The crisisification of the European Single Market

A study investigating how changes to governance of the Single Market can be understood through crisisification

Julia Linder

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Abstract
The European Single Market (SM) has typically been a symbol of economic integration and multilateralism within the European Union (EU). It operates within a robust regulatory framework aimed at ensuring the free movement of goods, services, people, and capital. However, with the steady onslaught of crises seen in the union in recent years, the SM governance appears to be changing by giving privilege to the safeguarding of strategic interests and ensuring stability. Similar changes have been noted in other sectors, where it has been dubbed a crisisification of policy-making in the EU. This is expressed by the agenda-setting, decision-making, participation, and legitimising narratives of ordinary governance becoming similar to those employed during crises.

The thesis seeks to understand the changing governance of the SM by using the theoretical framework of crisisification. The framework is adapted by considering elements of time, active secrecy, and Council coordination dynamics. Crisisification shows that changes to SM governance challenges democratic processes and community building. Insights from critical security studies also contribute to assessing the implications on policy-makers, citizens, and democracy of crisisification. The study explores these goals through semi-structured interviews and reflexive thematic analysis with civil servants from the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the European Commission, and the Swedish National Board of Trade. Findings revealed the multifaceted impacts of crisisification on privileging sectors deemed vulnerable or threatened over others and changing interinstitutional power dynamics resulting in challenges towards democratic values. The study underscores the need for further exploration into the effects of crisisification through systematic review across European policy sectors.

Keywords: crisisification, Single Market, European crises, institutional changes, security and risk
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DG</td>
<td>Directorate-General</td>
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<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<td>IPCR</td>
<td>Integrated Political Crisis Response Arrangements</td>
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<td>SM</td>
<td>Single Market</td>
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<td>SMEI</td>
<td>Single Market Emergency Instrument</td>
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<td>SMET</td>
<td>Single Market Enforcement Taskforce</td>
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<td>TFEU</td>
<td>Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union</td>
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**Introduction**

Amidst a rapidly evolving global landscape, the European Union (EU) grapples with an imperative to adapt to this new setting by protecting strategic interests and asserting itself as a geopolitical power. As articulated in a communication from the European Commission (henceforth the Commission), the EU acknowledges the need for continuous monitoring of critical technologies, risk assessment, and measures to safeguard strategic interests and security (Commission, 2023). The era of inactivity is waning, replaced by a commitment to use the European Single Market (SM) as a geopolitical asset on the world’s stage. This new strategy is a quite different sentiment to the one which historically shaped the governing principles of the SM (Kelemen & McNamara, 2022: 970).

This evolving context sets the backdrop for consideration of governance of the SM, a core part of European integration and an emblem of integration and shared prosperity within the EU. Recent years have witnessed an outpouring of crises, each seemingly more acute than the last (Boin, 2018: 94; Bengtsson et al., 2017: 35). In particular, the COVID-19 pandemic (henceforth the pandemic) marked a zenith, necessitating a paradigm shift in crisis response strategies for the SM. As a result, the Single Market Emergency Instrument (SMEI) was proposed, the first every crisis-specific tool for the SM (Commission, 2022). This instrument, designed to fortify the free movement of goods, services and people, underscores the assimilation of crisis management and the governance of the SM.

However, the SM is not immune to the broader tapestry of crises that have shaped the EU landscape, e.g., the Eurozone crisis, Brexit, the annexation of Crimea, and the rise of China (Commission 2021; Commission 2023). Unlike other policy areas that have attracted extensive academic scrutiny for their crisis-specific tools, the SM and its corresponding unit in the Commission, the Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship, and SMEs (DG GROW), have remained unexplored. However, as the SM serves 440 million citizens and consumers, 23 million companies and 56 million job-takers every day, it seems an important area to bring into the debate (Ibid.: 5).

1.1 Research Problem

This thesis situates itself within the study of crises, crisis management, critical security, and governance. Crises are critical junctures to the functioning of existing core systems and values, e.g., security, welfare, and civil liberty (Boin et al., 2016: 5). They are accompanied by heightened perceptions of threat, uncertainty, and urgency resulting from causal...
unknowns. This often calls for countermeasures outside the regular scope of governance (Ibid.: 4-5). Governance is understood as less hierarchical way of steering outcomes, involving markets and multiple levels of networks of public and private actors (Fisher, 2012: 417, 420). Moreover, the process of governing in the EU is taken to be the means of agenda-setting, decision-making, participation, and policy legitimising narratives (Rhinard, 2019: 2; Kohler-Koch & Ritterberg, 2006).

The theoretical underpinning of this study lies in the framework of crisisification (Rhinard, 2019). Crisisification posits a change to the agenda-setting, decision-making, participation, and narratives of ordinary policy in European governance towards the exceptional (Ibid.: 7). These changes result from a combination of crises as facilitating events being strategically leveraged by policy entrepreneurs to further executive ambitions. Additionally, political and cultivated spillover, from areas where crisis management has been prevalent, causes crisis orientated policy changes in adjacent fields. These factors are supplemented by security and risk logics in policy, justifying the need for exceptional measures to ensure the protection of citizens (Beck, 2006: 332; Salter & Mutlu, 2011: 191). This framework has been derived from single case studies, focusing on crises, crisis management, public policy, and critical security (Rhinard, 2019: 3). These studies touched policy fields ranging from migration and home affairs to sanitary issues. However, they do not investigate the SM more broadly.

As of recent, the SM has undergone changes in its essential governance patterns, but the extent of these changes and their drivers are not well understood. Differently from other fields, the SM is grounded in a robust regulatory framework ensuring the free movement of goods, services, people, and capital (Bernitz & Kjellgren, 2018: 22). This regulatory framework is operated by an intricate network of agencies, directives and working parties that strive to enforce harmonised regulation and prevent trade barriers before they have a chance to escalate to crises (Commission, 2023). Therefore, investigating the SM contributes both in an empirical manner to the understanding of governance changes. Due to its widely spanning policy structure, the SM can offer a pluralist, yet trade and industry specific, understanding of crisisification.

Furthermore, the SM offers insights into broader integration and state-building dynamics. Its success in navigating the complexities of 27 national interests illuminates the challenges and triumphs of integration (Kelemen & McNamara, 2022: 979). The tension between multilateralism and national self-interest, inherent in the SM's dual focus on trade competitiveness and industrial security, adds nuance to the analysis (Azoulai, 2015: 590).
Additionally, the shift from normal policy logics to crisis-driven logics holds far-reaching implications. As the pandemic displayed, crisis management can cause leaders to act out of the ordinary, deviate from treaties or agreements, and leave foreign colleagues to fend for themselves (Kelemen & McNamara, 2022: 983). More so, crisisification is potentially shifting the interinstitutional balance and democratic fabric of the EU (Huysmans, 2014: 130; Boin et al., 2016: 5-6). Considering that 448 million people could be touched daily by these implications, it seems necessary to investigate further.

1.2 Research Purpose and Questions
This study aims to analyse how changes in SM governance can be understood through crisisification. By studying the phenomena of crisisification, the thesis will explore what has changed and what its possible effects on democracy are. It contributes with nuanced perspectives through semi-structured interviews with civil servants based in Brussels and Stockholm. The interviewees were selected based on their expertise in the SM field and EU politics, history, and law. Most of the participants have worked in the sector between 1-2 decades, some longer, and can offer insights into long-term potential changes to European governance. The analysis is based on themes predicted by the crisisification framework and its implications on democratic processes. Hence, the study seeks to answer the following question: How can changes to democratic processes in the SM be understood through crisisification? What are the possible effects of these changes on governance patterns in the SM?

1.3 Thesis Outline
The thesis is structured as follows: section 2 reviews previous literature and section 3 presents the theoretical framework of crisisification. The case, methodological positioning and theoretical adaptations are detailed in section 4. Data collection and analytical strategy are presented in section 5. Section 6 presents the findings, engages in a discussion, analysing crisisification categories and democratic implications. Finally, section 7 concludes the thesis, summarising key findings, their broader implications, and academic relevance.
2. Previous Literature

The following section covers literature related to crises, crisis management, critical security, and European governance. The first sub-section delves into how facilitating events, spillover, policy entrepreneurship, executive ambition, and technology have enabled crisisification to develop. It integrates literature from different scholarly traditions to show how crisisification has developed dynamically and that the entirety of the framework has not yet been applied. The second sub-section concerns literature related to European governance and the SM as crisisification can challenge democratic assumptions that are foundational to the EU’s governance norms.

2.1 Crisisification: Development and Causes

Social and political conditions have worked in tandem to shape the grounds for the changes in the EU governance that Rhinard (2019) calls crisisification. These preconditions are delineated through an examination of crisis management and international politics literature. They provide an explanation to the challenges the EU faces today. Literature on risk and security studies shows how an increased use of the language of prevention, preparedness, responsiveness, and resilience has effects beyond directly associated fields (Boin et al., 2016: 7).

Crisis can be described using the object being threatened, the area that the crisis occurs within or the origin of the threat (Rosenthal et al., 1989: 283, 285). A common denominator is that crises are critical junctures with the ability to challenge core values and institutions (Roux-Dufort, 2007: 106). This is particularly true for modern crises, i.e., transboundary, cascading, or creeping crises, as they exceed the traditional geographical, cultural, political, economic, and legal borders used to contain a threat (Boin, 2018: 94). Due to their nature, crises find our political systems and governance norms off-guard, generating threats of larger magnitude and forcing creative solutions (Boin et al., 2021b: 12). Accordingly, crises can empower political gains if a novel resolution is found.

Moreover, modern crises often have multiple points of origin making root causes harder to chart and threats to escalate more rapidly (Ansell et al., 2010: 197-198). Management of modern crises can be particularly challenging since causes often stem from novel, heterogeneous, dynamics which makes sense- and meaning-making harder (Boin et al., 2013: 82). Consequently, leadership struggles with appearing competent. Although, the conjunction of intensive threat, urgency, and perceptions of uncertainty can spark
opportunities for novel action plans that leverage one specific remedy (Boin et al., 2016: 6-7; Rhinard, 2019: 2).

The individuals who can take advantage of such situations are referred to as policy entrepreneurs. They can set their ideas apart from the normal policy streams by disrupting the prevailing institutional agreements (Mintrom & Norman, 2009: 651). This is also called a window of opportunity, where policy entrepreneurs make a case for their preferred change. In practice, policy entrepreneurs can draw attention to specific issues, e.g. making a crisis seem more threatening than it is (Ibid.: 652). Policy entrepreneurship is also done by emphasising the inactivity of decision makers, using the crisis instrumentally for their own idea. These actors are sometimes able to make bolder statements and are also less sensitive to risk.

Scholars bring attention to the fact that a given political actor can stand to gain from framing a crisis in a specific way, so that focus and management methods are tackling the part of the issue they deem particularly important. Thus, depending on how the narrative of a crisis is portrayed, it determines whether and which countermeasures are applied (Boin et al., 2021a: 10-11). Thus, if it is framed advantageously, the emergency, desperation and confusion of a crisis can assist a certain political will. Especially if considered with the fact that leaders are sometimes granted more authority when decisions need to be taken quickly (Boin & Rhinard, 2020: 662).

Further, crises can have effects beyond the field directly affected. Transboundary, creeping, and cascading crises are not territorially limited and can therefore trigger problems in neighbouring physical spaces or adjacent policy fields (Boin et al., 2021a: 10). This makes these types of crises difficult to contain spatially, as evidenced by management of second- and third-order threats during the pandemic. Moreover, it showed that both external factors, the COVID-19 virus spread from a third-country, and internal ones, refusing to share medical equipment, can cause a crisis and the escalation of it. The pandemic also illustrates the cultivated, functional, and political spillover from cooperation across policy sectors (Stroby-Jensen, 2000: 73). As the initial fear settled, member states came together to find a horizontal approach with a primary goal, have an open and safe society again, through secondary means: find a vaccine, intensify border controls and normalise remote work, and sharpen stock-taking of health-related goods. Consequentially, a cultivated coalition between the DG for Health and Food Safety (DG SANTÉ) and DG GROW arose. Thus, the crisis’ spillover is shown through common goals on the agenda, deeper political partnership from inter-unit cooperation, and by sharing functional secondary goals related to the crisis at hand (Ibid.: 74).
Moreover, crises demand decision-making to be performed more quickly, and under special procedure. Ordinary legislative procedure in the EU usually requires two years and demands consensus between the Council and the European Parliament (henceforth the Parliament) under trilogue (Rhinard, 2019: 6).\(^1\) Differently, the Commission can perform its ordinary work through lower administrative levels, by creating crisis detection mechanisms, delegated acts and implementing acts, communications, and action plans (Brandsma & Blom-Hansen, 2017: 64-65). In addition, swift decisions at lower levels of administration might be preferred to during a crisis, as it limits the number of political conflicts that can arise between the legislative bodies as deliberation continues (Ibid.: 139).

