear, that these commercial interests were more apparent than any social constructivist values and beliefs. Still, it must be acknowledged, that political actions in its mere theoretical realm stem from ideological approaches based on a certain set of beliefs and values, but according to the empirical evidence, commercial interests became the heavy-weighting argument about hypothesis 1. Therefore, it can be claimed that the political actions from Region Midtjylland regarding the establishment of Climatorium presumably seem more applicable to hypothesis 2 in terms of observing it with a rational choice theory 'set of eyes.

In terms of examining the political actions related to the Climatorium in Lemvig about rational choice theory, one may refer to the general sociological perception from Jon Elster who in his publication; *Social Norms and Economic Theory* argued that the elementary unit of social life is the individual human action. To explain social institutions and social change is to how they arise as the result of the action and interaction of individuals (Jon Elster, 1989). In this case, rational choice theory explains the establishment of Climatorium and how the political actions of Region Midtjylland contributed to a certain social change, in this case, regarding the push for a green agenda and export of danish green solutions to other countries. However, to illuminate the theoretical groundwork more adequately behind Region Midtjylland's political actions regarding Climatorium, one may refer to Scott (2020) who shared the same perception of rational individual choices. They all shared the argument, that rational choice theories hold that individual must anticipate the outcomes of alternative courses of action and calculate that which will be best for them. Furthermore, rational individuals choose the alternative that is likely to give them the greatest satisfaction (Scott, 2000).

So, examining the claim carefully, the assumption is here, that rational individuals are more likely to act with a certain behavior if it gives them great satisfaction. This satisfaction could arguably be achieved through the fulfilling of the specific political wishes and goals within certain political strategies within Region Midtjylland. Based on the previous claim, the rational individual acts upon the activity or behavior that are most satisfying, which in comparison to the empirical evidence collected, means that satisfaction is fulfilled through the realization of Region Midtjylland's wishes of pushing for a green agenda through the establishment of Climatorium in Lemvig. In other words, the Climatorium in Lemvig realized the possible achievement of Region Midtjylland in terms of pushing for a green agenda, which legitimized the claim, that this specific satisfaction becomes the groundwork for these concrete political actions. Political actions that become more applicable to hypothesis 2, in terms of pushing for a green agenda based on commercial and material interests, that furthermore is being validated by the empirical evidence presented as well as with rational choice theory when reviewing the claim, that rational individuals base their choices on the one is that provides the individuals with the most satisfaction.

This argument, therefore, supports hypothesis 2.

5.2.2 GreenLab Skive

As previously presented, this analysis sought to test whether the political actions from Region Midtjylland in terms of supporting GreenLab Skive would support hypothesis 1 in terms of viewing the political actions as based on 'beliefs' or 'values' that social constructivist presents. As the analysis showed, the major preliminary reason for pushing for a green agenda within this argument was instead based on commercial and material interests which can remain evident due to the provided empirical evidence. However, to extend on the claim, that the political actions from Region Midtjylland regarding the establishment of GreenLab Skive primarily were related to commercial interests, this analytical section will compare the empirical evidence to rational choice theory to strengthen the claim, that the argument regarding GreenLab Skive is more applicable to hypothesis 2.

