From global visions to local actions

– A study of the implementation process of

global environment goals through a top-down

perspective

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Abstract

International environment efforts are often seen as unsuccessful and the reasons why are not clear. The international negotiations in the IPCC and the EU show that the opinions and ambitions differ quite a lot between the different countries. Even though there are ambitious goals and international agreements, such as the Kyoto Protocol, there are still problems with implementing these at country level.

This study examines the implementation process from international to local level focusing on a Swedish context. The aim of the study is to identify the main implementation problems when implementing international environment goals.

The study uses a top-down perspective, meaning that it will examine the implementation process from international to local level concentrating at the hierarchical structures and processes. The study uses both text analysis and qualitative interviews in order to collect data, three interviews were conducted in order to collect data about the municipality perspectives.

The conclusions of the study implies that a lack of national and local political will together with a high degree of municipality autonomy are the main problems when implementing international environment goals.

Keywords: *Implementation*, *municipality*, *EU*, *UN*, *environment*, *policy*

Sammanfattning

Internationella miljöförhandlingar anses ofta vara misslyckade och skälen till varför, är oklara. I de internationella förhandlingarna inom ramen för IPCC och EU visar att åsikter och ambitioner skiljer sig ganska mycket mellan olika länder. Även om det finns ambitiösa mål och internationella överenskommelser, till exempel Kyotoprotokollet, finns det fortfarande problem med att implementera dem på nationell nivå.

Denna studie undersöker implementeringsprocessen från internationell till lokal nivå sett ur en svensk kontext. Syftet med studien är att identifiera de främsta implementeringsproblemen av internationella miljömål.

Studien använder sig av ett top-down-perspektiv, vilket innebär en granskning av implementeringsprocessen från internationell till lokal nivå med fokus på hierarkiska strukturer och processer. Studien använder både textanalys och kvalitativa intervjuer för att samla in data, tre intervjuer har genomförts för att samla in data om kommunala perspektiv.

Slutsatserna av studien antyder att brist på nationell och lokal politisk vilja tillsammans med en hög grad av kommunalt självbestämmande är de största problemen vid implementeringen av internationella miljömål.

Nyckelord: *Implementering*, *kommun*, *EU*, *FN*, *miljö*, *policy*

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1. Introduction

Today environment problems[1] are a pressing issue, the international research community and most policy makers have come to an agreement on this. The international efforts on the environment originates from both global and regional level, the highest level of negotiations is the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (hence forth IPCC) which is the largest forum for states to negotiate with each other (Vogler, 2011). The annual IPCC conferences are not known to be very successful and have been criticized for being much too ineffective. But what is agreed upon within these conferences is covering the whole global community and makes it possible to make progress on a global level.

Naturally, states are global actors working for actions for the environment. There are also regional actors, such as the European Union, which are becoming more important in this globalized world characterized by intergovernmental and interregional connections. Connelly et al. (2012) emphasizes the need of international cooperation, something which has grown more important since the 1970s. The authors also stress the role of local actors in climate politics, but in the same time recognizes local actors to be more of an extended arm of higher levels of government. Another thing Connelly et al. (2012) stresses is the duties of the local authorities, what they are able to do within their authority. The authors says that the local authorities mostly deals with practical issues, such as waste management and land exploitation issues, not with overall strategic climate and environment issues.

According to Connelly et al. (2012) local authorities acts on mandate by the national government and has limited mandate to act on their own when it comes to strategic efforts on climate and environment, but the authors recognize the difference between different countries and their local governance systems and for instance argue that the Swedish local authorities have more autonomy in comparison with other local governance system[2]. According to the authors Swedish local authorities, municipalities, have a higher degree of self-determination in relation to the national government, but the authors do not specify how much. This relationship, between international, national and local actors in a Swedish context, will be

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[1] I have chosen to use only *environment*, not *environment* and/or *climate*. The reason for this is my belief that climate is an environmental problem, not a separate one.
[2] In comparison to, for instance, Great Brittan according to Connelly et al. (2012)

examined from both an international and a local perspective to further understand the implementation process of international environment goals.

The study objective is to obtain greater knowledge about the implementation process of international environment goals, which is a great subject to study, and therefore it is crucial to narrow it down by using a specific context. In this study three Swedish municipalities are examined and to be able to generalize the results of the study they must be put in a similar context. A top-down perspective[3] is applied in order to examine the implementation process. The results from this study cannot be generalized but can imply possible problems in the implementation process of international environment goals.

1.1 Background

Within the study areas of international relations and development studies, issues of the environment have become more important. The threats of a changing climate is nowadays a pressing political issue and is discussed at highest possible level, for instance in the United Nations and other intergovernmental organizations.

The international arena where states cooperate to agree on climate efforts and environment protection is quite clear in its structure, there are several instances where states can cooperate and it is possible to discuss the subjects both formally and informally. The international cooperation has difficulties to find consensus and most international agreements are politicized and weak, therefore there are not many binding agreements. The international community often agrees on non-binding *norms* for climate change efforts and environment protection, an instrument with variable effects which can be a functional tool for implementation of greater efforts for the environment (Vogler, 2011). An example of these norms is the 1972 Stockholm Conference that produced 21 principles[4] that combines national sovereignty and responsibility for transboundary pollution (Vogler, 2011). Also Agenda 21 from the Rio Conference 1992 is a quite successful norms-framework and has been adapted by, for instance, both national and local authorities (Vogler, 2011).

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[3] In opposite to bottom-up. More info about the bottom-up: see Sannerstedt (2001) and/or Matland (1995).
[4] Not to be confused with Agenda 21 from Rio 1992.

With no binding agreements and weak norm creation on the environment, it is hard to understand how real change and efforts could be possible. Implementation is a core concept in this study and I will come back to it later, but for now it is important to understand the approach of this study – implementation of international environment goals and norms. Corell and Söderberg (2005) suggests that local authorities in Sweden has gained a lot more self-determination over environmental efforts and emphasises the role of the *municipalities*[5] as an implementer of environment efforts. At the same time they stress the importance of the hierarchical structure of Swedish authorities, the municipalities does not have unlimited self-determination over environment efforts and they have to follow national policies in many areas. The local authority plays a key role in the implementation process of many political issues but in the area of environment they are seldom mentioned and international agreements seldom address the issue of implementation. This study will examine the implementation process of international environment goals with a top-down approach, from the UN and the EU to local municipalities.

1.2 Problem statement

There are many international agreements with the purpose to protect our environment but there seem to be problems implementing them, therefore this study examines the implementation process in order to identify these problems. The study attempts to examine *how* the global environment efforts are working at implementation level using a top-down perspective. It will also try to answer *what* the implementation problems of environment goals are. A top-down perspective is examined in this study through different kinds of data; interviews and qualitative text analysis. The study will try to give a deeper municipality perspective through qualitative interviews with strategic personnel and a broad perspective with focus on the UN, the EU and national level through qualitative text analysis of critical documents from the UN, the EU and national level.