Some researchers argue that transboundary crises work as the modern-day equivalents of war in shaping politics (Freudlspeger & Schimmelfenning, 2022: 1872-1873). They claim that for a society to withstand a transboundary crisis it must muster sufficient coercive, fiscal, and legislative force to overcome it, like the effort demanded by wars. For the EU it meant increased supranational capacity to ensure public goods provisions as part of the modern welfare state (Ibid.: 1877). The SM substantiates such an example. Borders were abolished to minimise transaction costs, and the SM becomes more deeply integrated when faced with exogenous shocks (Ibid.: 1875).

Moreover, scholars have highlighted the role of technology in the diffusion of transboundary crises because of the interconnectedness and automatic enactment (Backman & Rhinard, 2017: 262). Technological tools and their rapid development play a significant role in crisis management as they offer means of collecting data and analysis at a faster speed than humans can (Elbe, 2021: 658). Using technological tools can be relatively inexpensive, e.g., software is comparatively advantageous in signalling potential crises. Hence, there is a steep increase in the tracking and auto-assessing technologies within crisis management frameworks (Rhinard, 2019: 8). Relying on technology for decision-making during crises can also make it easier to depoliticise the situation and allow for leadership to be seen as reliable (Boin et al., 2016: 23). Furthermore, security devices shift the focus from present to future, i.e., the policies implementing said devices works preventatively (Amicelle et al., 2015: 299). Thus, surveillance techniques are implemented based on an exceptional security discourse but remain for the purpose of having a commonplace insurance (Aradau & van Munster, 2007: 98).

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\(^1\) Trilogue is the name for negotiation of a legislative proposal among the European Commission, the Council, and the Parliament.
2.2 EU Governance: Democracy and the SM

The inception of the European project was driven by a vision to establish a profound and reciprocal partnership, aiming to preserve peace and consolidate democracy (Bernitz & Kjellgren, 2018: 22-23). This foundational principle was manifested in the Single European Act of 1986 (Kelemen & McNamara, 2022: 970). The act not only expanded the competencies of the European community but also formalised political integration, granted implementing powers to the Commission, and initiated the process towards harmonised goods and services legislation (Ibid.: 970, 975). Consequently, market integration became pivotal in the delegation of power from member states to EU institutions.

However, the democratic underpinnings and integration mechanisms within the EU are not immune to scholarly contestation as some point to a lack of transparency. To comprehend democracy and legitimacy in the EU, scholars argue for an exploration beyond traditional ties to national institutions and elected representatives (Schmidt, 2013: 662). The interdependence of the two legislative institutions and the Commission, bound by treaties and interinstitutional agreements, is viewed by critics as a source of democratic deficit, with policies often detached from partisanship or public involvement in the policymaking process (Ibid.: 668). While recent improvements have been made in public participation, challenges persist (Ibid.: 670-671).

Proponents asserting the EU’s democratic credentials emphasise the delegated responsibility of EU officials as experts in crafting effective policy (Ibid.: 664). Ensuring policy effectiveness is contingent on robust evaluation mechanisms, with ex-ante assessments introduced by the Lisbon Treaty (Héritier, 2013: 681). However, critics question the decentralised nature of the assessment process, arguing that its quality depends on those undertaking it (Ibid.: 682). Transparent evaluation processes are crucial, but potential challenges arise in situations where information sharing poses critical risks (Ibid.: 687).

Governance can be conceptualised as the coordination of social relations between private and public actors in a non-hierarchical manner (Kohler-Koch & Ritterberg, 2006: 28). Additionally, it is thought that good governance considers checks-and-balances through “openness, participation and effectiveness” (Ibid.: 29). The EU has a unique layer of governance in the form of an experimentalist architecture that allows for participation across the administrative levels (Zeitlin, 2016: 1075).
It is important to keep in mind that governance definitions sometimes differ from the values and procedures that are prioritised during crises. First, power seems to be deployed in a hierarchical way, meaning that whoever is first to provide a solution with sufficient resources wins the governance race. Second, threat and urgency constructions can discard transparency norms in administration (Kohler-Koch & Ritterberg, 2006: 29). However, scholars have shown how crises are an integral part of the union’s governance where joint exploration through uncertain conditions results in innovative ideas (Zeitlin, 2016: 1090).

Another area of contention is with the interpretations of European values and their role as drivers of the common good (Hermerén, 2008: 374-375). These values, not rooted in specific communities or defined by geography, appear to have evolved in response to political issues and preferences (Ibid.: 375). The relationship between values, and their ranking order, introduce complexity as they may vary depending on the issue at hand and are influenced by temporal and historical factors (Ibid.: 376, 382).

The SM stands out as a successful case for integration and state-building in the EU. Traditionally, state-building is associated with the unification around the risk of a military threat. However, for the SM, integration has been equally robust due to the pervasive presence of market logics in everyday policy-making (Kelemen & McNamara, 2022: 970, 981). This perspective contends that the specific agenda-setting structure, decision-making processes, and legitimisation of the SM have gradually altered the political order of the EU. This is particularly pertinent to the concept of crisisification because it demonstrates that markets can be catalysts for governance change.

However, the SM has been left untreated by crisis management scholars. One probable reason being that critical situations such as climate disasters, financial recessions and health hazards are perceived as more threatening to the public rather than to disruptions in supply chains, deviating goods and economic sanctions caused by third-country retaliation. However, given the upswing in regulation focusing on the union’s strategic autonomy, deterrence, and resilience, it might prove an area particularly interesting for understanding how deeply crises can change the EU’s governance (Commission, 2021; Commission, 2022).
3. Theoretical Framework: Crisisification

Crisisification concerns “changes to collective policy-making processes in the EU” reflected by “crisis-orientated modes of thinking” (Rhinard, 2019: 2). It directs our analytical attention to four vectors of change in EU governance, namely agenda-setting, decision-making, participation, and policy legitimising discourse (Rhinard, 2019: 2). The following four subchapters are grouped by these categories. Each outlines the effect of crises within the specific element, potential implications and practical examples. These make the guide for the data collection and analytical strategy. Crisisification has been derived from case studies on crises, crisis management, public policy analysis and critical security studies (Ibid.). Therefore, the previously investigated fields have been limited to ones where crises have been sufficiently frequent or potent to demand specific policy changes (Bengtsson et al., 2018; Kreuder-Sonnen, 2018; Backman & Rhinard, 2017; Boin et al., 2014; Boin & Ekengren, 2009). However, studies have not concerned the SM and its specific regulatory framework.

3.1 Crises on the Agenda

Crisisification assumes that the European agenda and agenda-setting process are affected by crises and crisis management strategies in several ways. As highlighted in the literature review, sense- and meaning-making are paramount to leaders during a crisis. If done well, they can prevent a crisis from escalating. However, as uncertainty and potential costs run high, this is far from easily achieved. Although, it is solvable with functioning monitoring and early warning systems (Rhinard, 2019: 3; Dieter, 2009: 154).

Early warning systems work by the constant surveillance of vulnerabilities to detect threats before they can escalate. Since these systems are automated or computer based, there is also a perceived lesser risk for subjectivity (Elbe, 2021: 658). If a system notices a change, it gives leaders an argument for putting the potential crisis on the agenda. Such changes illustrate the risk-oriented policy logic of wanting to prepare and prevent based on previous conceptions of threats (Beck, 2006: 333). Crisisification highlights that policy solutions at the European level are also becoming orientated towards risk (Rhinard, 2019: 9). Consequently, when more issues are deemed crises, and their quality likens the transboundary or cascading ones, greater efforts are needed in terms of warning and coordination. Thus, member states seek supranational solutions, and the EU’s agenda expands (Ibid.: 8-9).
This is visible through the risk and security monitoring mechanisms that alert threats related to the sector they exist within. These systems belong to different DGs, with examples of vulnerable areas being railway failure, third-country migrant border crossings and sanitary issues (Backman & Rhinard, 2017: 264-265). The DG for Energy (DG ENER) has a horizon-scanning system geared towards noticing excessive radiology, the European External Action Service (EEAS) scans the EU’s borders to notice emerging conflicts, DG SANTÉ has a system that scans biological threats and food safety hazards, and the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Border uses a specific model of risk analysis to spot deviating trends (Rhinard, 2019: 3). These institutions have corresponding rapid response measures that seek to boost the responsiveness when a disaster is alerted from a monitoring system (Backman & Rhinard, 2017: 264-265). These systems receive a horizontal perspective after implementation and the peak of the crisis has deescalated.

This is further exemplified by the establishment of crisis specific venues for information sharing are developed, to enhance the sense-making capabilities of officials. An interesting development within these groups is data sharing between the private and public sector (Ibid.: 265). A novel feature is also that detection systems are used for both disseminating information and for first assessment of a threatening event (Backman & Rhinard, 2017: 266). This leads to crisis logics entering the lower ranks of administration and affecting the day-to-day work.

Moreover, surveillance techniques have effects on democracy because of the ability to effect the distribution of power as well as its holders (Huysmans, 2014: 122). Facilitated by security and risk narrative constructions, these systems dissect each of their objects. This scrutiny is done through framings of secure and risk-induced behaviour, to continually create smaller segments in a population (Ibid.: 125). Thus, as an analytical paradigm, risk assessment and surveillance technologies determine which lives or events are secure or dangerous.

Lastly, being able to set the agenda is a political power through which the winner shapes which policies are produced. This is particularly relevant when observing that the current crisis monitoring systems that are based at the Commission’s bodies. Since these systems report back to said bodies the Commission can hold particularly heavy procedural and gatekeeping agenda-setting power (Deters & Falkner, 2021: 292). For example, it can decide which data to scrutinise. Thus, what is deemed most threatening is placed on the agenda. Taken to the extreme, a preoccupation that follows the predictions from monitoring
systems can push topics off the agenda that still necessitate handling, just to a lesser acute extent (Beck, 2006: 333-334).

3.2 Crisis Driven Decision-Making
As the previous sub-section showed, crises cause uncertainty in policy making contributing to a greater need for technological sense- and meaning-making tools. Speedy decision procedures are also preferred to following the ordinary legislative timeline during crisis management (Rhinard, 2019: 4). Crises present themselves as existential threats in one way or another, which can contribute to a sense of disparity among citizens and decision makers if the remedial process is prolonged (Boin et al., 2016: 51). Thus, solutions might be found in the option that is simply most available and can be implemented quickly. However, a possible consequence is that the player with the most resource management capabilities or the least political responsibility wins, rather than the option that would withstand deliberation. This is particularly important as a sign of crisisification in the EU, since the union’s institutional structure is normally based on lengthy debate and compromise.

Decision-making is limited within the EU institutions as much power remains with the member state’s governments, meaning that relatively few practical decisions can be performed rapidly to counteract a threat (Mulder, 2016: 22). Although, following special rather than ordinary legislative procedure in decision-making has the ability of circumventing legal norms to protect democratic institutions. It affects the public by building emotion around the exceptionality of the depoliticised issue so that people feel directly impacted by the threatening outcome (Salter & Mutlu, 2011: 182). Thus, the more intertwined risk becomes in governance, the more legitimacy it can receive as an analytical lens for decision-making.