Before confirming this, we might gather further empirical evidence that validates this, in which great evidence can be found in GreenLab's press release. Here, CEO of GreenLab Skive Christopher Sørensen says; "Our aim with GreenLab Skive A/S is to revolutionize energy and to prove that transitioning to greener energy isn't just a possible way forward, but part of a profitable journey" (Christopher Sørensen, GreenLab Skive, 2021). This empirical evidence indicates the aim of GreenLab skive. This quote becomes very adequate when testing how the general argument of GreenLab Skive distinguishes from hypothesis 1 and favors hypothesis 2, since Christopher Sørensen within this claim argues, that 'it isn't just a possible way forward, but part of a profitable journey'. Here, Christopher Sørensen does not neglect GreenLab's aim based on certain 'values' and 'beliefs' but emphasizes the commercial basis of GreenLab's establishment. In the same press release, Christopher Sørensen furthermore claims that "Together, this circle of partners paves the way for a commercial breakthrough as part of the green transition" (Christopher Sørensen, GreenLab Skive, 2021). This empirical evidence also clearly indicates the commercial aim of GreenLab Skive, which due to this claim, becomes the primary one regarding the establishment and operation of GreenLab Skive. This argument clearly emphasizes commercial interests as the basis for GreenLabs aims and goals. Comparing this to concrete political actions in terms of evident political arguments, a report made by Region Midtjylland clearly emphasize how GreenLab Skive sufficiently supports Region Midtjylland's political ambitions to push for a green agenda but furthermore stresses the importance of how GreenLab supports EU's ambitions regarding the green agenda; "In a regional context, GreenLab Skive supports the political actions and strategies within the general strategy for growth and development in Region Midtjylland 2015-2025" (Region Midtjylland, "GreenLab Skive", 2017). The report furthermore illuminates that "Region Midtjylland during 2017-2020 worked on initiatives regarding energy-storage and circular economy, which on a full-scale unfolds in GreenLab Skive" (Region Midtjylland, "GreenLab Skive", 2017).

Also, the report argues that "Internationally, GreenLab Skive supports EU's ambitions regarding industrial symbiosis within climate and energy, and hits right in the center of the initiatives launched in

the program; 'Investment Plan for Europe' (Region Midtjylland, "GreenLab Skive", 2017). This empirical evidence retrieved from political reports and GreenLab's press releases indicates that the heavyset argument here is the commercial one, in which national and international commercial interests become the primary target and 'satisfaction that drives GreenLab skive. These targets, goals, and aims are furthermore, as the evidence shows, fully backed by the politicians in Region Midtjylland, which illuminates that the political actions support GreenLab's commercial interests.

From a rational choice theory perspective, this commercial 'satisfaction' for the regional politicians in Region Midtjylland becomes the driving force behind their political actions. According to the rational choice theory, individuals are seen as motivated by the wants or goals that express their 'preferences' (Scott, 2000). From this empirical evidence, the preferences are clear, and it is these preferences that become the natural and rational choice for the regional politicians in Region Midtjylland to act upon since their push for a green agenda can be strengthened and enhanced through commercial operations at GreenLab Skive promoting danish green solutions. Rational choice theory furthermore stresses that individuals must anticipate the outcomes of alternative courses of action and calculate that which will be best for them (Scott, 2000). In this case, the anticipated outcome becomes the commercial promotion of danish green solutions that political can help Region Midtjylland push for a green agenda in Europe which arguably is based on the calculation of which GreenLab Skive claims itself to be 'the world's first truly green industrial business park'. If GreenLab Skive calculates themselves to be a global frontrunner in this area, Region Midtjylland may anticipate the positive outcome of their political support, to the commercialization and export of green solutions, which they anticipate being a support to their political goals of pushing for a green agenda. Individual's evaluation of anticipated outcomes and calculations refers to what Elster (1989) frames as 'methodological individualism, which in its general perception means, that individual rational choices are bound by methodological systems that enable each individual to calculate and anticipate the outcome of their choices. This, to a certain extent, psychological assumption enables individuals to make rational choices based on systemized calculations, in which the anticipated outcome or result of their choices becomes the premise and determiner for their choice. Besides, the political actions Region Midtjylland took in this case were calculated in which they anticipated that the outcome or result from their political action would be the commercialization of danish green solutions that in the long-term would support Region Midtjyllands goal of pushing for a green agenda.

This argument, therefore, supports hypothesis 2.

5.2.3 Regional EU Offices

As previously presented, the argument concerning the danish Regional EU Offices in Brussels did to a certain extent support hypothesis 1. However, by examining the concrete activities and responsibilities they serve in Brussels besides policy-representation and lobby activities, some empirical evidence will indicate that their work is based on other interests. Examining the Central Denmark EU Office as an