Much focus will be on the EU in this study. The reason for this is that Sweden is strongly connected with the EU and its policies, but meanwhile has strong municipalities[6] with relatively much autonomy in their strategic environment work. This could be seen as a

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[5] The local authorities in Sweden are called Municipality.
[6] In comparison to, for instance, Great Brittan according to Connelly et al. (2012)

contradiction and is interesting to examine this relationship closer in order to expand the knowledge of the effectiveness of global environment goals.

1.3 Purpose of the study

The study will analyse the implementation process using a top-down perspective of implementation theory. The purpose of the study is to answer *what* the primary implementation problems are and who is causing these problems, put in a Swedish national and local context.

1.4 Research question

What are the primary implementation problems when implementing international environment goals from decision at international level to implementation at local level seen through a top-down perspective?

1.5 Study limitation and motivation of the subject

As this study is limited by time and resources it has to be limited both by volume and subject. For instance, it was not possible to interview as many respondents as I wished at different levels of the implementation process. Also, the subject in itself is wide and has to be narrowed down before it is possible to conduct a study, taking into consideration the other limitations for this thesis. Two actions making it possible to narrow the subject down are to limit it to a Swedish context and to narrow it down to a certain region in Sweden, where the final process of selection starts. Another important part of the narrowing down process is the focus of the study; I have chosen to begin the study at UN level and continue down to EU level and national level, ending up at local level selecting three different municipalities in Sweden.

2. Theoretical discussion

2.1 Implementation theory

Implementation theory is a broad definition of the research on implementation processes, mostly concerning policy implementation at national level. Most of the research on

implementation theory originates from the US and are influenced by the federal political structure in the US (Sannerstedt, 2001). According to Hjern (1982), implementation theory concerns the relationship between politics and administration. This relationship between politics and administration is the core idea of implementation and the sole purpose of implementation research is to examine this process (Hjern, 1982).

As the research on implementation evolved, two different ideas of how to explain and study implementation issues emerged, the top-down and the bottom-up perspectives (Matland, 1995). These two different approaches to policy implementation differs in their views on the structure of the implementation process, the top-down perspective[7] has a belief in the authoritative decision which should be implemented from decision to actual implementation and the bottom-up perspective instead believes that all actors involved have the possibility to affect the implementation of the policy (Matland, 1995).

According to Matland (1995) the bottom-up perspective takes into consideration the reactions of the local actors and how they change the initial policy goals in order to implement them in different ways. In these cases the top-down perspective is not very functional in order to describe and explain the implementation process. Hjern (1982) emphasizes the need for not studying the implementation process only through a hierarchical perspective such as the top-down perspective, but from an organizational perspective taking into account the different actors involved in the implementation process.

2.2 Top-down perspective on implementation theory

Most of the theoretical material on the top-down perspective in this study comes from Anders Sannerstedt (2001), one of quite few Swedish scholars who have written extensively about implementation theory. Many other research essays have concentrated their theoretical framework on Sannerstedt's work about implementation theory, much because he tries to cover a Swedish context when addressing implementation issues.
Because of Sannerstedt's comprehensive work on implementation theory his work will represent the base of the theoretical chapter. Focus will be on the top-down perspective of the implementation theory.

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[7] This is examined further in this chapter.

According to Sannerstedt (2001) the top-down perspective of implementation theory can be explained as a chain of hierarchical structures with the highest level of decision making on top from where all decisions originates and then follows a downward chain until the decision is implemented in practice at local level, for instance.

This approach can look like this:

> **Highest authority (ex. National government) → Middle authority (ex. Regional government) → Lowest authority (ex. Local government)**

Although the above description is simple, it illustrates the core assumptions of the top-down perspective of implementation theory. It is also important to remember that this structure can be found within each authority, for example within the national government there could be a separate chain of hierarchical structure. Further, Sannerstedt (2001) is stressing that the top-down perspective gets more precise the further down the decisions are made and a high level decision will get more precise the lower it gets in the hierarchical chain. Sannerstedt emphasize the fact that decisions can be changed during the implementation process because of change in the context and this must be seen as a part of reality. What he means is that a perfect hierarchy is difficult to achieve and this approach recognizes the probability that high level decisions will look different in reality when implemented.

One of the core assumptions of the top-down approach is that every hierarchical decision originates from the intensions of the decision-makers and that the decision, that could be national legislation or any other form of high level decision, is the sole guiding instrument for the implementation process (Sannerstedt, 2001). He also emphasizes that the top-down perspective, as the bottom-up perspective, primarily should be seen as a method of study for the researcher to use when studying implementation processes and not as a theory in itself.

One of the most cited studies on implementation theory and policy implementation is the work of Jeffrey L. Pressman and Aaron B. Wildavsky (1973); *Implementation: How Great Expectations in Washington Are Dashed in Oakland*. The study examines the implementation process from a top-down perspective and the obstacles being faced during the process from authoritative decision at national level to actual implementation at local level.

Pressman and Wildavsky (1973) identify some key issues of policy implementation. For instance they stresses the importance of the time frame, if the implementation process is too slow from decision to final implementation it creates a higher risk of failure. The time aspect is strongly affected by the number of sub-decisions during the implementation process, a high number of low-level decisions along the way from decision to final implementation mean a higher risk of delays and in the long run failure. The second key issue Pressman and Wildavsky identifies as crucial for successful policy implementation is the consideration of the implementation process already at decision level, they suggests that the implementation process is not taken into consideration as early in the policy process as it should be. According to Pressman and Wildavsky, policy makers believe that the implementation process is a technical problem and therefore rarely take this issue into consideration[8]. This lack of interest of the implementation process early on at decision level makes it unclear what has to be done in order to succeed with the implementation of the decision.

Summarizing Pressman's and Wildavsky's views on implementation problems could be done by recognizing the crucial roles of time and early on planning, which means that policy makers must take the implementation process into consideration at an early stage of policy making and that they have to minimize the bureaucracy and number of sub-decisions during the implementation process.

Richard E. Matland (1995) tries in his article to summarize some of the literature on policy implementation, for instance the top-down perspective. Matland begin to recap on what policy implementation through a top-down perspective is, and says that top-down implementation is the carrying out of policy decisions. According to Matland, many attempts have been done by researchers to develop generalizable advices for successful policy implementation. Some of the key issues being pointed out as crucial for successful implementation are clear and consistent policy goals, minimized number of actors, limited needs for change during the implementation process, and responsibility for the process given to actors loyal to the overall policy goals. These different advices are in line with most literature about policy implementation with a top-down perspective and will form the theoretical framework for this study. Matland (1995) stresses the importance of clear policy goals. If the goals of the policy are unclear it makes it difficult for the implementer to understand what has to be done in order

[8] Note that Pressman's and Wildavsky's (1973) study was done 40 years ago and the situation might have changed since.

to achieve the goals. He also stresses the importance of loyalty, which means that all actors involved in the process must strive for the same goal and not oppose them.

Summarizing the general advices on policy implementation being recognized by Matland; time, clear policy goals and minimized number of actors involved in the process are identified as crucial for successful implementation and is consistent with the problems being identified by Pressman and Wildavsky (1973) in their study of policy implementation.