Incorporating security and risk logics into ordinary politics has opened a discussion about the role of technology in governance (Huysmans, 2014: 124, 129). The potential problem is that these logics can facilitate issues in leaving the political sphere by replacing deliberation with standardised quantification and analytical tools (Oels, 2013: 25; Fisher, 2012: 421). Additionally, these logics privilege urgency and those who can create meaning first from crisis data, which discards the need for the typical deliberation time in public administration (Aradau & van Munster, 2007: 107). Instead, they privilege centralised sovereign power structures atypical of EU governance.
Practical evidence for crisisified decision-making is found in the form of Commission responses which are centralised and coordinated across the union (Rhinard, 2019: 3-4). One example being the Commission’s Emergency and Crisis Coordination Arrangements, which have a generic approach to speed up decisions when called for, and the Council’s Integrated Political Crisis Response Arrangements (IPCR) that have more flexibility and scalability than the aforementioned (Boin et al., 2014: 422). As these arrangements are built on coordination across sectors, the decisions taken with a crisis timeline can force premature wheels in motion in a sector only indirectly hurt by the crisis.

3.3 Participation: Coordination and Division
Crisisification also takes the form of introducing new actors constellations to remedy crises. As mentioned in the previous section, the EU institutions are limited in what they can do in practice, but the institutions are also bound in terms of what they can do without agreement across the three legislative bodies. However, one of the ways the Commission can act independently is through the creation of new consultative and non-legislative decision-making expert groups or committees (Rhinard, 2019: 6; Sedelmeier, 2001: 177). Sometimes these groups are also created from member state demands as a solution to a potential national standstill in crisis management efforts. This delegation of participation has the potential of creating more tightly knit EU-wide cooperation in crisis (Versluis, 2016: 7; Nohrstedt, 2013: 968).

This highlights that the EU’s power lies in its ability to coordinate responses and call attention to a problem among all the member states. An example of well-functioning cooperation is found both during the Asian avian influenza virus and during the pandemic. Member states were able to notify each other, coordinate decisions, and link policy-specific authorities under the Early Warning and Response System on public health hazards (Bengtsson et al., 2017: 35; Kreidl, 2020: 649). Thus, facilitating experts spread across the union to collaborate more easily.

Another example of changed participation is the increase of EU agencies over the last years and their central role is sometimes integral to the function of the Commission (Egeberg et al., 2014: 611). This is done according to a clear procedure with specifics per area that diffuses horizontally over time. Hence, functional spillover can also be traced in the diffusion of Commission authority (Radaelli, 2000: 26-27). Moreover, counter-crisis actions can result in high transaction costs for the Council and the Parliament as they try to keep the
Commission accountable, demanding resources that might not be available (Brandsma & Blom-Hansen, 2017: 132-133). One possible consequence from this development is a Commission with more executive authority.

Furthermore, the Commission is the institution that can create its own agencies and systems. It is also the institution that can decide who is invited to a given fora. Thus, the Council and Parliament are locked into a given position, without being able to oversee or enforce the specific administration carried out by bodies created by the Commission. This is particularly important to look at when examining the development of European politics, as the three institutions have different functional logics and institutional power (Kreuder-Sonnen, 2018: 961-962).

Further, the changing participation routines due to crisis governance is seen in the physical fora constructed for crisis management across policy fields. These include “crisis rooms” and special procedures for the DG for Mobility and Transport, DG ENER, DG SANTÉ, the DG for Agriculture and Rural Affairs, the DG for Environment, the DG for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, the DG for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, the DG for Migration and Home Affairs and the EEAS (Rhinard, 2019: 4). The purpose of these is to enable swifter action and prevent the escalation of a threat by limiting the participation to those who have expert knowledge in the field. As an example of this, Boin and Rhinard (2022) find that most of the critical decisions of the EU’s management of the pandemic were taken outside the public spotlight.

3.4 Legitimising Narratives

Traditional narratives of European governance have focused on peacebuilding and integration, especially commercial, economic, and fiscal integration (Kelemen & McNamara, 2022: 965-966). However, more recently narratives have shifted to focus on security. The underlying premise of the security narrative is that member states are facing threats which are forcing an accelerated effort to alleviate them (Sperling & Webber, 2018: 232). This shows a need to act preventatively rather than only reactively in governance (Boin & Ekengren, 2009: 287).

Further, risk logics in governance can encompass a threat to successful public administration. If risk is bounded with a sense of obtaining objective knowledge, through the assessment and management of risk behaviour, it has the potential of becoming a concept that can justify and explain the action and role of the state on the meta level (Fisher, 2012: 419).
Thus, the role of the governance can become limited by risk management and regulatory enforcement. This entails looking at threats as something that can be avoided by making safety and risk elimination an imperative of governance. The belief is anchored in that the construction of amity as secure and enmity as insecure which generates political intensification (Huysmans, 2014: 32). Hence, for a crisis to be afforded exceptional administrative rooms and procedures, that can challenge the current political order, an effective construction of it being insecure needs to take place (Wæver, 1995: 52). Similarly, the risk management narrative underscores a need to keep crises at safe levels and work towards resilience during sudden threatening disruptions (Oels, 2013: 20). Therefore, the politics of protection and framing of an issue as exceptional can lay grounds for changing governance structures, i.e. actors, proceedings, and policies within a select area.

Moreover, security logics change normal governance towards a focus on securitising people rather than governing through normal policy (Sperling & Webber, 2018: 237). As such, permanent crisis governance argues that security and risk logics have entered the space of normal policy logics as shown by a desire by policy makers to protect people (Rhinard, 2019: 7). This can be seen through internal actions towards network resilience, as well as externally directed communications on the union’s relevance on the world’s geopolitical stage. The table below summarises crisisification.
## Table 1: Summary of theoretical framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Premises</th>
<th>Effects</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agendas and agenda-setting orientated towards crises.</td>
<td>Crises and crisis related events determine and occur more often on the agenda.</td>
<td>The level of urgency, threat and uncertainty of a crisis makes sense-, meaning-, and decision-making difficult for politicians.</td>
<td>A system is needed that enables comprehensive monitoring of vulnerable areas that can share reliable information about the crisis.</td>
<td>Horizon-scanning systems for noticing excessive radiology, emerging conflict, biological threats, and food safety hazards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sped up decision routines and decision-making.</td>
<td>Decisions are taken more quickly to facilitate crisis management.</td>
<td>Crises can pose existential threats.</td>
<td>Decisions need to be taken more quickly than normally to prevent escalation. New routines develop as a symptom.</td>
<td>The Emergency and Crisis Coordination Arrangements and The Integrated Political Crisis Response Arrangements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changed actor constellations</td>
<td>Narrowed participation and coordination focused on crises.</td>
<td>A need to find novel solutions because of the unknown features of a crisis or because of institutional barriers in normal policy procedures.</td>
<td>The creation of crisis specific consultative expert groups and committees. Commission driven initiatives.</td>
<td>Expert groups and special procedures for DG MOVE, DG ENER, DG SANTE DG AGRI, and more.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New narratives of European governance</td>
<td>Security and risk logics determine justifying narratives of European governance.</td>
<td>An increased concern with precaution, preparedness, responsiveness, and resilience.</td>
<td>Politics is driven by prevention rather than by reaction. Focus on security and risk in narration.</td>
<td>Statements related to protecting vulnerable sectors or people.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The table summarises the crisisification framework from the four main categories outlined by Rhinard (2019), to each category's features, premises, effects, and practical examples.*
4. Case and Theoretical Adjustments

As mentioned in the introduction, this thesis contributes empirically to the crisisification framework. To achieve this, the following sub-sections will first outline the foundations of the SM and the policies it covers today for the reader to grasp its importance in everyday life. Second, the section will present the research paradigm and adjustments to the theoretical framework that have been done to better fit crisisification with the construction of the SM.

4.1 Backdrop of the SM and Crises

The SM can be described as the silent engine working to support the ordinary life of every European citizen. Based on the free movement of people, goods, services and capital, the European SM has become the world’s most integrated internal market, representing 18% of the world’s total GDP (Commission, 2023: 3). In concrete numbers, that means 440 million inhabitants and consumers, 23 million companies that aggregately employ 128 million people. Out of those 128 million, 56 million jobs are dependent on the trade of the SM (Ibid.: 7). Additionally, total employment increased by 5.5% between 2000-2014 and doubled the amount of job opportunities dependent on cross-border services from 5.6 to 10.9 million (Ibid.: 5).

All these achievements would not have been possible without a few critical points along the EU’s history. In 1957, the Treaty of Rome initiated to work towards the building of a common European market as a testament to the integration and harmonisation of the European community through the four freedoms (Kelemen & McNamara, 2022: 970). This was done to enable resource distribution throughout the market and ensure its competitiveness towards non-members (Azoulai, 2015: 590-591). However, it was also an insurance against that future disputes, should they result in armed conflict. Throughout the 1980’s ambitious programmes towards the harmonisation of goods and services, most notable the Single European Act in 1985, were undertaken to finally arrive at the free-trade zone (the SM) on January 1st, 1993 (Ibid.).

Large and functionally potent acts have since helped to further integrate the SM, e.g., the Posting of Workers Directive in 1996, the Amsterdam Treaty in 1997, the Recognition of Professional Qualifications Directive in 2005, the Services Directive in 2006, the Sale of Goods Directive in 2019, and the Digital Markets Act in 2022. Today the SM is governed principally through qualified majority voting. Legislative proposals must be aligned with

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2 The free flow of goods, services, people, and capital.
Article 114 of the Treat of the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU). The article confers that measures can and should be implemented while working towards harmonisation, to improve the functioning of the SM. The SM is practically run through networks and expert groups that help individuals or companies realise their role on the SM.

DG GROW is the service that proposes new legislation for the SM at the European level. It currently encompasses 41 units governing the regulation of all goods and services, access to finance, European standards and industry, tourism, public procurement, intellectual property, and the single digital gateway to name a few. In other words, the SM touches almost every aspect of EU citizens’ lives and the importance of preserving market stability, high competitiveness and economic balance seems just as important as it did 30 years ago (Commission, 2023: 1).

To illustrate its functioning the two diagrams below show the development of the SM in terms of GDP and intra-EU exports in goods. These diagrams showcase the abrupt shock that was the Pandemic and how much the EU economies depend on and thrive through the SM. Hence, the showing the enormous effect crises on the SM have on our entire societies; not just localised to specific policy fields and smaller groups. The SM also represents social legitimacy to the union through its institutional design, by being normatively orientated around the core European values (Kelemen & McNamara, 2022: 976).

**Diagram 1: GDP and main components in million euro for EU27**

The diagram shows the development of GDP with main components in million euro for the EU27 member states from 2013-2022. 2019 the GDP was 14.0 million, 2020 13.5 million, 2021 14.6 million and 2022 15.9 million. Source: Eurostat.
Taken together, the potential diffusion of crisis governance on the SM has effects in terms of needing to reshape the functional value-base for policy proposals, and the expedition of decisions, to justify actions that are not strictly geared towards harmonisation. It could also provide the necessary armour of protection against another trade-barrier inflicting crisis through preparation within the many informal networks and working parties already present within the SM framework. Other crises effecting the SM in recent years include: the Eurozone crisis, Brexit, trade and industry defence policy and war in proximity of the EU (Commission, 2023: 9-10, 20).

4.2 Methodological Approach and Adjusted Framework
This study follows a deductive mode of inference, where the existing theory guided the research question and structure of the study (Fejes & Thornberg, 2019: 24). Hence, the study uses deductive logic because of its power to measure concepts from qualitative data and offer explanatory value to the situated context of the study (Ibid.: 288). The theoretical claims work as an informing guide to the observed empirical phenomena, i.e., changes to SM governance can be understood from crisisification. As exemplified by the many large-scale crises occurring in proximity to the SM which have led to specific adjustment, e.g., SMEI and the REPowerEU-plan (Commission, 2023: 9, 20). Therefore, this thesis focuses on understanding the changes in the SM as proposed by the theoretical framework.
The thesis follows an interpretivist research design for two reasons. First, the study assumes that the SM, as a policy field, uses specific language and that meaning is understood from its localised setting (Fejes & Thornberg, 2019: 25). Second, the study uses crisisification to comprehend changing governance mechanisms within the SM, rather than explaining them from the theoretical framework. This contributes with understanding to similar contexts, where the theory can be applied. Because of the niche language and context of the SM, the crisisification framework is adapted to better fit the SM structure.