example, they claim on their website that they are working with interest representation, international projects, policy surveillance, and EU finances (CDEU, "About", 2021). Besides policy representation and interest-representation, Danish regional EU Offices also work with securing EU-finance for regional development projects, but also to acquire EU-financial support for SME's development of products, for market entrance, or to establish relations with partners across Europe. This specific activity remains one of the most important assignments Danish regional EU offices have which is shared among all the Danish regions. All the Danish regional EU offices have a specific working area called; Business-development whose primary activity is based on securing EU financial support from the many EU programs to support the up-scaling of a product, helping a certain product into the European market, etc. Taking CDEU as an example, they supported the company; Hydract A/S with securing EU-financial support for the product development. "The company Hydract A/S from Skive has succeeded in obtaining EU support four times, and it has reached a total of DKK 36.7 million in total" (CDEU, "Business", 2021). This example shows how CDEU secured EU financial support for a company placed in Central Jutland. Another great example is the company Radisurf who obtained DKK 11 million from EU support with the help of CDEU. "CDEU support helped Radisurf obtaining DKK 11 Mio in EU-support" (CDEU, "Business", 2021).). Both examples show two SME's who worked with products that support the strengthening of the green agenda respectively within the food industry and the car industry (CDEU, "Business", 2021).

Besides the fact that all the Danish regional EU offices work with policy representation and interest-representation in the EU, yet another of their shared core activities, which the Regional governments in Denmark finances, are their work with securing EU-financial support from the EU programs to support and up-scale products, development projects, etc. This arguably indicates, that besides their work is shared on certain 'beliefs' and 'values' as indicated under hypothesis 1, they are still working based on commercial interests. With this being said, one must remember, that it is not the Danish regional EU offices themselves who decide what to work with and how to work but is fully mandated and determined by their respective regional government in Denmark. This, therefore, indicates that it is the political actions from the regional governments in Denmark that support, and their EU offices activities related to commercialization and marketization. This empirical evidence indicates that their interests not only, from a social constructivist point of view, are bound by certain beliefs and values, but furthermore bound by commercial and material interests. To elaborate on this, Levin and Milgrom (2004) present a rather accurate perception of rational choice decision-making related to this case, in which they argue, that rational choice is defined to mean the process of determining what options are available and then choosing the most preferred one according to some consistent criterion. In addition, they argued, that in a certain sense, this rational choice model is already an optimization-based approach (Levin & Milgrom, 2004). This decision-making approach towards rational choice theory presents in the words of Levin and Milgrom's adequate assumptions related to the case of Danish regional EU offices. The options available for the regional governments in Denmark are the opportunities EU

structural funds enables for the member states, were regions, cities, SME's, etc. Can apply for EU financial support. When these options are available for the regional governments in Denmark, they choose to exploit this in terms of, roughly argued, developing the private and public sector within certain areas. This refers to the optimization approach Levin and Milgrom (2004) presents, which relates to the preliminary reasons for applying for EU-financial supports in general; to optimize existing structures or systems or optimize the production of certain products. Levin and Milgrom (2004) furthermore define this as a real-valued 'utility function' in which the rational choice by individuals is determined by value-adding optimization opportunities through utility programs such as the EU programs for financial support. As previously argued, this perception of rational choice theory may refer to a methodological-based individual consciousness that enables individuals to decide the rationality of their choice on calculation and anticipation. Comparing this, one could argue, that the political actions made by the danish regional governments in Denmark anticipated/evaluated the options available for optimizing existing strategies or systems which became the EU program's financial support and thereby calculated, that it would create the effect of maximized value-adding by initiating these concrete political actions. A maximized value-adding effect in terms of obtaining as much EU-financial support as possible to up-scale regional development projects and products of SME's that by through calculation helps the danish regional governments push for a green agenda, based on commercial interests and profitable anticipations.

By thorough testing and examination of this empirical evidence, it becomes clear, that the argument regarding the danish regional EU offices both supports hypotheses 1 and 2.

