

# Linking state, non-state and subnational climate action: The case of Sweden

Daniel E Stenson<sup>1</sup> & Oscar Widerberg<sup>2</sup>

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## Introduction

Successful international climate policy depends on domestic actors' acceptance and actions. Cities, regions, investors, companies and civil society organizations are crucial for implementing the Paris Agreement. The proliferation of non-state climate actions is therefore a positive development, symbolizing the commitments of players outside of the UNFCCC in contributing to halting dangerous global warming at well below 2 degrees Celsius.

For example, the Non-State Actor Zone for Climate Actions (NAZCA), a data-platform launched during COP20 in Lima in 2014, show-cases over 11,600 commitments by over 5,200 different actors.<sup>3</sup> Linking, or at least aligning, climate actions by governments and non-

state actors could generate various fruitful synergies. By signalling commitment and support for ambitious climate policy, non-state actors could instill confidence in governments to improve national mitigation and adaptation efforts. Governments can encourage, incentivize and reward non-state climate action by creating platforms for publicity and information exchange.

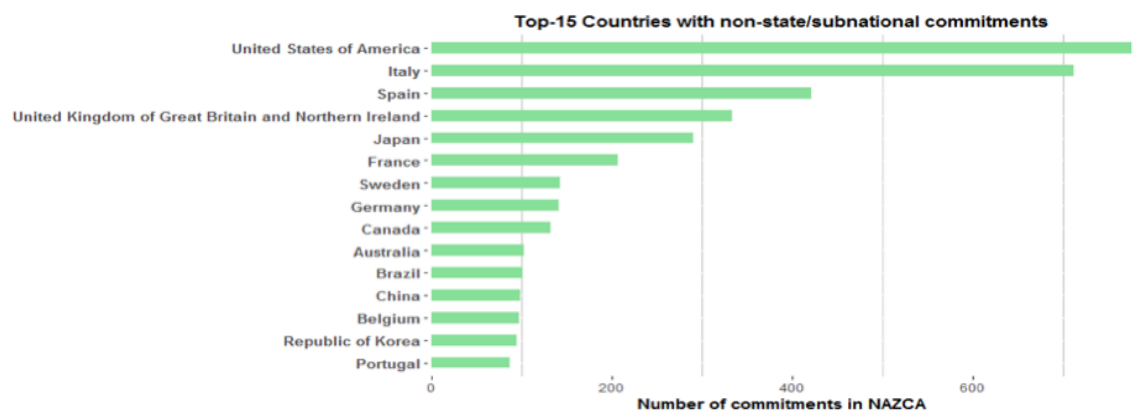
This brief takes a closer look at links between non-state actors and the government in Sweden. It presents new data on Swedish involvement in NAZCA showing that the country outperforms many of its peers in terms of commitments and discusses why this is the case. The brief is part of ongoing work carried out under Fores' Reference Group for International Climate Policy. The group was initiated in advance of COP21 in Paris, bringing together business, academia and public representatives to discuss key issues in international climate policy. One of the issues that emerged during the dialogue was the role of non-state actors, the Lima Paris Action Agenda (LPAA), and the NAZCA-platform. In several workshops members have

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel E Stenson is climate policy analyst at Fores, and a PhD candidate at the IVM

<sup>2</sup> Oscar Widerberg is researcher and a PhD candidate at the IVM

<sup>3</sup> Data collected from NAZCA, September 2016. Small discrepancies (< 5 %) between the NAZCA homepage and the data presented in this brief may occur.



discussed the issue, and within the framework, Fores has launched one report and two policy briefs, of which this is the second.

### Swedish non-state actors in NAZCA

The more than 11,000 commitments show-cased in NAZCA comes from non-state actors spread across nearly 140 countries.<sup>4</sup> An overwhelming majority of the actors - categorized into “cities”, “companies”, “CSOs”, “investors”, and “regions” - are based in developed countries. Table 1 presents an overview of the 15 best represented countries in NAZCA in terms of number of actors with commitments. If we look at the distribution of countries, we find that the lion’s share - more than 770 - of the actors are situated in the US. Sweden comes in number seven, despite its substantially smaller size in terms of population and GDP compared to other developed countries. Among the top 15 countries, Sweden together with Belgium, Portugal