Crisisification focuses mainly the Commission which needs to be scrutinised for its implication on this study. The main advantage of this centring is that it delimits the scope of investigation to focus on DG GROW as the main actor behind crisis governance. However, a disadvantage and critical aspect to this study, is that the role of the Council and Parliament are explained to a lesser extent. This study places emphasis on that the Council needs to coordinate its position in capitals, with permanent representations, and other member states, which presumably makes it more difficult to present a unified counter to Commission proposals (Perarnaud & Arregui, 2022: 112). Ekengren (1996) has found that Swedish civil servants experienced a need to adapt to the EU’s time schedules and discipline after joining the union. The Swedish policy officers experienced a bigger and faster information flow, as well as becoming more aware of time as a paradigm to politics (Ibid.: 396, 398-399). The three institutions also operate under different timelines based on different institutional and interinstitutional agreements (Commission, 2010; EU, 2012).

Similarly, crisisification elaborates on the role of crisis-specific instruments in affecting governance, driven by a desire for swifter sense-making (Rhinard, 2019: 4). Thus, it primarily has a functional-managerial perspective. Although, here it is claimed that the functional and strategic aspects are just as important to crisis governance (Kreuder-Sonnen, 2018: 959). SM governance is already based on expert-driven decision-making and participation through advisory groups. Hence, the blending of functional and strategic aspects of crisis management and politics already seem to be present within the SM and need to be accounted for as equally important to the study’s framework.

The strategic aspects of crisis-exploiting politics can be seen through active secrecy (Ibid.). Active secrecy means that authority-holders purposefully conceal information because they have something to gain from reducing justification and transparency measures.

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3 Under ordinary written procedure the Commission has a timeline of five working days and urgent procedures can be less than 48 hours. In contrast, the ordinary legislative procedure (co-decision) of the Council and Parliament is extended over several years.
(Ibid.: 960). Crisis conditions related to threat and urgency empower the usage of active secrecy. The possible consequences are difficulties in evaluating the procedural legitimacy and lesser input legitimacy. This study lifts this notion to the institutional scale, by arguing that crisis-oriented decision-making can be visible through active secrecy among the European institutions (Ibid.). The conception is based on that crisisification already argues for the influence of the Commission over the Council and the Parliament through its own crisis instruments and exclusionary dynamics (Rhinard, 2019: 12).
5. Method

The study is based on semi-structured interviews that were assessed with the help of reflexive thematic analysis. These methods for data collection and analysis were chosen because of their power in generating situation specific knowledge and flexible interpretation which supports the research purpose. The first subsection presents the interviews, research ethics, criticism, and reflection about the study. The second subsection delves into how reflexive thematic analysis has been used to complement the structure of the theoretical framework with adaptations, the interview guide, and the presentation of findings and analysis.

5.1 Data Collection: Semi-Structured Interviews

This study used semi-structured interviews with Swedish civil servants to enable formal and informal information exchange, while still using interview questions informed by the theory. It was important to use interviews to enhance the understanding of potential implications of a SM run by crisis governance. By focusing on the qualitative framing of changed procedures it is possible to interpret slighter differences that might not be distinguishable in written material (Fejes & Thornberg, 2019: 33). Interviews also allow for the exploration of potential implications of a crisisification of the SM beyond what the theoretical framework already predicts.

The interviewees were selected based on their knowledge, expertise, and experiences as accurate representations for the researched phenomena (Bailey, 2018: 145). The pre-written interview guide contained exploratory questions to allow the interviewees to speak more freely on their experiences with crises in the SM policy field. However, some questions also contained elite language based on specific expertise of the interviewees (Ibid.: 107). The questions were informed by the theoretical framework, however, the themes that evolved from the interviewees were only partially informed as the interviewees contributed with information that the previous literature and theory did not cover (Ibid: 189).

Eight interviews were conducted to analyse and create meaningful connections in the material within the given scope. The questions were therefore asked in a flexible manner, changing the order based on what the interviewee mentioned (Ibid.: 107). Some questions were also made-up during the interview based on information that the interviewee shared. This allowed for the interviews to be more organic and for the interviewer to pick up on

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4 Interview guidelines are in Appendix I.
slighter details in the language and experience of each interviewee (Ibid.: 110). The interview guide was assessed and revised after each interview to improve from meeting to meeting.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted in different formats ranging from 16 to 65 minutes. Two interviews were conducted in-person and the rest over video call. This was done to accommodate to the interviewees’ schedules, as well as make it possible to interview two policy officers based in Brussels. The following table summarises the interviews and interviewee facts. In the table below, the interviewees have been given aliases to protect their identity. The interviews are not presented in the order that they were conducted. Moreover, the interviews were conducted with representatives from the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the European Commission (DG GROW), and the Swedish National Board of Trade. However, as some interviewees did not want to disclose which office they belong to, this has been left out.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee code</th>
<th>Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interview A</td>
<td>Senior Legal Advisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview B</td>
<td>Senior Advisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview C</td>
<td>Desk Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview D</td>
<td>Senior Advisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview E</td>
<td>Desk Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview F</td>
<td>Policy Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview G</td>
<td>Policy Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview H</td>
<td>Minister Counsellor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table shows the coded name of the interviewees and their role. The coded name is used in the presentation of the results.

5.1.1 Ethical Considerations
Prior to starting the interviews, a suitability test was performed to ensure that the study conformed to the four principles of ethics in research. The study needed to protect biometrically sensitive traceable personal data and the identity of the individuals given their politically sensitive workplaces. Although the questions asked during the interviews concerned broader political trends, participants could still feel uncertain about their
statements for fear of implications on their professional status if their participation was disclosed (Bailey, 2018: 179).

Interviewees were initially contacted by a phone call or over email where the purpose and setting of the study was explained. It was explained that the Swedish Defence University is the research principal, and that participation is voluntary. They were also asked if they would be willing to participate in the study, and what their conditions for participation were. If answered positively, the interviewees were sent an information leaflet about the project and a consent form detailing the ways in which data would be collected, stored, and used, as well as a suggested meeting time. At the start of an interview the participants were asked if they accepted to be recorded for aiding transcription ex-post the interview. All interviewees agreed to this, but most asked not to be quoted. For homogeneity no participants were quoted, even if they did not ask specifically to refrain from it. One participant asked to see the transcript if the study would be published officially, even if no direct quoting was done.

The interviews were recorded with the help of a computer-based voice memo programme and with handwritten notes. These were transcribed as soon as possible after the interview and stored on an external drive. The voice and text files have been given coded names to avoid traceability. Data recorded for the thesis will be used for this study restrictively, in coherence with the general regulation on storing data (Regulation 2016/679: article 6).

5.1.2 Reflexivity and limitations
For transparency, limitations related to the material and trustworthiness of the study needs to be discussed. In 2022, I worked in the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, in the unit for SM policy. I started as an intern and went on to have a temporary position. As an intern, I was given the opportunity to gain insight into most of the SM fields. This experience is also what originally brought me to the topic of this thesis. Although, it should be clarified that at the time of my employment I did not know that I would be conducting this study.

Further, having worked in the SM sector meant that I had some understanding of the topic at the start of the project. I was able to use my previous knowledge of the SM when writing the interview guide. This knowledge also made it possible for me to ask specific questions to the interviewees and follow-up on answers that contained technical language. A newcomer to the field could find it difficult to effectively engage with the specific language, norms, and practices of the SM (Bailey, 2018: 74). However, it is also possible that because of my previous experience I took certain expressions for granted.
Gaining access to expert officials acting in a political environment is not always easy (Ibid.). The officials might feel uncomfortable with sharing sensitive information to an outsider and will act as gatekeepers to the field (Ibid.: 77). Therefore, it was a privilege to be able to use the relations I had already cultivated through my previous employment. These professional relationships granted me access to the participants of this study, either by first-hand contact or by recommendation. However, the process of gaining entrance was not effortless and repeated attempts had to be made to schedule the interviews. Throughout the research attempts were also made to contact a broader sample of participants from Swedish institutions and DG GROW but these were unfortunately declined. Further, my professional relationships did not prevent power relations from dictating which information the interviewees were willing to share. It is also possible that the participants felt that the study could convey a certain political image to a broader crowd through its results.

Eight interviews can be seen as a relatively small sample for a study exploring the SM. Hence, when arriving at conclusions this limitation was kept in mind. Given the limited sample, this thesis can only give an interpretation of what the participants experience within the SM context is (Fejes & Thornberg, 2019: 287-288). Hence, the participants’ answers are presumed to be affected by their background and the institutions they work for. Since most come from the Swedish context, it means considering that participants speak in experiences from a smaller, peripheral, member state with a foreign policy orientated towards free-trade policy (EU, 2023). These facts will also likely have effects on the responses of the interviewees. However, several interviewees wanted to highlight that they shared their personal opinions and reflections, which were not always representative of the organisation that they work for.

Nevertheless, the sample holds a high level of information power, making the limited sample less problematic. First, the interviewees have worked with SM policy for many years contributing to a longitudinal understanding of change. Second, they hold experience from other sectors of EU policy, adding a policy comparative layer to their perspectives. Third, they have experience from working in the Commission, the Council, and the Parliament in Brussels, adding nuance to their reflections on interinstitutional dynamics. Fourth, they have experience from other Swedish ministries, agencies, businesses, and organisations, making their perspectives compelling towards speaking on changes of the SM. Fifth, they have different roles within the organisations they represent, which broadens the understanding of the studied phenomena within the organisational structures.
5.2 Reflexive Thematic Analysis

Reflexive thematic analysis (TA) was chosen as the analytical tool to allow for the investigation to follow the categories as presented in the self-selected theoretical base yet remaining flexible to emerging themes (Braun & Clarke, 2021: 5). This is due to the constructionist orientation of reflexive TA that sees linguistic practices as having meaning to its context (Ibid.: 8). For this reason, the research question developed over time, adapting to insights from the material and the theory (Ibid.: 12). Additionally, the deductive approach and reflexive TA construct a lens through which the material could be interpreted (Ibid.: 8).

The theoretical framework and case had been well read and engaged with before starting the data collection. Through this engagement it become clear that theoretical modifications were necessary to better fit the theory to the case. The aspects considered were organisational dynamics in the Council, differences in the time perception of policy-making, and the role of active secrecy in times of crises. Engaging deeply with the theory and case beforehand enabled the interview guidelines to be tailor-made before each interview. Hence, the interview guide was tailored based on the individual interviewees’ role and expertise within SM policy.

The initial step of the analysis involved transcribing the interviews and organising them into codes (Fejes & Thornberg, 2019: 37). To avoid linguistic misinterpretations or misrepresentations, the transcripts were kept in their original language, Swedish or English. Throughout the analysis, the material has been read multiple times at different points in time for ensuring thoroughness and good quality (Braun & Clarke, 2021: 9). Codes were organised based on the shared core idea into themes through systematic analytical engagement and the themes were reworked multiple times from their initial categorisation to the final (Ibid.). This was done by separating the analytical material into conceptual and overarching themes (Bailey, 2018: 189). Conceptual themes are reoccurring, explicit, descriptive, or explanatory statements in the material and overarching themes are underlying ideas, insights, or insinuations (Ibid.).

The first construction of themes was done with a very open mind, allowing analysis of the material to refute preconceptions and not necessary fall into the predicted categories. These were then reinterpreted, morphed, and organically developed to the final presentation of the findings (Ibid.). As the material was reworked, the division between conceptual and overarching themes was questioned, so that some of the original overarching themes were

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5 Appendix II shows the progression from initial to final themes.
reinterpreted as conceptual themes and vice versa. The following table shows the flow of the methodological process.