2.3 Previous studies

I have chosen to incorporate the previous studies section in the theoretical framework in order to give a deeper and broader understanding for policy implementation. To examine real life implementation together with the theoretical background on implementation theory will enable me to conduct a satisfying analysis. The different studies have examined implementation processes from a top-down perspective and will function as tools, together with the theoretical background, for the upcoming analysis. During my analysis I will continually refer back to the previous studies. Focus will be on the results of their studies, not the structure.

The study conducted by Zhang, Yang and Bi (2011) examined how the financial industry, especially banks, in China has been affected by a government policy stating that the climate and the environment must be taken into consideration when banks lends credits to companies. The authors suggests that this government policy gives incentives to banks to lend credit to environmentally friendly companies, and to stop lending credit to companies with poor environment and climate awareness. The study examines the implementation process of this policy at both national and provincial level in China. The results show that the policy has not been fully implemented at national level, but has been more successful at provincial level. One of the reasons suggested to why the implementation has been unsuccessful is unclear policy goals at decision level. Also the implementation process has been absent when deciding on this policy.

In their study, Pressman and Wildavsky (1973) examine how policy decisions at national level are implemented at local level, using a US context. Their study consisted of examining how a government project decided upon in Washington with purpose to create jobs in

Oakland, was implemented. The study showed that the implementation process was unsuccessful in such degree that just 3 out of 23 million USD allocated for the project had been used after 3 years of implementation. The authors suggest that too much bureaucracy and too slow implementation process was the main causes of the failure. They propose that to succeed with the project, the implementation process should have consisted of much less bureaucracy and a shorter time-frame from decision to implementation.

Bhave's, Mishra's and Singh Raghuwanshi's (2013) study examines how climate change adaption, with focus on safeguarding water resources, in India could be done through both a top-down and bottom-up perspective. Although Bhave's, Mishra's and Singh Raghuwanshi's study is a natural science study, it is useful to further understand how implementation of environment policies could be done. Their study shows that implementation at all levels are working in their case and that all levels of decision, from national policy to local policy and operative actions could be a method to implement measurements for climate and environment actions. The authors argue that all levels must be combined and work together in order to adapt to a changing climate.

These three different studies have a lot in common but also some differences. For instance, they all argue that time is a crucial factor for successful implementation and that implementation must be taken into consideration early on in the policy process. Also, clear goals are important in order to succeed with the policy implementation. Bhave's, Mishra's and Singh Raghuwanshi's (2013) study differs from the others because of its combined approach of bottom-up and top-down. They argue that the implementation process should be multidimensional and work from all levels, not just top-down. This multidimensional approach will be present in the analysis and will give the theoretical framework a wider perspective.

2.4 Theoretical discussion and summery

As shown above, implementation theory is a highly discussed subject and the theory is divided when it comes to core assumptions. I have chosen to use the top-down perspective on policy implementation and therefore limited the theoretical discussion to that. The literature and research shown above is fairly consistent when it comes to core problems and recommendations for policy implementation. Some of the core assumptions within the top-

down research are the crucial role of time, minimized bureaucracy and consideration at of the implementation process already at decision level. The previous studies also show how these factors are crucial for successful policy implementation and that the top-down perspective has some recurrent problems to deal with.

To be able to apply the top-down perspective of policy implementation theory in the study, I have to identify the core assumptions of the perspective. The theory chapter has shown that the crucial assumptions are quite few and easy to recognize, and therefore I will rely on these in my analysis of the data.

The core assumptions identified:

- *Time* is crucial for successful policy implementation, if the process is too slow it will create problems and might cause halt of the policy implementation or in worst case even failure.
- *Low amount of bureaucracy and sub-decisions* are necessary for a successful policy implementation, if there are too many actors involved in the implementation process it might cause set-backs to the policy implementation.
- *Clear overall goals* for the policy is crucial and will affect the outcome. If the overall goals are unclear the risk of failure is much higher.

There are other theoretical perspectives that can be used in order to examine the effectiveness of international environment goals through apart from top-down implementation theory. For instance Gunnar Sundqvist (2010) argues that there are three different ways to implement policy decisions; through *rules*, *goals* or *visions*. Sundqvist (2010) means that rules functions as barriers to eliminate destructive human behaviour, for instance to institute laws with the purpose to limit people's abilities to harm the environment. Goals on the other hand functions as guidelines more than rules and is results-orientated, targets are made up to reach overall goals. Visions functions as inspiration for change and actions against climate change for instance, authorities must be role models for actions against climate change and pollution. What Sundqvist (2010) implies is that each of these different perspectives gives people different amounts of control and trust, which perspective that is most successful though is not examined closer by Sundqvist. Although Sundqvist theory is interesting and useful, it will only function as an alternative approach in this study and will not be examined closer.

3. Methodology

In this study I will use two different methods to collect data; semi-structured interviews and a qualitative content analysis. Because of the different types of data needed for this study this type of structure is crucial in order to get the right amount of data and the right type of data. In this section I will also explain my research strategy and research design, and I will also end up in a discussion on the reliability and validity.

3.1 Research strategy

The study objective is to find out what the main problems are in the implementation process of international environment goals. The best way to achieve the study objective is through a deductive approach, which means that the theory represents the base of the study and is used to analyse the empirical findings (Bryman, 2011). I have, however, chosen not to use a hypothesis-based approach because of the importance of the empirical findings rather than the theoretical approach. The process looks like this according to this approach:

> **Theory → Data collection → Results → Analysis → Conclusions**

3.2 Research design

According to Bryman (2011) research design can be seen as the guiding framework for the study. There are different kinds of research designs with different purposes and uses. I have chosen to conduct a case study with focus on a specific issue and specific entities to examine, in this case municipalities. Although I examine three different municipalities in the Stockholm area, I also examine documents from the UN, the EU and the Swedish government which means I am conducting a case study with several units of analysis. Also the three different municipalities could be seen as three different cases, but I have chosen to examine them as part of the same region because of their similarities and therefore I have chosen to see them as one case. Bryman (2011) emphasizes the role of the context in a case study and therefore it is important to stress the fact that this study examines only three municipalities. The reason for this low amount of units of analysis is the resource and time limitations but

also because of the validity of the study, fewer municipalities with great similarities is possible to generalize compared to a higher amount of municipalities with many differences.

3.3 Data collection and analysis

3.3.1 Semi-structured interviews

When choosing what kind of interview to conduct it is important to consider the amount of structure needed or/and wanted (Merriam, 1994). From this claim I have chosen to conduct semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews are formed more as a conversation with guidelines than as a regular interview (Merriam, 1994). This type of interviews, where the interviews are more like conversations and the respondents can give a more detailed answer, contributes with more contexts surrounding the subject which is good for the researcher during the analysis (Johannessen and Tufte, 2002).