5.2.4 Committee of the Regions

As viewed under hypothesis 1, the argument regarding CoR supported hypothesis 1 viewed from a social constructivist approach. However, to test whether the CoR also supports or rejects hypothesis 2 will be examined by applying rational choice theory to the empirical evidence of the CoR. In this way, it can be either rejected or confirmed if the empirical evidence of CoR becomes applicable to rational choice theory and the presumed commercial interests that is the framework of hypothesis 2. As viewed in previous arguments under hypothesis 2, related empirical evidence illuminated, that the commercial interests were the majority sample of motivations behind the political actions from the regional politicians in Region Midtjylland. However, as previously explained, the CoR remained as an EU institution in which regions can engage in political dialogue with EU legislators and politicians. In this way, the CoR offers a great pathway to influence EU policy, also regarding agricultural policy. However, as the examination also clarified, that the empirical evidence of CoR primarily became a policy-influence pathway for the danish regions which is based on common interests about the opportunity given to the regions to influence EU policy and presumably especially the EU CAP since it remains of the largest and most wide-spreading EU policies with great sensitivity to the majority of the member states.

By examining whether the empirical evidence of the CoR either rejects or supports hypothesis 2, the rational choice theory will be applied to the CoR. Due to the core terms within the rational choice theory, there remain some elements that seem applicable to the danish region's political actions regarding engagement with the CoR. In general, rational choice theory examines the options available and then choosing the preferred one in terms of acquiring the most satisfying outcome. The CoR offers a great opportunity for the danish regions to engage in political processes in the EU and be able to influence EU policy and legislation during drafting sessions. By examining, Levin and Milgrom's (2004) perception of rational choice theory, the optimization-based approach becomes an applicable concept to the empirical evidence of the danish regional political actions within the CoR. Since the CoR offers opportunities to influence EU policy, they presumably offer the opportunity for the danish regions to optimize their international activities and optimizes their opportunity to influence EU policy on areas remaining very sensitive to the respective regions. In this way, the value or outcome of being able to influence EU policy, therefore, becomes the theoretical relationship towards the empirical evidence of CoR. In this way, core elements within rational choice theory can be applied to the empirical evidence of the CoR. However, as hypothesis 2 claims, that danish regions, and in particular, Region Midtjylland pushes for a green agenda based on commercial interests, hypothesis 2 presume that the political actions that have been examined are based on commercial interests, meaning, that commercial output determines the rational choice behind the examined political actions. Though, as direct commercial interests were evident regarding the political actions examined within the Climatorium in Lemvig and GreenLab Skive, commercial interests can also be viewed in more indirect ways.

Despite the fact, that it was evident, that the CoR supported hypothesis 1 in terms of the danish regional political actions in the CoR was primarily determined by shared beliefs and values, one can by further examination validate, that the danish regional political actions in the CoR furthermore is determined by possible commercial interests. Based on the fact, that danish regional politicians engage in the CoR to influence EU policy, it, therefore, means, that they can influence discussions concerning current regulative frameworks and legislations on areas of great sensitivity to the danish regions. As previously presented, the data collected from the interview with Asger Christensen's political advisor illuminated, that some of the pressing challenges for the danish farmers and the danish agricultural industry are the current regulative framework within the EU CAP. "Yeah it is true that of course the draft regulation is quite difficult to understand and the commission published, I think it 4 examples and how an eco-scheme could be designed, so in that way, they don't necessarily have a lot of guidance..." (Appendix 1, 2021). These challenges become incentives for the danish regional politicians to engage in the CoR to influence policy and try to influence the regulatory framework for the EU CAP, so it becomes easier for the danish farmers to produce and export agricultural products. This examination shows, that despite, that the danish regional politician's political actions in the CoR were initially determined on the shared set of values and beliefs, there are nevertheless also underlying commercial interest within this claim, in which danish regional politicians can influence EU

regulations on agriculture to maximize the value acquired in terms of establishing sustainable and beneficial economic incentives for the danish farmer to produce and export agricultural products.

This argument, therefore, supports hypotheses 1 and 2.

5.2.5 Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR)

As with the CoR, the CEMR also figures as an institution within the EU system. The CEMR represents the interests of Europe's local and regional governments and their associations in more than 40 countries (CEMR, "About Us", 2021). The CEMR is working to include the member state's local areas and regional governments in the EU policy processes and figures as pathways for them in the EU system. In this way, the CEMR is based on the same core interests as the CoR, to enable regions and local areas to influence EU policy. As with the CoR, the CEMR can be applied to some of the core elements within the rational choice theory, especially regarding ideas of individual decision-making and real-valued utility function. As a previous examination of the danish regions, political actions concerning their participation and membership in the CEMR illuminates that their rational choice behind these political actions is determined by their availability to influence EU policy and channel regional political opinions to the EU within areas of great sensitivity to the respective region. In terms of the real-valued utility function presented by Levin and Milgrom (2004), the danish regional political engagement in the CEMR is determined by the acquirement of real-valued that in this realm refers to the value of being able to influence EU policy. These core elements of rational choice theory apply to the danish region's political actions by their membership in the CEMR.