**Table 3: Summary of theoretical and analytical framework**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theoretical concept</th>
<th>Interview guidelines</th>
<th>Analytical guidelines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Based on crisisification: agenda-setting, decision-making, participation, and legitimising narratives.</td>
<td>How would you describe SM governance? Which sectors in the SM have received more attention in recent years and why? Why and how is the SM different from other policy areas? Which crises have been particularly noticeable for the SM?</td>
<td>Description of the SM and its form of governance. The role of crises in policy making is and specifically for the SM. Changes to SM governance routines. Specific questions related to agenda setting, decision making, participation and EU governance narratives. Comparison to crisisification in the material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Based on adjustments: coordination in the Council, differing decision times among institutions and member states, active secrecy.</td>
<td>Who sets the agenda for the SM and how is this done? Where is leadership located at the apex of a crisis? Which institution holds the most executive power and has this changed following crises?</td>
<td>Governance dynamics and influencing abilities among the institutions: including time, secrecy, and executive ability. Specific SM expert groups and their role in shaping governance. The understanding of time and its effect on administration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential implications: democratic, political, geopolitical, and implications for individual policy officers.</td>
<td>What does it mean for EU citizens if speed takes priority over deliberation? When are crises helpful for political development? Is crisisification a necessary outcome of the complex crises in recent years?</td>
<td>Functional and critical implications of crises. What does the similarities and difference to crisisification imply for SM governance? Elements of exceptionality in SM governance. What the SM represents for the EU and Sweden.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table summarises the methodological process. First, engagement with the theory took place to thoroughly understand its premises and implications as the study seeks to be deductive. Second, based on knowledge about the SM, the theoretical framework was adapted to better fit the case. Third, the interview guidelines were written based on the purpose of the study, research questions and the theoretical limitations. Fourth, interview guidelines were adjusted before each interview and were different from the interview guide. Fifth, the theoretical framework was kept in mind throughout the entire analytical process to guarantee homogeneity of the study.
6. Results

This section delves into the nuanced facets of the SM, dissecting its responses to crises, adapting to geopolitical shifts, and navigating regulatory challenges. From the SM's resilience during the pandemic to DG GROW's strategic role, the findings highlight the delicate balance between crisis management and foundational principles. The overarching themes show the SM's transformation from a symbol of mutual prosperity to a tool for security, risk, and crisis management. Issues of fatigue, neglect, and the quest for open strategic autonomy shape a comprehensive understanding of the SM's evolving role in a rapidly changing global landscape.

6.1 Agenda-Setting

The theory and literature review showed that defining what a crisis is can be a challenging task (Rosenthal et al., 1989: 283; Boin et. al., 2016: 5). This was exemplified by one interviewee questioning if the pandemic should be called a crisis (Interview D). Crises also seem to represent the status quo of current EU policy making. Those working in the field have become so accustomed to the rhetoric of crisis that it is normal procedure to adapt to something acute (Interview E). The current period is even described as a permacrisis (Interview B). However, the common denominator emerging from the interviews seems to be the critical nature and ability of a crisis to acutely place itself at the centre of politics or work instrumentally to place another politically threatened area at the centre (Interview E).

6.1.1 Gatekeeping the Agenda

The interviewees listed several crises as having affected the agenda and agenda-setting process of the SM. The one with the most severe effects seems to be the pandemic as it challenged the SM’s core values of harmonisation and minimising barriers. In practice this meant that the free movement of goods, services and people within the EU was interrupted (Interview C). Some member states stockpiled and refused to redistribute medical gear as borders went on complete lockdown (Interview D). These actions were shocking, although, they showed a side of the SM framework less often seen. Namely, that the regulatory framework allows for exceptions when circumstance requires it (Interview A). Nonetheless, the member states and European institutions saw the lack of free movement as a severe crisis for the SM. Consequently, on request from the European Council, SMEI was proposed in 2022 as way of preventing this from happening again (Interview E & F).
Other large-scale crises have affected the agenda and agenda-setting process of the SM. Most notably, i) Brexit, as it affected the SM through the loss of a major internal trade partner; ii) Russia’s war of aggression in Ukraine destroyed the supply of critical raw materials and contributed to increased geopolitical tensions in the region; iii) the US’ and China’s trade defence instruments; and iv) the Eurozone crisis (Interview F & G). These have contributed in significant ways to changing the needs from the SM and the realpolitik status of the EU (Interview F). In turn, this seems to have caused a fatigue related to SM politics and that the SM itself has been forgotten by political leadership (Interview A & C). Thus, the SM can be understood as subject to other issues to using its’ agenda space (Interview H).

The fatigue could also be seen through the dismissal of repeated efforts for policy change in the services sector (Interview G). Proposals and solutions for increased harmonisation are aired but stopped for political reasons, both from member states and the institutions’ (Interview A & C). Simultaneously, the amount of new regulation of services on the SM has decreased, or at least stagnated, with 60% of the trade barriers to services still existing 30 years after the SM’s conception (Interview C). The services’ fatigue also seems to be a consequence of SMEI absorbing most of the available policy resources, so that other issues are crowded out (Interview C). Thus, by placing the issues that seemingly contain the greatest risk highest on the agenda, known problems are deprioritised because of their inevitability in being uncertain (Beck, 2006: 334).

The horizontal nature of SMEI and its strong language have demanded a lot of resources from all parties during negotiations (Interview E). Moreover, during negotiations of SMEI, defining what a crisis on the SM was central (Interview G). Not only was there disagreement between the Commission’s proposed definition and member states’ opinions, but also regarding what a given definition could mean for the instrument’s reach. Creating instruments that are useful in practice is important for the democratic legitimacy of the union. An instrument that lacks input legitimacy risks becoming obsolete if it is not formulated in a functionally anchored manner (Schmidt, 2013: 668).

The feeling of SM fatigue was strengthened by Commission President von der Leyen not mentioning the SM in her State of the European Union 2023 speech. This is echoed by the industry, where some experience that there has not been a real SM strategy since 2015 (Interview A). The lack of engagement also rang true from political leadership at the national level, i.e. Swedish Prime Minister Kristersson not mentioning the SM in the statement of the Government’s EU policy in 2023 (Interview A). Yet there were ample remarks about industry and a need to protect it. This has led some to ask where the SM and strengthening of its core
framework is in politics (Interview B). It has also generated questioning about if the union’s industry would be better off with less sector specific security and risk preparedness acts (Interview A).

Further, one interviewee suggested that the Services Directive and the Professional Qualifications Directive have done what is possible for the horizontal harmonisation of services (Interview G). To combat existing problems sectoral solutions are needed, but there is a lack of political will to act because the nature of services makes their scope and barriers difficult to understand (Interview C & G). The under-regulation of services also seemed to be an issue of quantity and quality. Partly because the sector’s key regulatory framework, the Services Directive, is not legally as strong as the Directive for Goods Sales (Interview C). Additionally, the Services Directive was controversial when it was written, and it still is (Interview A). The free movement of services is sometimes incompatible with national regulation on workers’ conditions and recognition of professional or academic qualifications. Hence, the existing SM framework is not strong enough to fully realise the free movement of services (Interview C). The sector is further disadvantaged because infringement procedures are abandoned for political reasons, and proportionality tests are abstained from (Interview C).

The synopsis of under-regulating services seems to be that the potential political gains do not outweigh the potential losses (Interview G). The SM, and not only services, carries with it a gamble for politicians willing to promote further integration. The integrated and harmonised SM forces workers and businesses to compete with more efficient or cheaper alternatives in other member states. According to basic market economics, this will result in certain short-term losses for some, in the form of bankrutpcies and unemployment but long-term gains for all (Interview D). This dynamic makes it difficult for civil servants to motivate action if the potential losses for citizens can contribute to politicians not getting re-elected. Hence, there is more incentive to work on protecting the industrial sector as it allows for easy political gains (Interview C & D). Therefore, policy entrepreneurs will also be more likely to act in the field where there is political motivation to resolve an issue (Mintrom & Norman, 2009: 652). Additionally, those recognising the SM fatigue argued that economic benefits are not strong enough of an incentive to support further harmonisation of the SM anymore (Interview F).
6.1.2 Agenda Dominance

En masse the above shows that crises have shaped DG GROW’s agenda away from the SM. At the start of the current Commission, DG GROW received a greater policy scope and budgetary means e.g. involvement in shaping defence industry and space programs (Interview D). It also exhibited signs of sectorisation as exemplified in several large new acts and strategies: the Critical Raw Materials act, the Standardisation strategy, the European Chips act, and the Industrial strategy (Interview A & F). The tension between industrial protection, competitiveness, and free trade is at the centre of SM politics and it seems that the protection and security through autonomy side have taken precedence in the agenda-setting processes (Interview H & E).

Industrial policy also works as a vehicle for prioritising the launch of proposals in sectors that the Commission deems to be vulnerable to internal failure or foreign threat (Interview A & D). In recent years, DG GROW has presented an annual report on the state of the SM, driven by wanting to monitor selected areas that might leave the EU particularly vulnerable to externally driven shocks (Interview D). These reports are part of DG GROW’s industrial strategy for strengthening the resilience of the SM and European industries’ competitiveness (Interview D). The Commission writes and concludes the analyses itself. Thus, the analyses are politically driven rather than based on objective empirical evaluation. Therefore, the reports can give prominence to the sectors that the Commission sees as particularly important to protect. The reports can function as an argument of working for the common good by reproducing accepted values (Hermerén, 2008: 374).

The reports started before the pandemic, and got an upswing from it, as it became clear how businesses and citizens suffered from its secondary and tertiary effects (Interview F). These vulnerability reports placed particular emphasis on the role of the SM for maintaining the functioning and well-being of the EU’s industry, resilience, and twin transition (Interview G). Thus, they highlighted the role of monitoring the SM for the purpose of protecting adjacent areas (Interview D & F). This ties into the objective of having open strategic autonomy in the EU. The approach pertains to developing strategic capacities through new industrial alliances, as well as monitoring strategic dependencies based on analysing ecosystems sensitive to third-country supply.

Monitoring and surveillance are integral to the functioning of the SM. In one interview, a previous enlargement was mentioned and that a key aspect then was to ensure

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6 The twin transition is an EU strategy for making our societies greener and more digital in a symbiotic way.
that the new member states’ could enforce SM-rules (Interview H). If they did not exit, or were insufficient, a mutual effort among member states and EU institutions was made to create the necessary agencies. That way enforcement of SM regulations could be ensured, through mutual help and assurance based on local expertise from capitals and the institutions (Interview H).

Similarly, the SM has several tools to prevent technical hiccups, two are the Directive EU/2015/1535 and Solvit. These were created as means of cooperation to prevent crises, rather than by having executives acting in emergencies (Interview H). Directive EU/2015/1535 aims at openness among member states and scrutiny of trade barriers. Before passing a new technical regulation on goods or information society services, the national authority must inform the Commission. Thereafter, the Commission has the right to stop the new law if it is deemed to cause further and unnecessary new technical barriers to the SM (Interview C). Thus, the directive has a horizon scanning element in the sense of working preventatively, which makes it like other horizon scanning systems in the EU (Backman & Rhinard, 2017: 264).

Additionally, Solvit is an informal network of SM agencies that helps people and businesses who experience that one of their freedoms has been violated in another member state (Interview B). It is a free of charge service that all EU citizens can use; the purpose being to resolve issues under EU regulation outside of a court. When the national agency responsible for Solvit receives a complaint about another member state, the agency strikes up an informal conversation, often over email, with its counterpart so that the issue can be solved (Interview B). Usually, the injustice is due to a misinterpretation of the legal framework or from administrative negligence. Thus, this informal network works by collegiality and supervising European colleagues to avoid court involvement, by stopping a potential administrative mistake. Solvit is employed reactively but likens the early warning systems already uncovered by crisisification. The network’s goal is to communicate and resolve a problem before it has time to escalate (Rhinard, 2019: 3).

Another notable change is that the Commission had started to request suggestions for proposals on services from the member states, which is the opposite direction through which proposals are usually put forward (Interview C). The new dynamic was described as member states first raise an issue to the Commission, the Commission counters it with questions about what the member states would like to see as the outcome, if they have any suggestions, if they have done the ground analytical work or gathered the opinions of the college and civil
society. Meaning that more of the preparatory work is given to capitals before a topic can land on the agenda (Interview C).

Contrarily, in global standards negotiations, the member states represent the opinion of the EU in the World Trade Organization. This opinion is first negotiated mutually between the Commission and the Council. However, a development in this field was that the Commission seeks to take over the representative role and does so with little influence from the member states (Interview H). Perhaps this is because of the standards’ potential to act as industrial facilitators. When other policy areas have demanded crisis management efforts, a common dynamic has been for the Commission to receive temporarily improved executive abilities (Rhinard, 2019: 12).