The loose definition of the semi-structured interview makes it useable when it comes to areas where I as interviewer has little knowledge about the subject, because the semi-structured interview is more characterized as a conversation it opens up for the respondent to talk freely on the subject. Bryman (2011) argues that semi-structured interviews are constructed as a conversation plan where the interviewer tends to ask follow-up questions to clarify and deepen the respondent's answers and arguments. Bryman (2011) also stresses that the interview must be prepared beforehand and lines up some important points to consider when preparing the interviews. For instance, it is important to formulate understandable and relevant questions, avoid leading questions and take into consideration the background facts about the respondent. Bryman (2011) also stresses the importance of considering the ethical aspects of the interview, if the respondent wants to be anonymous for instance, and if there are any criminal activity involved in the process. The ethical aspects are important to consider early on in the planning process.

The interviews are important for the data collection in this study, therefore it was important to do a representative selection early on, both of municipalities and personnel to interview. After constructing my interview questions[9] I directly searched for a homogenous group of

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[9] The interview questions are attached in Appendix A in this document.

municipalities to be able to generalize from my data[10] and ended up with Huddinge, Botkyrka and Haninge in southern Stockholm. I choose these three because of their similarities; they are alike in population size, geographical location, commuting system, waste management, operative structure, etc. After choosing these municipalities I conducted a strategic selection based on my purpose and interview questions, focusing on strategic, non-political personnel working strategically with environment issues. After locating personnel who met these requirements I called the municipalities to schedule interviews early to be able to collect relevant data. In each municipality I interviewed 1 to 2 employees and the interviews followed the questions but rather as guidelines than direct questions.

I informed each respondent of my study and how I would use the interviews in the study. Also, I informed the respondents of the ethical precautions made to ensure their integrity. I clarified to the respondents that the interviews should not be personal in character and that I would refer to the interviews as the municipality they represent and not as them personal. Throughout the study I will refer to the interviews as Huddinge municipality, Haninge municipality and Botkyrka municipality. Doing so will not change the validity of the data because the interviews are intended to represent the municipality perspective, not the respondents personal views. It will also ensure the respondents integrity.

3.3.2 Content analysis

Merriam (1994) argues that qualitative content analysis is flexible and it is possible for the researcher to create a functional system for data collection quite easily. In this regard Bryman (2011) agrees and stresses the role of the researcher in this type of qualitative or ethnographic as it sometimes is called, content analysis. Both Merriam (1994) and Bryman (2011) emphasize the flexibility when it comes to coding and categorizing when using this type of method.

In content analysis words can play a great role when collecting data, both quantitative and qualitative (Bryman, 2011). Also, Bryman argues that words can be used as an initial source for further collection of themes in the documents and that words that are frequently used can give an understanding of the intents the authors may have. Bjereld, Demker and Hinnfors

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[10] As much as possible, considering the low validity of the case study design.

(2009) support the conclusion that qualitative content analysis, among all other qualitative methods, do not seek to quantify data but instead tries to find the qualitative values within the data. Underlying messages and latent attributes will give the researcher a greater understanding of a phenomenon or action (Bjereld, Demker and Hinnfors; 2009).

Other important factors to take into consideration when collecting data from documents are the 1) authenticity – that the document is what it claims to be, 2) credibility – that the document is not falsified or distorted, 3) representativeness – that the document is representative for other relevant documents (Bryman, 2011).

After taking all these factors; the flexibility, importance of words and themes and the quality of the documents using the three recommendations from Bryman (2011), it is easy to both select the right documents and making a flexible and easy to replicate manual for data collection. I have chosen to identify keywords connected to policy implementation that should exist in the chosen documents, after identifying these keywords it is then easy to search all documents. After finding these words it is possible to identify themes and key concepts within the documents and use these in the upcoming analysis. These themes, both manifest and latent, will be presented in the empirical findings.

Problems when using content analysis are for instance bad quality documents, a certain degree of interpretation from the coder/author which requires a certain amount of knowledge of the subject beforehand, and the risk of unjustified conclusions when coding latent content (Bryman, 2011). These problems are important to consider when it comes to assess the quality and the validity of the study; I therefore want to clarify that the results from this study can be affected by my personal perceptions and knowledge about the subject.

The list of keywords used when conducting the content analysis is attached in Appendix B. All or some of the words will be used depending on the data found.

3.4 Reliability and Validity

In case study research it is crucial to consider both reliability and validity (Bryman, 2011). To begin with I need to point out that this study takes the shape of a hermeneutic one, which means that all conclusions made in this study are affected by the fact that I as researcher am a

human and therefore interpret data through my knowledge and perceptions (Thúren, 2007). With this in mind I have done everything possible to keep this study as objective as possible.

Reliability considers if the results of the study would be the same if the study was conducted again (Bryman, 2011). According to Bryman the reliability is affected if the measurement is unstable, for instance data collected from interviews that do not have consistent data such as numbers and quantifiable measurements and can change over time.

The reliability of this study is fairly good because of the clear theoretical framework and the structure of the interviews. The interviews are not meant to be personal in character, only to give a deeper municipality perspective. The reliability could be argued to be low because of the loose structure of the interviews and the qualitative nature of the content analysis, but I claim that this is within the limits because of the complexity of the study.

Validity considers if the conclusions of the study interrelates or not. The validity of a study considers if the conclusions can be generalized to other cases (Bryman, 2011). According to Bryman it is impossible to generalize from the conclusions of a case study and this is important to consider when drawing conclusions from this study. With this in mind I will emphasize the importance of not generalize from my study and therefore I will only discuss hypothetically based on my study results.

4. Empirical findings

In this chapter I will summarize the empirical data to be used in the analysis. I will give an overall picture but also use specific quotes.

To be able to conduct the study, I quickly understood that only a content analysis was not possible due to lack of sufficient documents at municipality level, therefore it was necessary to use two different methods for data collection; qualitative content analysis and semi-structured interviews.

The documents used in this study represent key UN, EU and national agreements on the environment and is examined in their language of origin but translated to English.

I have conducted three semi-structured interviews in three different municipalities; Huddinge, Haninge and Botkyrka. These interviews are meant to give a deeper understanding of the strategic environment work in each municipality.

Huddinge municipality was represented by two people with strategic responsibility in the area of climate and environment. They were interviewed together but answered individually and gave their perspectives on the subjects discussed. They had quite similar background regarding education but one has worked longer than the other. They both have extensive strategic tasks but within different parts of the organization.

Haninge municipality was represented by one person with overall strategic environment responsibility within the municipality. The respondent had worked for about a year in the organization and had an extensive educational background. The interview was based on the interview questions but follow up questions was asked.

Botkyrka municipality was represented by two people with strategic responsibility. They were interviewed individually. Both of the respondents had extensive work experience with strategic work and had similar education. They worked in different departments within the municipality.

4.1 UN documents on the Environment

The UN documents being studied in this thesis are the Kyoto Protocol (1998) and the Copenhagen Accord (2009). All these documents are valid as UN negotiations summaries and are easy to find for any other who want to replicate the study. I will examine each document individually.