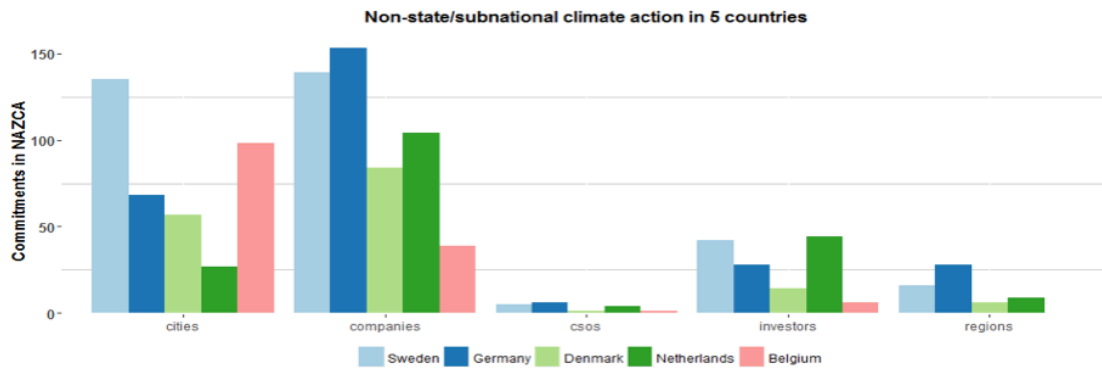
and Italy fare highest in terms of actors per capita.<sup>5</sup>

Over 150 swedish non-state actors contributes with nearly 340 commitments, for which cities and companies each account for around 40 % of all the commitments. Among the cities, Stockholm stands out with 15 commitments and among the companies, H&M ranks first with 11 commitments. Also Jämtland (region), Nordea Bank (investor) and the Church of Sweden (CSO) rank first within their categories.

Comparing Sweden with other Western European countries shows how Swedish non-state actors are highly engaged in the climate action, or at least in contributing to NAZCA, compared both to the total number of countries involved and compared to neighbourhood countries. Figure 2 presents the number of actors with commitment across actor-types in four countries: Sweden, Germany, Denmark, the Netherlands and Belgium. It shows how Sweden outperforms Belgium and Denmark on all five actor-types; the Netherlands on all but the ‘investors’

<sup>4</sup> The remained of this brief works with an adjusted data-set which removes double entries from cities participating in the “Covenant of Mayors”, a cooperative initiative for urban climate action. The adjusted total number of commitments is 9,908, the total numbers of actors or countries represented remain unchanged.

<sup>5</sup> The large share of actors in Italy is primarily the result of the “Covenant of Mayors”, a European cooperative initiative for urban climate action, accounting for over 90 % of all the italian entries in NAZCA. For Sweden, this same number is about 30 %.



category, and Germany on ‘companies’ and ‘investors’.

In sum, NAZCA contains a relatively high number of climate commitments by

Swedish non-state actors compared to other countries. In the next sections, we discuss why this may be the case.

### Explaining Sweden’s performance in NAZCA

Based on inputs from workshops held with Fores’ Reference Group for International Climate Policy, as well as interviews made with senior Swedish government officials, we suggest three possible contributing factors to Swedish actors’ good performance in NAZCA:

1. A generally positive view among Swedish businesses to achieving a global deal in Paris;
2. A history of companies and municipalities to join domestic climate initiatives; and,
3. The government initiative “Fossil Free Sweden”.

First, Swedish companies were generally positive and eager to see a deal made in Paris, reducing the uncertainty in the direction of global climate policy. Consequently, companies became receptive to the encouragement from French embassy in Sweden to join

initiatives and take commitments profiled on the NAZCA platform. Second, Swedish companies and cities have a tradition in joining domestic such

as Hagainitiativet,<sup>6</sup> Nätverket för Hållbart Näringsliv,<sup>7</sup> and Klimatkommunerna.<sup>8</sup>

These initiatives have provided a breeding ground for national dialogue and spread of knowledge and experience, including the awareness of international initiatives such as the LPAA. Third, the Swedish government have through its own multi-stakeholder initiative called “Fossil Free Sweden” encouraged companies, cities, regions and CSOs to join NAZCA. To date, nearly 200 companies, cities, regions and CSO engage in “Fossil Free Sweden”. So far, 39 members have reported its commitments to NAZCA, and another 29 are in the process of so doing.