The above findings highlighted the importance of having agenda-setting power. In particular, the power to decide which issues should be placed on the agenda. These are given more salience and are normed as more important for security reasons (Huysmans, 2014: 124). They also illustrated how normal issues are forced to share the agenda with crisis issues by DG GROW proposing solutions based with the EU institutions rather than with the member states (Rhinard, 2019: 8). Crises then work as gatekeepers, both in terms of which issues are allowed to be placed on the agenda and by making the minds of politicians inclined towards insecurities rather than normalities (Deters & Falkner, 2021: 292). It also seemed that the intensity and frequency of crises in some sectors caused the people working in the adjacent sectors to experience isolation (Interview A, C & F).

6.2 Decision-Making

Crisis force resources to be allocated into the threatened areas which results in other areas being less endowed. This might seem trivial, but for crisis management and democratic processes it has two very important implications. First, were two similar disasters to happen consecutively the later might go unnoticed or suffer from worse decisions because damage control is allocated to the first crisis (Interview H). This can be problematic for European authority holders, as legitimacy in crisis politics depends on delivering results (Kreuder-Sonnen, 2017: 961). Second, crisis management seems to cause those deciding over resources to become so caught up in the crisis that they become overly connected with it (Interview H). The constructed policy preferences play a part in substantiating the motivations for further crisis-oriented governance and crisis-oriented authorities need to exploit crisis narratives and manage risks accordingly for their authority to be conferred (Kreuder-Sonnen, 2017: 961).
The current political situation of DG GROW, and Sweden, seemed to imply that describing industry as vulnerable is done to enable swift decisions on proposals specific to security of supply (Interview A & D).

6.2.1 Crises Decision Times
During the pandemic, many decision-making routines changed to prevent the further spreading of the virus. Decisions that had been taken through in person voting procedures moved online (Interview H). For example, the voting on implementing decisions for standards, managed by the Committee on Standards. Standardisation works as a facilitator for safe goods and services on the SM through standardisation implementing decisions. These standards are written specifically for the European market to protect its citizens and industries. However, there is a concern that EU specific standards drive business away from the European market as rules get too difficult to adhere to (Interview H).

The Committee used to vote during formal in-person meetings, however, during the pandemic voting moved to email form causing little or even no deliberation among member state colleagues (Interview H). One interviewee recalled that a written procedure on an implementing decision for a standard needed to be decided over a weekend (Interview H). Thus, the circumstances of the pandemic allowed for exceptional procedures on an issue that was probably not acute. Although, it could also be seen as a Europeanisation of decision-making, where member states are adapting to the European decision rules. This is not necessarily a sign of crisis governance but can be seen as a part European integration (Ekengren, 1996: 396-397).

In addition, the shorter deadlines have resulted in difficulty to gather the opinion of national stakeholders and ministries on proposed standardisation implementing decisions. The standards’ written procedures are also described as getting more politically extensive and less technical over time. Taken together, the above factors have contributed to confusion among ministries as to who provided an affirmative opinion and when (Interview H). Hence,

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7 The committee is made-up of representatives from each member state that are responsible for the standardisation oversight. The representatives are also responsible for coordinating the national opinion on a new standardisation implementing decision, which can be a big task depending on how many policy fields are concerned.

8 An attempt was made to verify this on the EUR-Lex database. It seems that DG GROW has steadily increased its number of implementing decisions from 164 in 2019 to 245 in 2023. However, whether the decision times have become shorter, overall and in comparison, to the Swedish perspective, is more difficult to say because of interinstitutional rules.
it can be seen as a problem of accountability regardless of whether it is a sign of crisisification or not having integrated with the European flow of affairs sufficiently.

This trend had also been noted in other sectors of the SM that fall under DG GROW’s regulatory scope. The decision speed at which proposals have been agreed on caused industry representatives to describe the goods sector as having faced a cascade of new regulation. However, this development concerned only goods regulation, not services as highlighted in the previous chapters (Interview C). This division has grown in the 2019-2024 period because of functional spillover, geopolitical tensions and narrowed internal policy priorities (Interview E & F). This type of regulation is predominantly in the form of due diligence obligations, aimed at monitoring supply chains to prevent human rights violations or adverse environmental effects, i.e. spillover from work related to sustainability (Interview A).

Additionally, one interviewee described that SMEI is a consequence of that the IPCR does not have the legal ability to generate binding decisions (Interview G). SMEI was a complement that is supposed to facilitate faster decision-making and have substantive coercive power. It was also a consequence of that the IPCR does not have a specific room for SM expertise to meet. This meant that SM specific issues could not be solved when the IPCR was first employed during the pandemic (Interview G). First, this highlights the difficulty of modern crises, as they demand creative constellations of professionals that might only be realised after the crisis has escalated (Ansell et al., 2010: 197). Second, it supports the claim that leaders desire certain and swift sense- and meaning-making capabilities to arrive at a crisis remedy (Boin et al., 2016: 23; Boin & Rhinard, 2022: 658).

Contrarily, there are also examples of politically sensitive issues, deemed to be crises, that now have longer decision times. This was exemplified by the joint cases of IKEA and Decathlon to the European Ombudsman. IKEA and Decathlon had experienced planning restrictions concerning retail space in two German federal states, whereafter the two companies filed a complaint to the European Commission in 2008 (Interview C). The two companies took issue with the fact that the Commission did not finalise a decision and that when confronted about why, the Commission offered differing explanations for the time delay. One argument was that Germany held the Presidency of the Council of Ministers in 2020 and it was not politically suitable to continue the issue then.
as of early 2023. However, the issue is still unresolved, signalling a problem with the fact that the Commission has exclusive rights to pursue infringements (Interview C). In a similar way, the proportionality tests are initiated less frequently, and by fewer member states (Interview C). This can be compared to infringement procedures since their goal is to ensure enforcement and sufficient national implementation.

6.2.2 Increased Decision Intensity

Proposals had also been resource intensive in the sense that they preoccupy the minds of both local politicians and Commissioners. This can also be seen as through the literature’s description on the crisis management behaviour and capabilities of leaders (Boin et al., 2016: 7). Hence, the regulations were supposed to place the reporting, surveillance, and enforcement of the European values at the forefront to avoid future crises. However, for the SM the special provisions coming from due diligence regulations make it difficult for businesses to operate (Interview H). This caused fragmentation and deviations from the provisions under article 114 TFEU (Interview A; EU, 2012). Some voices were concerned that special regulations lack a holistic perspective (Interview A). Although, some of the interviewees mentioned the green transition as burdensome and a contributor to more internal trade barriers, it has the potential of placing the SM on the agenda as an enabler to climate adaptation, e.g., using the harmonisation argument to enable wind power plants across the union (Interview F).

This appears to be part of a broader trend in policy writing and decision-making. In the last years, DG GROW has presented several product specific proposals to the Council. These are presented in terms of creating internal stockpiling for sectors that could be particularly vulnerable if external supply would cease. The process was described as if a proposal is not accepted by the Council and Parliament, and enforced by national bodies quickly, a supply crisis is inevitable (Interview B & D). Thus, crises are used as a pawn to avoid discussing the questions where the institutions or member states might not agree (Interview E).

Consequently, there was a sense of proposals being pushed out without allowing proper time for public consultations or impact analysis; neither the Commission nor member states can properly gather the opinions of people and organisations (Interview D). This could mean that the interinstitutional agreement on better law-making has been diverged from (Interview D). Even if it does not imply a legal breach, lacking sufficient anchoring of policy is a deep democratic problem, with the potential consequence being a distrust in politicians.
and the political system (Schmidt, 2013: 662). There was also a risk of suspicion, confusion, and distrust forming among the institutions if policy suggestions are proposed without the sufficient evaluations (Interview D).

Because of the scale of each policy proposal, it was also difficult to allocate sufficient administrative means to thoroughly investigate whether proposals are anchored with the public and if they are accepted across ministries (Interview D). An indication of proposal decision-making becoming oriented towards exceptions (Wæver, 1995: 70). This is also amplified by the fact that the proposals are quantitatively many, causing each proposal to have a relatively shorter preparation time. Moreover, proposal impact assessments demand that the evaluator is deeply knowledgeable in the field, as it is sometimes up to an individual policy officer to make the assessment and decide which aspects should be taken into consideration (Interview G). This could support concerns of inadequate quality in assessment of policies, challenging their robustness (Héritier, 2013: 682).

Yet, for the maintenance of the SM, it is the slow work towards enforcement and ridding trade barriers that substantiates its core. Thus, there was a danger in only talking about the SM and crises since the foundational reasons for having a SM could be forgotten (Interview F). What really seems to represent having crisis management capabilities or preparedness in the SM is not constantly searching for vulnerabilities or placing a crisis at the forefront of politics. Rather it can be found in collective effort and empathetic resource distribution when it is needed (Interview A, C & H). Hence, good crisis preparedness should not demand politicians to become frantic when a threat evolves, instead it comes from a reliable and deliberative system (Interview B & C). Similarly, crises could be seen as the leverage used to portray a strong image of Europe outwardly. Crises were in this perception an important cornerstone in constructing the tale of the new EU (Interview H).

Furthermore, the sometimes slow-moving SM is a symbol of compromise and finding agreement on issues that would have led to coercive retaliation historically (Interview H). This was also tied to classical liberal ideals of countries that have economic relations and will not have armed conflicts with one another (Interview C). However, these ideals hinge on that all member states contribute consciously to the formation of politics. Thus, all member states have a duty to contribute to the political outcome and cannot rely on the EU institutions to keep the functioning of the SM project alive without clear incentive (Interview C & H). For the SM is not advantageous to everyone, at least not in the short-run, and that forces politicians to motivate it in national parliaments as some citizens must compensate for the gains of the many in the long-run (Interview D).
6.3 Participation

The interviewees highlighted the effects of SM crises on participation abilities and fora in several different ways. In summary, these changes seem to have contributed to an overall rebalancing of the institutions, where they in different ways were discontent with their respective positions and work towards change through crisis-oriented policymaking.

6.3.1 Interinstitutional Rebalancing

SMEI is the first ever instrument specifically formulated for crisis management of the SM to ensure the free movement of goods, services, and people during a crisis (Interview B). This showcases an efficient use of a crisis to generate new policy (Dieter, 2009: 154). Its goal is to make the SM more adaptable to future crises by providing a blueprint for management based on past emergencies (Interview E). SMEI is therefore like some of the crisis preparedness and warning systems, as presented by Backman & Rhinard (2017). At the start of the negotiations of SMEI, it included a section on security of supply to help the union remain autonomous in times of crises. This part of the proposal received substantial criticism from the Council’s legal service as the basis in free movement under article 114 TFEU seemed to be missing (Interview B).

The instrument will horizontally interplay with the IPCR, the Emergency Response Coordination Centre, and the Single Market Enforcement Taskforce (SMET). SMEI is also proposed to complement existing sector-specific instruments (Interview B). SMEI will not have a “crisis room” for monitoring and management within DG GROW as other DGs have (Interview 8; Rhinard, 2019: 4). The reason was the difficulty to track in an efficient and secure way disturbance to supply lines or trade (Interview H). However, the instrument will have central liaison offices in Brussels and the member states, to ensure reacting in real time to potential crises (Interview G). Thus, SMEI can be seen as an attempt at gaining sufficient knowledge of SM predicted risk through rational calculation, to prevent a catastrophe from challenging those calculi (Beck, 2006: 335).

The IPCR was used as a forum for member states to find a common solution when the pandemic unfolded (Interview G). The Commission is also part of the IPCR but serves as a secretariat as the IPCR is formally a Council based and employed system; the Parliament does not have official involvement. This caused the Parliament to feel excluded from the decision-making, so far that it feels that the Council and Commission have exploited their
mandate (Interview G). However, the Council experiences this as its prerogative and that it is a part of the member states sovereignty to make crisis decisions without European consultation. Although, there is support in the literature for Eurocentric crisis management being advantageous, as diverse national efforts to European problems have previously resulted in failures (Dieter, 2009: 154). This is an issue of transparency as the Parliament felt excluded from information during the crises management (Interview C & F). The negotiations of SMEI showed that the doubtful relations between some proposed parts of the instrument and article 144 TFEU created a sense of worry among the member states (Interview B; EU, 2012). It was so strong that they wondered what the overall intention behind the instrument’s proposal was (Interview F).