4.1.1 The Kyoto Protocol

The Kyoto Protocol is the outcome of the third session of the Conference of the Parties (COP) under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) that took place in the Japanese city of Kyoto in 1997 (Oberthür, 1999). The Kyoto Protocol was ground-breaking and was the result of long going negotiations on climate and environment within the international community (Oberthür, 1999). The Kyoto Protocol can be considered to be the

foremost agreement on environment efforts and has paved the ground for future agreements, in theory.

I will now account for the main features of the Kyoto Protocol, focusing on the implementation aspects. There will be some quotes to give examples of the content.

The word *implementation* is found 35 times in the Kyoto Protocol. When reading the document, focusing on the parts containing the word implementation it is possible to get an overview of the usage of the word. Because the study uses a qualitative content analysis, it is possible to study the content in detail rather than just counting words. This makes it possible to create a deeper picture of the meaning of the word *implementation*, also considering the context.

To give examples of how the use of the word implementation in the Kyoto Protocol, I have listed some paragraphs below.

Article 8, paragraph 1:
The information submitted under Article 7 by each Party included in Annex I shall be reviewed by expert review teams pursuant to the relevant decisions of the Conference of the Parties and in accordance with guidelines adopted for this purpose by the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to this Protocol under paragraph 4 below. The information submitted under Article 7, paragraph 1, by each Party included in Annex I shall be reviewed as part of the annual compilation and accounting of emissions inventories and assigned amounts. Additionally, the information submitted under Article 7, paragraph 2, by each Party included in Annex I shall be reviewed as part of the review of communications.
Apart from the complex language in the articles of the Kyoto Protocol, the paragraph above for instance shows that the commitment towards the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol is clear and far reaching. The following paragraphs also emphasize the implementation process.

Article 8, paragraph 3:
The review process shall provide a thorough and comprehensive technical assessment of all aspects of the implementation by a Party of this Protocol. The expert review teams shall prepare a report to the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to this

Protocol, assessing the implementation of the commitments of the Party and identifying any potential problems in, and factors influencing, the fulfilment of commitments. Such reports shall be circulated by the secretariat to all Parties to the Convention. The secretariat shall list those questions of implementation indicated in such reports for further consideration by the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to this Protocol.

In article 8, paragraph 3 states the role of the reviewing process and gives examples of how this shall be conducted. The paragraph emphasizes the importance of reviewing the implementation commitments through technical expert's reports.

Article 8, paragraph 4:
The Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to this Protocol shall adopt at its first session, and review periodically thereafter, guidelines for the review of implementation of this Protocol by expert review teams taking into account the relevant decisions of the Conference of the Parties.

In article 8, paragraph 4 the guidelines for these expert reviews are stated. A periodical review will be conducted in order to supervise the compliance of the commitments in the Kyoto Protocol.

Article 10, part E:
Cooperate in and promote at the international level, and, where appropriate, using existing bodies, the development and implementation of education and training programmes, including the strengthening of national capacity building, in particular human and institutional capacities and the exchange or secondment of personnel to train experts in this field, in particular for developing countries, and facilitate at the national level public awareness of, and public access to information on, climate change. Suitable modalities should be developed to implement these activities through the relevant bodies of the Convention, taking into account Article 6 of the Convention [...]

In article 10, part E the Protocol the role of already existing institutions is emphasized and the importance of their commitment in order for the Kyoto Protocol commitments to succeed.

Article 14, paragraph 4 (part h):

Establish such subsidiary bodies as are deemed necessary for the implementation of this Protocol [...]

The implementation process is important according to the Kyoto Protocol and there are many suggestions on how to implement the commitments, for instance the establishment of subsidiary bodies with responsibility of the implementation compliance.

When studying the Kyoto Protocol like this, focusing on the implementation aspects, it is possible to better understand the use of the word and the implications of it. In the upcoming analysis implementation theory will be used to understand the deep, latent meaning of implementation in the Kyoto Protocol.

The Kyoto Protocol emphasizes the significance of the implementation of the protocol commitments and is clear about the responsibility of the parties, which is mentioned many times through the document. Striking though is the lack of further instructions on how each party should implement the protocol and instead it refers to the special rapporteurs and working groups. Possible reasons for this will be discussed in the analysis chapter. Article 14, paragraph 4 (part h) shows some effort to recommend the parties on how they can implement the commitments made in the protocol. But overall there is no significant part in the Kyoto Protocol discussing the implementation process from decision to local implementation.

4.1.2   The Copenhagen Accord

The Copenhagen Accord is the result of the COP 15 negotiations in Copenhagen, Denmark in 2009 which beforehand had strong hopes on it to be successful; a hope that was not satisfied due to stranded negotiations (Rogelj et al., 2010). The Copenhagen Accord was frequently reported in media as a failure but I still want to examine the results and see if the implementation process was included in the final agreement.

Some of the paragraphs in Copenhagen Accord brings up the issue of implementation, mostly the relationship between the so called developed and developing countries and the commitments the developed countries have made towards the developing countries in terms of financial and technological assistance. For instance, the Copenhagen Accord stresses the

developed countries commitment to a goal to jointly mobilize contributions of 100 million USD annually to the least developed countries until 2020.

Paragraph 3:

Adaptation to the adverse effects of climate change and the potential impacts of response measures is a challenge faced by all countries. Enhanced action and international cooperation on adaptation is urgently required to ensure the implementation of the Convention by enabling and supporting the implementation of adaptation actions aimed at reducing vulnerability and building resilience in developing countries, especially in those that are particularly vulnerable, especially least developed countries, small island developing States and Africa. We agree that developed countries shall provide adequate, predictable and sustainable financial resources, technology and capacity-building to support the implementation of adaptation action in developing countries.

Paragraph 8:

Funding for adaptation will be prioritized for the most vulnerable developing countries, such as the least developed countries, Small Island developing States and Africa. In the context of meaningful mitigation actions and transparency on implementation, developed countries commit to a goal of mobilizing jointly USD 100 billion dollars a year by 2020 to address the needs of developing countries.

Overall, the Copenhagen Accord addresses the issue of implementation but not in any deeper aspects. It focuses on the implementation, more as the compliance, of the commitments made by the richer countries. The Copenhagen Accord is not as fundamental as the Kyoto Protocol and therefore not as comprehensive; the number of times that the word *implementation* occurs is not as many as the Kyoto Protocol.

To summarize the implementation aspects of the Copenhagen Accord, it focuses on the compliance process rather than the implementation process. The reason for this will be discussed later on.

4.2 EU documents on the Environment

The documents representing the EU in this study are the EU Climate Action Explained (2013) and the EU Environment Action Programme (2014). These two documents give a good overall picture of the environmental work within the EU and are also easy to find.

4.2.1　The EU Climate Action

When searching on the chosen keywords in the document explaining EU Climate Actions there are no clear parts that address implementation issues and the document mostly contains overall goals and visions, especially regarding emissions cuts. When searching for *implementation* there are no hits in the documents at all. The other keywords are more successful but there are more focus on explaining overall goals and the role of the different EU bodies, such as the role of the European Commission.