However, even though the argument of the CEMR supported hypothesis 1, one can by a thorough examination claim, that the regional political actions within the CEMR also are based on expected commercial and economic outcomes regarding the green agenda and the danish agricultural sector. Based on the fact that the danish regional politicians who are members of the CEMR are working on influencing EU policy and legislation in all areas having an impact on municipalities and regions (CEMR, "Introducing CEMR", 2021), the danish regional political actions can furthermore influence the regulatory framework of the EU CAP, since the CEMR furthermore works within Environment, climate, and energy amongst other areas. Since the CEMR works to influence EU legislation, danish regional politicians are able through their membership to influence regulations and legislation affecting the danish agricultural sector and thereby establish more sustainable economic incentives and frameworks for danish farmers. By establishing more sustainable and better regulatory frameworks for the danish farmers it will improve their production and export of agricultural products. This indicates, that despite the danish regional political actions through their membership in the CEMR are determined by the shared belief and value in the general availability to influence EU policy within the areas of the green agenda, there remain some preliminary commercial interests, that nevertheless determined their rational behavior behind their political actions.

This argument, therefore, supports both hypotheses 1 and 2.

5.2.6 European Parliament

As with the CoR and the CEMR, the European Parliament as the legislating EU institution previously was claimed to support hypothesis 1. The parliament was examined by focusing on the danish MEP's figuring as a direct policy influential channel for the danish regions. As with the CoR and CEMR, the danish MEPs within the parliament offer a pathway for danish regional politicians to influence EU policy by engaging in political dialogue with the danish MEPs on topics that are sensitive to the danish regions. In this way, the danish MEPs can address danish regional political agendas and issues to the legislators in the parliament and therefore 'talk their case' during legislative sessions and processes in the parliament. Applying this to rational choice theory, this specific outcome of being able to influence policy becomes the calculation that determined and defines danish regional political actions, in which the satisfaction of being able to influence EU policy that is sensitive to the danish regions becomes the calculated outcome and satisfaction. As evident regarding the CoR and CEMR under hypothesis 2, these core elements of rational choice theory and individual decision-making remain applicable to the empirical evidence of the parliament.

However, although the empirical evidence and argument of the parliament supported hypothesis 1, there remain some signs that the empirical evidence of the danish regional actions in the parliament through the MEPs are also determined by the commercial interest that may support hypothesis 2 as well. Due to the fact, that the parliament remains the decision-making body in the EU system together with the council, they are responsible for adopting legislation and regulations within specific areas. Comparing this to the availability, that danish regional politicians have the opportunity to channel policy positions to the danish MEPs in the parliament, opens a direct way of influencing legislation and regulation for the danish regional politicians. According to the interview, Asger Christensen's political advisor said, "that within the Renew group we have one of the repertoires who are responsible for the horizontal regulation, which is sort of setting the governance framework for CAP" (Appendix 1, 2021). According to this, danish MEPs within the cross-member state renew group, are responsible for developing the CAP framework, which opens up a great opportunity for the danish regional politicians to reach out to the respective MEP and try to influence the governance and regulatory framework for the CAP to create the most sustainable economic incentives and frameworks for danish farmers. In this way, as with the CoR and the CEMR, this can be argued as pure commercial interests from the danish regional politicians' side, in terms of creating the best value-adding economic framework for the danish farmers to improve production and export of danish agricultural products.

This argument, therefore, supports both hypotheses 1 and 2.