SMET is a group where the Commission and member state authorities discuss the most pressing SM barriers preventing it from functioning smoothly. Sweden was one of the instigators to this group as its primary purpose is harmonisation (Interview F). It seeks to identify growing or existing barriers along the SMs different streams, to coordinate SM issues in other policy areas and streamline the work to remove barriers. A specific barrier is presented in detail, and the member states are tasked with bringing this information home as well as giving feedback to the Commission on what their member state specifically can or cannot do to eradicate the barrier. The group has a strong objective of providing results to long-standing problems through innovative ideas (Interview F). Thus, SMET can be seen as both a proactive and reactive group.

One legal contention arose during negotiations between the Commission and Council as they desired different interpretations of the instrument. Some member states were critical of the focus on securing potentially vulnerable supply lines, arguing for an instrument only focusing on the four freedoms (Interview B). Although, a broader instrument allows for it to be used more frequently and efficiently (Interview G). Thus, for the instrument to have a clear legal basis in article 114 TFEU the purpose needs to be removing barriers to trade on the SM (EU, 2012). The Council legal service argued that this criterion was not fulfilled in the sections related to supply chain security (Interview F).

Two other points of contention were more political. First, member states questioned why they should work towards an EU supply vault when it is already difficult to form one nationally. Also, it might be undesirable for nations to share information among each other on specific resource capacities (Interview F). This information might be classified or simply pose a strategic threat if made known. A functioning SM implies redistribution among member states when it is necessary, without requiring an EU specific storage. Second, it is
close to impossible to know in advance which supply crises that are likely to occur. This means that the union could either have a stock of goods that will never be used or that a completely different supply is needed in the end (Interview B).

An outcome from the ongoing trilogues on SMEI was that the Parliament is displeased and felt excluded from crisis management in the EU. They wished for more involvement during the pandemic, or better and greater information access. As the treaties and the existing crisis management mechanisms are written, they endow the member states with sovereign oversight and management of crises through the IPCR (Interview G). The Commission can have a coordinating role through the IPCR and actively help member states to overcome crisis obstacles (Interview F). Thus, to compensate for this uneven power distribution in existing crisis arrangements, the Parliament would like to have a clearer crisis management role through SMEI or its own crisis management arrangement. It was therefore proposed that the Parliament has a seat on the overseeing board of SMEI (Interview 7). Similar demands have previously made their way into reformulations of the TFEU, e.g. article 222 as part of the Lisbon treaty (EU, 2012; Rhinard, 2019: 6).

The above can be understood from crisisification in two important ways. First, it shows that crises will enable novel actor constellations (Rhinard, 2019: 6). Although, it does so in a previously uncharted way: by incorporating the Parliament in decision-making rather than through working groups within the Commission. It also shows the difficulty among the institutions to ensure collegiality and maintaining oversight during crises (Brandsma & Blom-Hansen, 2017: 132). Crisis management also hold an element of secrecy naturally, as leaders might want to limit how much of the threat is able to reach the public i.e., containing the public threat perception (Kreuder-Sonnen, 2018: 966). Although, the danger lies in that secrecy becomes a justifying means for limiting transparency on politically sensitive issues (Ibid.: 970).

Giving the Parliament a stronger role in crisis management could have effects on the oversight and distribution of power in different ways. A positive implication would be that elected representatives are nearer to the crisis related executive capabilities, i.e., the gap between citizens and decisions is closed (Interview G; Schmidt, 2013: 668). However, as one interviewee revealed, there seems to be a move in the flow of new suggestions, where member states are asked by the Commission to do the groundwork (Interview C). In tandem, these informal changes could have a negative effect in the form of that institutional roles and

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10 This article is called the Solidarity clause.
responsibilities are changing without there being a formal agreement to support it. For everyday business, it means navigating a new playing field based on feeling rather than based on certainty of who is responsible (Interview C). For citizens, it might mean not knowing which institution to look to for answers.

6.3.2 Council Changes

Another piece of institutional rebalancing comes from the desire for a political Commission. The Commission has received criticism in the past for being too technocratic, thus, not working for a common explicitly European agenda (Interview H). Commission President von der Leyen has taken this one step further by interpreting her mandate in the treaties as being political (Interview G). By extension, her cabinet has been interpreted as geopolitical. This is relevant to the SM as it changes the dynamics between the institutions, and there is less clarity as to who should do what (Interview C). Having a politically guided Commission also brings into question which objectives the cabinet is working for: the European common good or those of national governments? (Interview C). The geopolitical label has not been met without resistance because, to the European Council, it implies giving away a layer of power tied to the member states’ sovereignty (Interview H).

Almost all interviewees described the UK leaving the EU as a critical juncture. Brexit was seen as a crisis for Swedish EU policy overall, and particularly for SM and trade policy. The UK is described as a good partner for Sweden in multilateralism, a skilled negotiator and most importantly a power balancer to the other large member states (Interview A, C, F & H). This was seen from a shift in voting majority constellations and changing the institutional dynamics. As the SM is run by qualified majority voting, losing a heavily populated member state can tip the scales unfavourably for small or medium sized member states aligned with the UK (Interview F). Perarnaud & Arregui (2022) also finds that member states have differing abilities in forming and defending their positions. They find that voting power is statistically related to bargaining success, and that small and medium sized member states can struggle in organising a counter to Commission or larger member state proposals (Ibid.: 105).

Consequently, the larger member states have been able to assume greater influence, whereas smaller member states have needed to look for new alliances and have sometimes had a hard time organising their wills to create a substantial counter pole (Interview A & D). An example of this is France and Germany presenting formally co-authored papers and propositions that took smaller member states by surprise (Interview A & C). The UK was also the member state that added article 50 TFEU, as a guarantee for mutual reliance rather
than constructing a finished European state (EU, 2012). Although, Brexit had a positive effect on the SM as the added value of a well-functioning SM became more evident (Interview F).

6.4 Narratives

Crisisification offers insights with regards to the language driving the SM. It has shifted to include description of a desired resilient and strategically autonomous SM. Hence, when asked about what the SM represents, two powerful and dominant attributes can be discerned: it is the core of the EU and a marker of peace in the union (Interviews A-D & H). This question was asked to understand the interviewees’ personal and professional interest in the SM and to detangle its administrative development while facing a steady onslaught of internal and external crises. The SM is also described as underappreciated when it is functioning. However, when the union is faced with a crisis, or the SM itself is threatened, its added value becomes more apparent (Interview G).

The SM was described as the ideal free internal market, built on trust and respect for the commonly decided rules (Interview A & D). In this sense, the SM is a tool for upholding, building, and defending European industries; it is not a goal but an asset that can assure that the normative and legislative rules the EU has agreed upon are practised. For this reason, the SM cannot be a finished project but is an agreement where shared skills and responsibilities protect the partnership. One interviewee explains that several member states feel a political obligation to prevent the union from moving in the wrong direction as their raison d’être (Interview H).

Further, the growing number of member states governed by parties with Eurosceptic leanings contributed to the same feeling of fatigue and need for internal protection (Interview C). Understandably, if your government repeatedly challenges the foundational ideas of the EU, why bother with strengthening the project? It might even traverse the national leadership to work for the functioning of the common free market. Concurrently, national policies or strategies were implemented that could limit the free movement of people and services, e.g. Sweden with Tidöavtalet (Interview C). 11 Something worrisome given the 2020’s similarities to the 1920’s, according to one interviewee (Interview H).

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11 Tidöavtalet is the agreement supporting the constellation of the Swedish government from 2022.
6.4.1 Prevention, Protection, and Resilience

The unifying factor of the SM has changed from being mutual prosperity, to the need for mutual security (Interview D & H). The reason for this development seemed to be that the current and preceding Commission colleges have faced frequent crises and had been tasked with crisis management repeatedly (Interview D). Also, the geopolitical change from power shifts, war in proximity and a demand for a less technocratic EU aided this development (Interview H). The development towards a political Commission is arguably a necessity for smooth functioning crisis management by solidifying cooperation around what could be the European good (Versluis, 2016: 14). There was also a fear in it not being functional or democratically sufficient, since its institutions were founded on different pretences (Interview C, D & H). More so, the build-up of production capacities, trade defence instruments and restrictions could be seen to ensure security and countering coercive action by third-countries (Interview F).

Moreover, crises were also perceived as the building block of the EU and fundamental to its advancement (Interview D & H). The European project sprung out of the need to prevent another world war (Bernitz & Kjellgren, 2018: 22). Hence, the founding countries decided that it was more important to prevent a crisis of the same scale from happening again through economic dependency, than staying separated because of an inability to compromise (Interview H). When it was truly necessary, a practical solution could be found in a situation that usually resulted in conflict. Thus, the memory of war facilitated the liberal democracy that built Europe. Crisis preparedness in the EU therefore seems to represent the usage of common resources and skills practically, to facilitate resolution or reform (Interview G). Hence, crises were not something that necessarily needed to be feared but could provide the essential spark for rebuilding and reshaping (Interview D & H; Zeitlin, 2016: 1082). However, preparedness also assumes that a catastrophe is inevitable, and that the society demands a device that can absorb the shock (Oels, 2013: 20). Thus, risk and preparedness support each other in the systems that leadership proposes.

This stands in opposition to the course of security and risk narration that started 5-10 years ago and was amplified as the pandemic played out (Interview F & H). The pandemic highlighted the problems arising from having insufficient inputs, or disrupting the flow of goods and services, resulting in an increased focus on preventing vulnerabilities. Thus, causing a need to prioritise the sectors which should be protected to avoid the same type of crisis from erupting again. Salter & Mutlu (2017) suggests that crises can be viewed as national trauma. Security performances play a role in preventing the trauma from happening.
again by employing mechanisms that remind us of the threat and reproduce the normatively desirable situation (Ibid.: 186-187).

An example of this was that the Industrial strategy was communicated in 2020 on the exact same day as the World Health Organization declared the pandemic (Interview F). The strategy was revised a year later, where more focus was placed on safeguarding supply chains rather than harmonising the SM industry. Thus, the strategy was modified to be sufficiently in line with mapping desired outcomes rather than also encompassing consequential values (Amicelle et al., 2015: 297). Actions were taken by the Commission to obtain vaccines and protective masks in a firmer way than their role would ordinarily allow (Interview F). Brandsma & Blom-Hansen (2017) proposes that the Commission can step-up during crisis because it is able to coordinate a response more easily than the other institutions can.

Narratives of security and risk prevention were also present in SMEI through description of securing industries and having a resilient SM (Interview B & F). This formulation contributed to questions about compatibility between security of supply and businesses’ privacy. In the original announcement of the SMEI proposal, emphasis was placed on finding ways to maintain free movement during crises. However, as challenges stacked up during the pandemic and the EU’s regular trade partners refused to cooperate, the direction changed towards securing supply chains within the EU (Interview F). This was expressed by businesses needing to supply information on production capacities, means and abilities as well as prioritise EU stockpiling orders (Interview B & F). Often this is sensitive information and can be viewed as a breach of the business’ right to integrity. Companies were also asked to deviate from existing agreements to prioritise production for the union in an eventual crisis (Interview B). Information sharing across the public and private sectors has been identified in other crisis management instruments (Backman & Rhinard, 2017: 265). However, this part of the proposal was removed in negotiations between the Council and the Commission but seems to return during the current trilogues with the Parliament (Interview F).

The above is only one of the features that have come back from the Commission’s original proposal. The Parliament also supported the usage of prioritised orders for companies, to enable a union supply (Interview B). Although, with more balanced demands on businesses than the Commission proposed (Interview F). Moreover, the Parliament rapporteur has presented suggestions of their own leaving some to feel like SMEI is being treated like a blank canvas that can be altered to absorb the questions the Parliament finds most relevant (Interview E). This is a possible consequence of the instrument being
horizontal, meaning that many policy fields are affected, and representatives want to have a say. SMEI will also have an assessment feature where the Commission can oversee how well functioning the instrument is. However, a concerning aspect of internal monitoring is that it could remove deliberative settings by appealing to the finality and certainty of said assessment (Amicelle et al., 2015: 296). Thus, the element of transparency and collegiality risks being lost to privilege efficient analytics (Aradau & van Munster, 2007: 107).