The paragraph below shows how the EU explains how they will reach the target of a 20 % increase of renewable energy, but a clear explanation for how the implementation process should look like is not included and instead there are certain targets for each Member State which together will contribute to the overall target of a 20 % increase of renewable energy. The responsibility for the final implementation lies on each Member State according to this document.

The national renewables targets for 2020 range from 10 % for Malta, a country with a renewable energy sector in its infancy, to 49 % for Sweden, a country with an advanced sector based on bioenergy and hydropower. Together these national goals will achieve the 20 % target for the EU as a whole, substantially increasing renewables' average share of energy consumption from 12.5 % in 2010.

Overall, the EU Climate Action document gives a visionary picture and do not consider the implementation process. Much like the Copenhagen Accord, most of the responsibility is put on the Member States. The document often refers to EU legislations on climate actions and claims that the EU climate goals, such as emissions cuts and increased investments in renewable energy, will be overachieved but do not refer to how. This may well be explained

by the non-legislative character of this document, which instead refers to other legal documents. This will be further discussed in the upcoming analysis.

4.2.2   The EU Environment Action

The EU Environment Action Programme brings up implementation issues many times and gives practical examples of how to implement EU environment legislation. For instance, the Action Programme has a chapter dedicated to implementation improvements; "Priority objective 4: To maximize the benefits of Union environment legislation by improving implementation". Below are some examples of paragraphs addressing implementation issues and how they can be resolved.

Paragraph 57:

Improving the implementation of the Union environment acquis at Member State level will therefore be given top priority in the coming years. There are significant differences in implementation between and within Member States. There is a need to equip those involved in implementing environment legislation at Union, national, regional and local levels with the knowledge, tools and capacity to improve the delivery of benefits from that legislation, and to improve the governance of the enforcement process.

In paragraph 57 the EU strongly emphasizes the importance of the implementation process and recognizes the difference conditions for each Member State. The paragraph also stresses that all levels involved in the implementation process, such as national and local, must be given the knowledge, tools and capacity making it possible to implement the environment goals.

Paragraph 58:

The high number of infringements, complaints and petitions in the area of the environment shows the need for an effective, workable system of checks and balances at national level to help to identify and resolve implementation problems, along with measures to prevent them from arising in the first place, such as liaison between the relevant administrations responsible for implementation and experts during the policy development phase. In this respect, efforts in the period up to 2020 will focus on delivering improvements in four key areas.

The EU recognizes the problems with implementing the different standards and legislation on the environment. Therefore the EU stresses the importance of strong institutions and administrative bodies at all levels in the implementation process.

Paragraph 59:

Implementation challenges specific to an individual Member State will be targeted for assistance, similar to the tailored approach followed in the European Semester process. For instance, partnership implementation agreements involving the Commission and individual Member States will be drawn up, addressing issues such as where to find financial support for implementation and better information systems to track progress. With a view to maximizing the effectiveness of this approach, Member States should, as appropriate and in accordance with their administrative arrangements, encourage participation by local and regional authorities. The Technical Platform for Cooperation on the Environment set up by the Committee of the Regions and the Commission will facilitate dialogue and information pooling, with a view to improving the implementation of legislation at local level.

The EU also suggests how to help individual EU Member States which shows how prioritized the subject of implementing strong environment standards within the EU is. Also in paragraph 59 is the local perspective emphasized.

This comprehensive document on EU environment actions shows that the EU has considered implementation, at international, national and local level. An example of this is paragraph 59, shown above, which states that the EU will assist individual Member States in the implementation process and encourage the participation of both regional and local authorities. In paragraph 65, the EU set up concrete targets to be achieved by 2020. These targets are in line with the visions and commitments to an improved implementation process[11].

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[11] See page 56 in the EU Environment Action Programme (2014).

4.3 Swedish documents on the Environment

When studying the Swedish environment goals I have chosen to use the government report on Swedish Environment Goals (2012) which precise the environment goals system. The report aim to clarify the decided goals and explain the system they exist within.

4.3.1 The Swedish Environment Goals

The report on the Swedish environment goals system shows many practical suggestions or recommendations to municipalities and regional actors with purpose to promote environment actions at local level. In the report there are also many demands on local actors. Overall the document gives a comprehensive guide for local and regional actors on *what* to implement but not *how* to implement these recommendations and demands. As in the other documents examined above there is a lack in communicating the details in the implementation process and focus lies on what should be implemented. The reasons for this will be discussed further on. An example of this type of recommendation is the one below:

All municipalities should continually update their planning and have access to professional expertise in planning, urban design and architecture.

The recommendatory character does not involve the implementation process and there are no further suggestions referred to. The municipality perspective on the Government guidelines and national legislation on environment is presented below.

4.4 Outcomes of the municipality interviews

The interviews were conducted during the spring semester 2014 and critical personnel with strategic responsibility in the area of environment were interviewed. The reason for doing interviews instead of conducting a content analysis is the lack of sufficient municipality documents.

4.4.1 Botkyrka municipality

Botkyrka municipality has a strong commitment towards the Aalborg Charter[12], an EU initiative to enhance the sustainability work in European towns and cities. The different EU directives are important in the strategic environment work in the municipality and the respondents stress the commitments made by the municipality towards different global initiative. The most of the EU directives concerns water and is structured as guidelines more than as support, according to the municipality representatives.

The respondents said that the different global and national goals functions more as guidelines than actual goals to meet. They argued that they base the local environment goals on the different goals from both EU and National level, but a strong local angel is incorporated and the local needs are considered to be able to implement these goals.

One of the respondents said that "the important thing is to give the tools to reach the goals, not only clear goals". Sometimes, they argue, the goals are not that important to reach good results but instead there are a lot of other factors equally as important. It could for instance be a supportive political leadership with high ambitions who values far reaching efforts for the environment.

The respondents said that the work by the motto "think globally and act locally". They argued that international cooperation is important for the capacity development of local authorities and gave examples of cooperation with a Malaysian town that the municipality had for years. They stressed the importance of knowledge exchange and international cooperation between local actors which enables them to reach their environment ambitions.

Both respondents described the process of forming an environment strategy for the municipality. They said that they sort out the useful at global and national level and incorporate them into the municipal strategy. Both respondents argued that the municipality has quite a lot of authority regarding environment strategy and the international and national comes in second to the municipal agenda, therefore the local political leadership has a strong authority to implement their own environment agenda.

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[12] For more information about the Aalborg Charter: http://www.sustainablecities.eu/aalborg-process/charter

The respondents argued that "it is at the local level everything is happening", meaning that the local authorities are the ones implementing the global environment goals. This approach was present during the entire interview, giving the impression that the municipality do not prioritize goals and norms from higher level. If this is the general approach in the municipality's environment work, the top-down process is not working in line with current implementation theory.

4.4.2 Haninge municipality

The respondent representing Haninge municipality begins by introducing the municipality objectives and budget report[13] as the primary policy document where the overall mandate for the strategic environment work originates. Therefore, this annual report is crucial for the municipality's environmental work.