5.2.7 The Royal Danish Embassy

As previously argued, the empirical evidence and argument presented for the royal danish embassy in Brussels did from a social constructivist approach support hypothesis 1, in which it became evident, that the political motivations behind the danish regional politicians' actions here were based on values and beliefs in terms of pushing for a green agenda. However, to test whether this argument also supports hypothesis 2 in terms of examining possible commercial interests and motivations, one may start analyzing the argument from the rational choice theoretical perspective. From a rational choice perspective, it becomes natural for the danish regional politicians to engage in political dialogue with the royal danish embassy in Brussels, since the outcome from that political action will be the opportunity to influence EU policy. If, as hypothesis 2 claims, the goal is to push for a green agenda among the danish regions and in particular Region Midtjylland through the royal danish embassy in Brussels, one of the best options available besides the parliament, etc. is the embassy, in which the ambassador is a party of consultation during EU legislative and drafting processes. Here, the rational choice among danish regional politicians when seeking to push for a green agenda becomes to engage in dialogue with the embassy and push through regional political interests that can help the regional government push for a green agenda.

However, since the embassy is a party of consultation in the EU policy processes and decision-making processes, there may remain other preferences among the danish regional politicians to engage with the embassy on behalf. "Rational choice theory starts with the idea that individuals have preferences and choose according to those" (Levin and Malgrom, 2004, p. 3). Despite their preference regarding influence policy to push for a green agenda, commercial interests become another preference determining their political engagement with the embassy. One of the commercial interests that motivates the danish regional politicians is their engagement with The Trade Council in Brussels who supports danish companies in their entrance into the Belgium market, the out-sourcing of company departments, and the establishment of danish SMEs in Belgium. This is an important commercial task danish regional governments are engaged in due to the fact, that more than 50% of danish legislation regarding companies stems from the decision in the EU (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Trade Council, 2021). Here, the danish regions support the up-scaling of danish SMEs, etc. through EU-financial-supported projects, that enabled SMEs to engage in Belgium as well as in the European single market.

Other commercial interests and motivational factors to push for a green agenda can be validated as to what was evident regarding the CoR, CEMR, and the parliament, namely the opportunity to influence regulations and legislation on agricultural policy. Since the embassy remains a party of consultation in the decision-making processes in the EU, it offers the opportunity for the danish regions to channel their political opinions to the embassy who channels it through to the parliament during. This enables danish

regional politicians in the long term to influence those regulatory frameworks and governance systems that, according to Asger Christensen's political advisor, remain a great challenge for the danish agricultural industry. Here, the danish regional politicians can help improve the regulatory framework and thereby improve the economic incentives for the danish farmers and increase the opportunities for more cost-beneficial production and export of danish agricultural products.

This argument, therefore, supports both hypotheses 1 and 2.

6. Conclusion

To initially conclude on the result from the analysis or to examine the outcome of the testing of the two hypotheses, one can see a general tendency. Before concluding or evaluating whether or not the analysis answers the general research question, and initiate conclusion on the testing of the hypotheses is in place. As one can illuminate from the analysis, there emerges a clear indication that the majority of arguments support hypothesis 2. Some arguments solely support hypothesis 2 and some argument supports both hypothesis 2 and 1, which the empirical evidence and data showed. What does this mean concerning the two hypotheses? To hypothesis 1, it means that the minority of the arguments supports the claim that *Danish Regions, and in particular Region Midtjylland, pushes for a green agenda based on beliefs*. The arguments solely supporting hypothesis 1 are arguments in which empirical evidence indicates concrete political actions from the danish regions or Region Midtjylland that solely are based on beliefs and values, which the social constructivist emphasize. Besides, there remain other arguments supporting hypothesis 1 that also supports hypothesis 2. Here, empirical evidence indicates, that certain political actions in the danish regions in general or in particular Region Midtjylland, also base their political actions on commercial interests, which rational choice theory emphasizes. Concerning the testing of hypothesis 2, the result indicates that, as argued before, the majority of the argument and empirical evidence supported hypothesis 2. As the analysis illuminated, most of the analyzed political actions from the danish regions regarding the push for a green agenda were based on commercial interests.