Fossil Free Sweden (FFS), in particular, has a direct link to the LPAA and NAZCA. The aim of FFS is to provide a platform for Swedish actors to publicize their contributions to the government’s goal to become one of the world’s first fossil free

<sup>6</sup> <http://hagainitiativet.se/en/>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.nmc.a.se/>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.klimatkommunerna.se/>

welfare nations.<sup>9</sup> A special coordinator - the former director of the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (SSNC) Svante Axelsson - has been appointed by the government to foster links between the government and domestic actors, generate a dialogue between non-state actors, and compile data and analysis on the work of the national actors. Actors becoming members of the initiatives signs up to a declaration which message may be summarized as:

*“we are actors that acknowledge that the Paris Agreement requires action, and we believe that we as actors, as well as Sweden as a country, may play a role in moving ahead, and by making our commitments visible, we hope others will join.”*

According to Sweden’s former chief negotiator to the UNFCCC Anders Turesson<sup>10</sup> - who is now the civil servant responsible for the FFS initiative - the motives behind forming the initiative Fossil Free Sweden are twofold. First, for Sweden to succeed in the government’s ambition of transforming Sweden into a fossil free welfare nation, it must be supported by a movement of non-state actors that are closest to the concrete action. Second, the FFS was set-up as something close to a national replica of the international movement formalized in the Lima Paris Action Agenda (LPAA). In both cases, the rationale is that a mobilization of non-state climate action have two purposes. For one, the commitments by companies, cities and regions will be crucial for Sweden, and other countries to fulfill their Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC). In addition, having

the support of national stakeholders is according to Turesson crucial both to be able to strengthen national measures as well as for the instruction delegations get before international negotiations.

Under the FFS, organisations are highly encouraged to register their commitments in the NAZCA platform. Compared to NAZCA, the FFS has a less bureaucratic process for registering commitments. There is no need to submit commitments - one reason for this is for the FFS to be able to attract a larger share of the business community, including the larger emitters. In the words of Anders Turesson, there is less use of an initiative that is perceived as a business committee of the green movement, although those “spearheads” can play an important role. By having a laxer view on individual commitments, the ambition is to be able to collect a larger mass of actors, to create a mobilization behind the narrative of the possibility to achieve the so far somewhat vague ambition of becoming one of the world’s first fossil free welfare nations. In the longer run, when this target is to quantified and given a timeline, actors would probably be asked to stand behind these targets.

For the FFS as well as for the NAZCA platform, a majority of the business commitments are from companies closer to consumers, with more easy accessible emission reductions. Of the more crucial Swedish industry, the vehicle manufacturers joined the FFS early, while the steel industry are still to join, with the government hoping to initiate a dialogue leading to the steel industry joining as well.

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<sup>9</sup><http://www.regeringen.se/rattsdokument/kommitte/direktiv/2016/07/dir.-201666/>

<sup>10</sup> Interview held 25 October 2016.

## Conclusions and further research

At this early stage, we have been able to identify a few preliminary conclusions, that in most cases also are should be subject to further research.

**The effectiveness of non-state actor engagement in global climate governance needs attention.** The Fossil Free Sweden initiative is a clear example of how the mode of Lima Paris Action Agenda has transformed into equivalent national actions, with the aim of collecting and mobilizing action for both direct and indirect effects on emission reductions and policy formation. The ambition to create a narrative that helps to drive climate policies forward, however seems to lay on anecdotal evidence and a “feeling” that if non-state actors are being involved, they feel an ownership and becomes part of a movement that helps policy makers on different level to make more bold decisions.

**The relationship between the design of institutional rules and level of enthusiasm for participation needs exploration.** The degree of formalisation and review of commitments is an issue for the NAZCA as well as FFS. It seem to be that policy makers understands that there is a point where requirements for formal commitments becomes an obstacle for actors joining, which must be balanced against the risk of greenwashing. However, where exactly this balancing point is, remains unclear. It likely depends on the purpose of the platform - the need for formalisation and review are probably higher in a platform aiming for direct emission reductions than in a platform which main target is to help creating a narrative around an inevitable

transformation to a low carbon society. Moreover, some argue that the LPAA and NAZCA needs to be formalised also in the coming UNFCCC-texts, thereby getting a more of official status.

**The support mechanisms and management of non-state actor platforms are important for moving forward from the initiation phase.** It is easier to initiate than to run platforms such as NAZCA and FFS. After the initial buzz, when a lot of actors join, members as well as outside actors start having expectations. If the organizers are not able to live up to, or manage, these expectations, the initial enthusiasm of members may fade out. This require resources, and what at first seemed to be a rather easy way of getting attention and show-casing ambition, may evolve into a coordination of multiple actors with different needs and wishes.

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**About Fores:** Fores is a Stockholm based think tank, with Climate policies as one of its four prioritized issues.

We are thankful for inputs and financial support of members of Fores reference group for international climate policy.

**About IVM:** The Institute for Environmental Studies (IVM) at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam is a multidiscipline research institute devoted to finding to smart solutions for sustainable challenges.

Contact:

[daniel.engstrom@fores.se](mailto:daniel.engstrom@fores.se)

[Oscar.widerberg@vu.nl](mailto:Oscar.widerberg@vu.nl)