The municipality has also a quite strong commitment to international environment agreements and different kinds of cooperation. For instance, Haninge municipality has also signed the Aalborg Charter and is committed to that agreement. When I asked about what the municipality prioritize, global or local needs, the respondent argued that they absolutely consider global environment issues but added that the municipal needs often are prioritized. For instance, efforts against climate change are often based on global norms and recommendation from both the EU and the UN.

The respondent said that the political leadership is crucial when it comes to mandate in these issues, with strong political support it is possible to implement great things but with weak support it is almost impossible to implement efforts for the environment. This is both the strength and the weakness of a politically governed organization, the respondent argued.

According to the respondent there are some amount of top-down processes from both the EU and the national government, for instance the national environment goals and the EU water directives. These differ in both mandate and authority, which means that the municipalities are able to incorporate their own objectives in the original goals.

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[13] For more information about objectives and budget in Haninge municipality:
http://haninge.se/upload/71393/KF-mal-och-budget-2014-15.pdf

To be able to reach stronger commitments for the environment, the respondent believes that a mix of top-down and bottom-up approach must be considered. The global and national actors must initiate a dialogue with local actors and consider the implementation process much earlier on at global and national decision level. At the same time the respondent admits that detailed decisions on the implementation process is difficult at international level because of the different conditions each country has.

According to the respondent, Haninge municipality is thinking globally and acts locally. It is important for the municipality to understand and consider the complex correlations between global and local environmental problems and how they could be resolved from a local perspective.

4.4.3 Huddinge municipality

In Huddinge municipality, one of the two respondents is an Agenda 21 coordinator who has responsibility for the local Agenda 21 strategy. Huddinge municipality did early adopt a locally adapted Agenda 21 after the Rio Conference in 1992; this was a government directive urging municipalities to adopt a local sustainability agenda addressing both ecological and social sustainability. In Huddinge, they focused on the ecological aspects of the sustainability agenda. This project among others shows the global commitments in Huddinge municipality. The local Agenda 21 in Huddinge municipality has been revised twice over the years in order to incorporate the national environment goals.

As the other respondents in this study, they emphasized that they work in a politically lead organization which means that the mandate and the resources can shift depending on the political leadership. For instance, the political priority is water and that affects both the budget and mandate in order to reach the goals.

The EU water directives are key incentives for the municipality and most efforts are put into water-improvement efforts, such as cleansing of lakes and key water resources in the municipality. Currently, the municipality has not been able to reach their goals and the EU water directives which mean that the municipality could face sanctions from the EU.

When I asked about their priorities and if they focus on global, national or local level they answered that it depends on the subject. For instance, climate efforts are often based on global targets and initiatives, but issues as noise levels and land use are based on local needs and priorities.

The respondents although stressed that the municipality often consider global needs when working strategically, for instance does the municipality consider carbon footprints in order to form a local agenda on the environment. They said that "We feel that we relate quite a lot to national and international efforts, but we narrow it down and implement it at local level. We ask ourselves, what does this mean to us?"

They also said that it "sometimes feels as we, the municipalities, are in the forefront of environment efforts. Before the regions and the state". They said that there is a lack of support from the national level and argued that it often is more helpful to turn to another municipality in order to get assistance.

On the subject of top-down governance they argued that the state should be more supportive and that both the state and the EU should be more supportive and give incentives for more ambitious efforts for the environment at local level.

4.4.4 Conclusions from the interviews

All the municipality representatives interviewed in this study emphasized that they work in a political organization and that the environment agenda is mostly based upon local needs and priorities. They did anyway all consider global needs also, mostly climate because of the global characteristics of climate issues.

The municipalities also emphasized the lack of supports from national level and that the need for rethinking and reshaping of the implementation process of the national environment goals is needed. All of the respondents stressed that the EU environment directives are important and useful incentives for local actors to keep up effort for the environment.

Some issue areas, such as climate and water are based on global initiatives but issues areas such as noise levels and land use are solely based on local needs. All respondents argued that

they pick the goals and guidelines useful for the municipality and disregard the goals not useful for the municipality. This shows that the municipalities have a high degree of autonomy regarding environment efforts and that environment issues are mostly based on local needs but do sometimes consider global needs, often in order to build a comprehensive agenda for the environment.

5. Analysis

In this chapter I will conduct an analysis of the collected data being accounted for in the previous chapter through the eyes of top-down implementation theory. The theoretical approach is accounted for in chapter 2 in this study. I will sort the analysis under three different topics which represents key elements of successful policy implementation.

5.1 Time is crucial

Most of the research on implementation theory stresses the importance of time and effectiveness to be able to implement policy decisions (e.g. Matland, 1995 or Pressman and Wildavsky, 1973). Time is one of the factors not mentioned very often in any of the documents or interviews conducted, which is interesting because of the importance of time within implementation research. Although time was not explicitly mentioned as important in the documents or interviews, other related factors was mentioned. For instance, all the municipality representatives stressed the need for strong support from the political leadership in the municipality in order to help the strategic personnel to set up far reaching and ambitious goals with a fairly short time span from decision to implementation. Because of an often changing political leadership in the municipalities, it is difficult for the strategic personnel to set up long term and short term goals. This could be seen as a contributing factor for slow implementation.

Sannerstedt (2001) argues that the top-down implementation process will get more precise the lower in the hierarchical chain it goes and a lot of sub-decisions will be made through the implementation process. According to Sannerstedt, a perfect top-down implementation process where a policy decision is implemented fast and without any hesitation is almost impossible. These facts about the top-down implementation process presented by Sannerstedt

could also explain the time consuming process as seen in all three municipalities examined in this study.

Time has not been explicitly said to be a problem according to the respondents but implicitly there are a lot of factors affecting the time consumption during the implementation process, such factors are weak political leadership and support for environment efforts at all levels of the implementation process making it difficult for the strategic personnel to set up ambitious goals time wise.

5.2 Low amount of bureaucracy

Pressman and Wildavsky (1973) stress the importance of low amount of bureaucracy as a factor for successful policy implementation. This is clearly shown in almost all documents and interviews where bureaucracy is mentioned both explicitly and implicitly. For instance, both the Kyoto Protocol and the EU Environment Action stresses the importance of bureaucratic structures and clear chains of authority. In both of these documents they argue that bureaucracy is crucial as in strong institutions and supportive structure during the entire implementation process. What Pressman and Wildavsky (1973) highlights is the amount of sub-decisions, redo decisions at lower levels in the implementation process, for instance decisions made in the municipalities to change already existing environment goals.

The interviews were especially interesting in this sense because of the insight in the municipality structure and priorities regarding the environment.

All respondents emphasized that they work in a political organization which means that most efforts for the environment must be sanctioned by the political leadership in the municipality. This is an example of the sub-decisions that Pressman and Wildavsky (1973) brought up, which according to them causes problems for a functional implementation process. The respondents did not always see the political leadership in the municipality as an obstacle, they also stressed that a supportive and committed political leadership can function as a driver for efforts on the environment. This runs counter to what Pressman and Wildavsky argues and it is important to consider that a bottom-up perspective could be more functional when analysing this contradiction.