Although, the purpose of this feature seemed to focus on expanding rather than scaling down or revising, the features related to swift action in crisis (Interview E). One interviewee explains that it seems that politicians have already forgotten about the pandemic while negotiating SMEI by the end of 2023 (Interview E). Therefore, the instrument is itself not driven by a crisis anymore but by other, more recent, crises which function as an argument for continuing to privilege its importance (Sperling & Webber, 2018: 237).

6.4.2 Geopolitical Facilitation
A recurring theme was the depiction of European governance as shaped by polarisation. One side that is organised and stronger, arguing for a Europe that can show strength and power, and one side that clings to a multilateralism and compromise (Interview A & H). Open strategic autonomy has been used as a narrative of curating the geopolitical aspects of DG GROW, to capture a narrative that is both open to trade and attempts to create self-sufficient industries (Interview A & C). Openness in trade and investments is a source of strength for the union; it allows the EU to have a diversified range of trade partners, preventing the SM from becoming dependent on one demand or supply line. Thus, it builds economic resilience as another key narrative of the EU in an era where it needs to look strong internally and externally (Interview C).

Moreover, changing narratives could be explained by the geopolitical landscape. Thus, perspectives of internal security and displaying outward power is a way of maintaining the EU’s stance in global politics (Interview C). As referenced in previous sections, Brexit changed the dynamic of the SM for many smaller free trade friendly countries. The changes to institutional balances generated by Brexit are apparent to many of the interviewees. Not necessarily in the form of contributing to more crisis-related fora, but in the form of changing the realpolitik status of the union. By extension, this had led to more risk and security anticipating leadership, rather than a leadership governed by mutual support, and facing crises as they evolve (Beck, 2006: 331). Brexit’s impact became more evident with the uncertainties that developed during the Trump administration’s threats of a trade war, and
tariffs on steel and aluminium. Also, the EU’s is dependency on China’s production or raw materials enabled it to act coercively as well as Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, that damaged access to agricultural products and critical raw materials (Interview D & H).

There was also expressions of the Commission acting as a crisis commission needing to protect European industries (Interview A). This could be seen because of i) having unreliable trade partners and ii) a need to appear like a strong geopolitical power. They stemmed from having faced supply chain-related crises where larger goals, such as the green and digital transition, were unable to be met (Interview A, C & D). However, it is also a consequence of coercive third-country actions. Such actions took the form of threatening member states’ sovereignty or abandoning international agreement (Commission, 2021). Hence, they generated a need for the EU institutions to be risk-free when there is a need to take a stand against those third-countries. It could also be viewed as a necessary instrumental development to preserve the values which European governance hinges on. Hermerén (2008) argues that the ranking order of values is dependent on temporal and historical factors, and this crisis-oriented governance feature could be an example of this.
7. Conclusion
This thesis has explored governance changes in the SM by using interviews with eight public servants working in the policy field. The findings were analysed with the help of the adjusted crisisification framework and the implications of risk and security logics entering normal policy-making. Its categories functioned as an exploratory guide for the changes in governance routines, procedures, and democratic norms expressed by the interviewees.

7.1 Summary of Findings: Crisisification
The study set out to answer two issues. First, *how can changes to democratic processes in the SM be understood through crisisification?* Based on the interviewees’ description of the development of SM governance, crisisification offers insight to changes in agenda-setting, decision-making, participation, and legitimising narratives. The interviewees perceived the effect of crises in various ways depending on the portfolios they handle, but they all highlighted the significant effects of crises on the SM governance. This took the form of both internal crises and spillover from other sectors which influenced the functioning of the interviewees everyday work. Particularly noticeable was that the fields depicted as vulnerable, or truly subjected to crises, tended to take political priority over other sectors and absorbed the agenda. This was seen by the parts of the SM related to industrial vulnerability ascending in strength through new proposals on enforcement and monitoring, in comparison to the services sector which seemed to be forgotten about.

Similarly, the decision-making times in particularly sensitive areas had gotten shorter, as well as seen an overflow of new legislation. It seemed that decision-making is conforming towards a Commission and Europeanised timeline. Contrarily, in the sectors where crises could not be leverage politically, decision-making was dragged out or completely stopped. In terms of participation, the interviews disclosed changing interinstitutional balancing where the Parliament is deeply displeased with its current role for crisis management capabilities. The Parliament would even like to see a crisis management instrument specifically for its own device and have a seat on the governing board of SMEI.

The consequence of cumulative crises could also be seen through the changing power dynamics within the Council. Swedish representatives found it difficult to coordinate positions with other member states. This lack of executive ability from the Council seemed to have led the Commission to assume a more political role. Further, narratives of industrial
vulnerability and distrustful third-countries was used to orientate policy towards protection and preparedness.

7.2 Summary of Effects
The second research question was: what are the possible effects of these changes on governance patterns in the SM? The study found two major implications on governance patterns. As guided by the theoretical framework, crisis and security logics in normal policy-making seemed to enable some issues to be privileged over others. Crisis instruments and risk assessments were leveraged to limit the amount of justification that was necessary for placing an issue on the agenda. This was causing those working within the disadvantaged fields to experience a political fatigue and isolation (Rhinard, 2019: 8-9; Beck, 2006: 333-334; Sperling & Webber, 2018: 237). The interviewees saw this as a threat to the foundation of the SM, because harmonisation and integration as a peacebuilding project has gotten a secondary role.

By contrast, the fields labelled as particularly vulnerable or functional for geopolitical leveraging are overflown with policy proposals at a speed that some fear is not coherent with the rules of better law-making. Thus, issues are placed in the realm of exceptional policy-making (Amicelle et al., 2015: 296; Aradau & van Munster, 2007: 107). There was also a concern that the heavy focus in some fields could lead to worse crisis management in other sectors since resources were allocated too narrowly. Further, sensitive fields were increasingly governed by monitoring systems, that remove the layer of deliberation and politicisation, as the result of technological assessment is perceived to bring absolute solutions (Oels, 2013: 18; Aradau & van Munster, 2007: 98; Kreuder-Sonnen, 2018: 959). Thus, it became hard for the Council and Parliament to execute their overseeing role, which some of the interviewees fear could cause mistrust.

However, it was also true that crises could be facilitators by generating political turmoil around an issue that might not be handled otherwise. Crises could therefore be seen as a two-sided coin in governance. They have the potential of removing important aspects of deliberation, but they can also bring light to minority issues that might not be unveiled without a sufficiently large threat (Boin et al., 2016: 86). Furthermore, bringing the Parliament closer to the crisis management capabilities of the union might have a positive impact on democracy in the form of linking the European elected representatives to decision-making more closely (Schmidt, 2013: 668).
7.3 Academic Relevance

Previous research on crises and crisis management in the EU has mainly focused on single cases or localised sectors (Boin, 2018; Bengtsson et al., 2017; Backman & Rhinard, 2017; Kreuder-Sonnen, 2018). This study has also examined a single sector, but one which previous studies have not explored. *Au contraire* to other EU sectors, the SM effects every person residing, working, consuming, or selling to the union (Commission, 2023). At minimum, that means 448 million people directly affected by policy-making from DG GROW every day. Therefore, the changes aligned with crisisification, as indicated by delegated powers, narrowed agenda-setting, quicker decision-making, and overflowing policy fields, can have effects on the democratic norms, procedures and routines that expand from Brussels to capitals and to the normal lives of people. The impact of permanent crisis governance of the SM also means that 448 million people can be used as a vessel for projecting narratives of insecurity and justifying exceptional policy processes (Salter & Mutlu, 2011: 182).

However, the results are limited by several factors that need to be accounted for when reading the conclusions. First, Sweden is a small country meaning that there are fewer people that can coordinate the work on each proposal coming from DG GROW. Larger member states might find the same workload easier to manage. Second, Sweden is a country at the periphery. As a result, it has had less time to influence the administrative structure in the EU compared to the founding members. Third, Sweden is heavily dependent on SM trade for its welfare, meaning that representatives might be more inclined to see proposals geared towards outward protection as more problematic than they are. For the same reason, the perception of the SM acting in the shadow of industrial policy might be depicted as more significant than it is to other member states. Altogether, the findings could have benefitted from a use of multiple data sources. This could have improved the transferability of the results to similar contexts of individuals. Future studies could therefore complement this research by analysing text sources or interview representatives from other member states and institutions.

One unexpected finding from the interviews was that the people working on issues not considered as crises, feel as though they are working against the leadership stream. They feel that efforts for policy proposals are undesired or even rejected. As crisisification speaks mainly at the meso-level of society, it was interesting to uncover that there were also effects for the individual. Therefore, it could be fruitful to explore how and if crisisification has an effect at the individual administrative level. Moreover, to better understand of how
widespread crisisification is across EU policy fields, future research could use quantitatively orientated methods to enable systematic mapping. This strategy could also be employed to better chart the development of SM governance.
8. References

8.1 Literature


8.2 Empirical Material

Interview A, Senior Legal Advisor, 20th of November 2023, video call
Interview B, Senior Advisor, 20th of November 2023, video call
Interview C, Desk Officer, 21st of November 2023, video call
Interview D, Senior Advisor, 22nd of November 2022, in-person, Stockholm
Interview E, Desk Officer, 4th of December 2023, video call
Interview F, Policy Officer, 5th of December 2023, video call
Interview G, Policy Officer, 14th of December 2023, video call
Interview H, Minister Counsellor, 7th of November 2023, in-person, Stockholm
Appendix I

Interview Guide

The interviews followed 4 different topics:

2. Relation to crises and perception of how crises can affect governance.
4. Questions related to interviewees perception on how agenda-setting, decision-making, participation, and legitimacy takes place in DG GROW and/or the Single Market in general.

Questions were adjusted based on the interviewees’ responses, therefore, they changed from interview to interview.

The questions are not presented explicitly here as they could be used to identify the interviewees.
Appendix II
Development of Themes

Table II.1: Presentation of initial themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conceptual themes</th>
<th>Overarching themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Monitoring the Single Market</td>
<td>1. The liberal peace: where did it go?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The Single Market Emergency Instrument</td>
<td>2. Where is the Single Market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. An industrial DG GROW</td>
<td>3. What is a crisis, crisis management and crisis preparedness?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Over regulating vs under regulating</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Shorter deliberation times</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. New direction of policy making</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Brexit and a changed geopolitical landscape</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table shows the first organisation of conceptual and overarching themes. These themes are based on many different codes that developed from the material. However, they are not included since many of these include quotes or referencing that could compromise the identity of the interviewees and the conditions of their participation agreement. N.b. the individual conceptual themes have some relation to all the overarching themes, not just the ones they happen to share row with.
Table II.2: Presentation of final themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overarching themes</th>
<th>Conceptual themes</th>
<th>Initial themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Agenda-Setting</td>
<td>1.1 Gatekeeping the agenda</td>
<td>What is a crisis, crisis management and crisis preparedness?; Where is the Single Market?; New direction of policy making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.2 Agenda dominance</td>
<td>Monitoring the Single Market; The Single Market Emergency Instrument; An industrial DG GROW; New direction of policy making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Decision-making</td>
<td>2.1 Crises affecting decision times</td>
<td>Shorter deliberation times; An industrial DG GROW; New direction of policy making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.2 Increased decision intensity</td>
<td>Monitoring the Single Market; The Single Market Emergency Instrument; An industrial DG GROW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Participation</td>
<td>3.1 Interinstitutional rebalancing</td>
<td>The Single Market Emergency Instrument; Brexit and a changed geopolitical landscape; The liberal peace: where did it go?; New direction of policy making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.2 Changes for the Council</td>
<td>Brexit and a changed geopolitical landscape; Where is the Single Market?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Narratives</td>
<td>4.1 Prevention, protection, and resilience</td>
<td>The liberal peace: where did it go?; What is a crisis, crisis management and crisis preparedness?; Where is the Single Market?; An industrial DG GROW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.2 Geopolitical facilitation</td>
<td>Brexit and a changed geopolitical landscape; The liberal peace: where did it go?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table presents the final overarching and conceptual themes, as well as which of the initial themes were turned into the final themes.