However, as this thesis integrated the case study regarding the particular focus on Region Midtjylland of all the danish regions, the hypotheses sought to test if Region Midtjylland, in particular, pushes for a green agenda. This was done by retrieving empirical evidence that could indicate the presumed particularity of Region Midtjylland's push for a green agenda. Within hypothesis 1, as was also concluded in the sub-conclusion hereunder, the empirical evidence and data did not indicate any specific incident that Region Midtjylland became the particular entity. Still, the empirical evidence and arguments regarding Green-Lab Skive and Climatorium indicated the specific political actions from Region Midtjylland within the respective region, but the core interest behind their political support of those two was primarily based on commercial and material interests. Therefore, within hypothesis 1, Region Midtjylland did not occur as the 'odd man out and the particularity of Region Midtjylland within hypothesis 1 can therefore be rejected. Within hypothesis 2, the particularity of Region Midtjylland became more evident, since the analyzed empirical

evidence that intended to show the concrete actions from the politicians in Region Midtjylland applied to the presumed claim within hypothesis 2. Using rational choice theory to illuminate, that commercial interests were the presumed rational choice behind the analyzed political actions, it thereby applied well to the hypothesis, since the core elements behind their political behavior and actions were based on commercial interests, that from rational choice theory, were seen as the most rational choice to achieve the most satisfying result.

So, returning to the research question; *Does the Danish Regional Governments have an independent influence on the EU Common Agricultural Policy or not?* one can by the results of the analysis carefully say, that, yes they have. Despite the many pathways for the danish regions to influence the EU CAP through, such as the CoR, CEMR, the danish representations, etc. there is one particular way they independently can influence EU CAP. Referring back to the description of the EU CAP under the empirical overview, the CAP consists of 2 pillars. Here, pillar 2 focuses on rural development within regions and local areas, where the funding from the EU CAP supports regional and local rural areas. Here, the interview with Asger Christensen's political advisor clarified if the danish regions can influence EU CAP independently. Here the political advisor responded to my question:

"For the pillar 2 support I do think that there is some scope for improvement and also for regional policies and regional municipalities and regional policy because I think from the regional perspective you have for example projects trying to participate and for these parts, it is the pillar 2 support, and here I think the regional and municipalities will have an interest in actually helping farmers to get reimbursement for the cost for the projects" (Appendix 1, 2021)

Here, the political advisor as to the interviewee clearly states, that if the danish regions independently can influence EU CAP, it must happen through pillar 2 by engaging in agricultural and environmental EU-funded development projects. These projects are after dissemination and implementation evaluated by experts working within the EU institutions that evaluate the success of the regional development projects and report back to the main committee in the EU. As stated in the empirical overview, if the projects are a success, it will have a chance to indirectly influence EU policymaking by exemplifying 'best practice' solutions on agricultural issues that remains common for all member states, and in return, acquire EU-funding for agricultural development from pillar 2 in the EU CAP. Within this, the political advisor refers to the concrete pathway of the Danish Regional EU Offices in Brussels, where the danish regions in Denmark can collaborate on EU-applications for agricultural funding with their respective regional EU Office in Brussels. Despite that the regional EU Offices are not parties of consultation during legislative and drafting sessions, they are still working closely together with danish MEPs, so for the regional governments in Denmark, it remains a useful pathway to influence the EU CAP. So, based on this, it becomes clear, that obviously, the danish regions can influence EU CAP through the Danish MEPs or the embassy, etc. But to be able to independently

influence EU CAP, the most sufficient way is through the danish regional EU offices. Here, the most sufficient way of independently influence the EU CAP is through EU projects when applying for EU-funding through pillar 2 within the EU CAP. In this way, to extend on the confirmation of hypothesis 2, this independent way of influencing EU CAP, is also based on commercial interests, since the most sufficient way to independently influence EU CAP is through EU application for EU-funding, to, as what the political advisor argued, "to get reimbursement for the cost for the projects" (Appendix 1, 2021).

By this, one can hereby conclude, that to the overall research question, danish regions do have an independent way of influencing the EU CAP. Additionally, it can furthermore be argued, that hypothesis 1 is rejected and hypothesis 2 is confirmed, which corresponds well with the practical way, danish regions can independently influence EU CAP, namely through the basis of preliminary commercial and material interests.

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