According to Matland (1995) loyalty towards the initial policy decision is important in order to reach the goals. What Matland means is that all actors involved in the implementation process must be loyal to the policy decisions and not make any changes or oppose the decisions made in order for the implementation to succeed. According to the respondents and some of the documents examined in this study, lower level political instances sometimes has too much influence on environment efforts from both international and national level. For instance, many of the respondents argued that the national environment goals are incorporated into the municipality agenda on the environment but is weakened because of the needs and priorities in the municipality. This suggests that the international and national environment goals have more of a symbolic value to the municipalities and often functions as inspiration and recommendations rather than actual goals for the municipalities to strive towards.

5.3 Clear goals

The third identified recommendation for successful policy implementation is clear goals. Matland (1995) argues that clear overall goals for what the policy decided upon is aimed to achieve, are crucial for successful implementation. If the goals are unclear it is much more difficult to reach them. If the goals are clear it is easier to identify what efforts are needed to reach them. If the municipalities have clear goals to guide them in their efforts it is possible for them to form a functional strategy.

The UN and the EU documents examined in this study have clear goals for a better environment and they also, to some extent, addresses the implementation process needed for these goals to be reached. The problem is not the goals or the recommendations made to reach them, it is rather the implementation process between national and local level. The international goals exist but it is the efforts made in each country that causes the most set-backs to the implementation processes of international environment goals.

In the three interviews conducted the respondents stressed the importance of clear goals from both national and local level in order to achieve the goals. Almost all of the respondents argued that unclear goals make it more difficult to implement effective efforts to reach them. This is in line with the recommendations made by Matland (1995), but clear goals at international level do not seem to improve the implementation process and a reason for this could be unclear goals at local level.

6. Discussion

The results in this study show that there are clear goals and ambitions at international level, especially in the EU. According to the top-down perspective within implementation theory it should be enough if the international decisions include clear goals, low amount of bureaucracy and time-consideration to be able to reach the goals. Without generalizing too much this is not the case in this study, but the implementation problems are mostly located within each country. This emphasizes the need for political will at national level and international agreements and goals cannot be effectively implemented if the national political will does not exist.

The political leadership in both the national government and in the municipalities is important for the implementation of international environment goals and if there is a lacking political interest and will at country level it is difficult to implement international environment goals. The documents examined in this study shows that there is a fairly strong will at international level to reach environment goals but the implementation problem can and should be blamed on the national governments and their political agenda.

Another possible explanation for the ill-functioning implementation process could be other political issues, such as economic crisis in Europe and security issues[14] making environment issues a de-prioritization at both international and national level. Of course, economic interests from both government and civil actors are important when discussing why environment issues are de-prioritize. The great oil and coal exporting and importing countries do not wish for far-reaching environment goals that could harm their economic growth and the large energy corporations have shown little interest in more sustainable alternatives.

Countries such as Germany could show the way to a more sustainable energy market by restructuring their energy market to renewable energy. This could lead the way for other countries, preferably within the EU, to restructure their energy market but it is foremost a political will that is needed in order to make changes like this.

To conclude it is possible to draw some conclusions about what is the pressing issue that must be addressed in order for environment goals to be reached. There must be a political will and

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[14] E.g. the War on Terrorism and the current crisis in Ukraine.

clear ambitions at national level and the implementation process must be considered at national level in higher extent then today. Also, the autonomy of the municipalities should be limited in these issues in order for national goals to be implemented without political obstacles at municipality level.

The theoretical focus in this study is the op-down perspective of implementation theory, a quite narrowed downed theoretical framework. In opposite to this perspective, the bottom-up perspective gives a different perspective of implementation. To problematize the relationship between the top-down and the bottom-up perspective is important in order to understand the complexity of implementation problems. This relationship is complex enough to be able to conduct a whole study of and I will not discuss it in any deeper aspects, but there are some key issues to address.

As shown in the theoretical chapter in this study, the two different perspectives have some key differences. For instance, the top-down perspective has a belief in authoritative decision making and loyalty to the main goal of the policy. In opposite to this the bottom-up perspective claims that the implementation process is much more complex and the all actors involved in the process have some degree of authority and possibility to influence the process. It is important to understand how the Swedish municipalities works in order to understand the issues of implementation, because of municipal structure a strict top-down perspective is difficult to apply and a more multi-dimensional analysis using both a top-down and bottom-up perspective would be preferable to better understand the complexity of the municipality.

The Swedish municipalities, as shown in the interviews conducted in this study, are quite complex in their organizational structure and the political leadership has a lot of autonomy in relationship to the state. The power relationship between the state and the local authorities makes it more difficult for a top-down implementation process to function and a combined top-down and bottom-up perspective is needed in order to further analyse the implementation process. If the municipality would not have the amount of self-determination they have today it would be possible to fully explain the implementation process through a top-down perspective, but with the high amount of self-determination the municipalities currently have it is difficult to explain and analyse the implementation process.

What I want to emphasize are the complexity of the political structure at local level in Sweden and the need for a multi-dimensional approach to implementation analysis, using both a top-down and bottom-up perspective on policy implementation.

7. Conclusions

The research question that this study was supposed to answer:

What are the primary implementation problems when implementing international environment goals from decision at international level to implementation at local level seen through a top-down perspective?

The results can imply but not conclude that the research question is possible to answer. The focus in the question is *what* the problems are and it is possible to identify some possible problems in the implementation process.

Firstly, there is a lack of political will at national level which is then reflected at local level. The political ambitions at national level do not give enough encouragement or incentives for the municipalities to implement neither international nor national environment goals.

Secondly, the municipalities do not regard the international or national environment goals as equally important for the municipality as the local needs and priorities. Instead, the municipalities shape their local environment agenda using some of the international and national goals that they consider useful for the municipality.

These are the main possible reasons that I have identified as obstacles for a functional implementation of international environment goals. Of course, it is not possible to conclude anything but if studying a similar context it could imply that these two problems could be generalized to other municipalities.

Further research about the implementation issues of international environment goals could be developed and conducted in a larger context in order to generalize the results. If more documents and more municipalities are examined it is possible to draw stronger conclusions. It would also be possible to examine the political agenda and for instance interview political

leaderships both at local and national level, a fully developed interview study could be fully functional for this. Finally, it would be desirable to conduct a study using both a bottom-up approach and a top-down approach in accordance with what I said in the discussion above.

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Appendix A

Interview questions

- What are the specific mandates you have in the municipality?

- Can you explain for the environment and climate work in the municipality?

- What are the main guidelines and driving forces when you form the municipal strategy on climate and environment efforts?

- Do you take into account international interests, such as UN and EU climate goals when you form the municipal strategy on climate and environment efforts?

- How free do you feel you are when forming the municipal strategy on climate and environment, do you have to follow EU and national policy and/or goals when forming the local agenda on climate and environment efforts?

- What do you think is the most important part to take into consideration when forming the municipal strategy on climate and environment efforts; local, national or international needs?

Appendix B

Keywords
Implementation
Implement
Perform
Accomplish
Realize
Execution
Execute
Achieve
Carrying out
Fulfill
Fulfilled