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EDITED BY  
Sandra Schwindenhammer,  
University Giessen, Germany

REVIEWED BY  
Pierre Rossel,  
Inspiring Futures Sàrl, Switzerland  
Chris Hilson,  
University of Reading, United Kingdom

\*CORRESPONDENCE  
Nils Stockmann  
✉ nils.stockmann@uni-osnabrueck.de

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# Now they can cope? The Green Deal and the contested meaning of sustainability in EU sectoral governance

Nils Stockmann\*

International Political Economy Research Group, Institute for Social Sciences, Osnabrück University, Osnabrück, Germany

The European Union (EU) has long discursively positioned itself as a global frontrunner for sustainability and climate protection. Nevertheless, substantive progress toward sustainability goals has not been reached in several governance areas, such as transport and mobility. Especially at the local scale, the highly complex and technocratic EU policy framework is confronted with increasingly polarized claim-making regarding ecological, social and economic problems. With its recent Green Deal governance architecture, the European Commission has sought to address this ideational and institutional fragmentation and resulting stalemate toward reaching “climate neutrality” by proposing ambitious sectoral policies and new governance instruments. This problem-driven paper exploratively investigates the ongoing reconfigurations the Green Deal induces within EU governance. Using the example of the urban mobility sector and employing an interpretive analysis of key policy documents and expert/stakeholder interviews, the paper links the literatures on EU governance architectures and norm dynamics. It discusses potentials and pitfalls for meaning-making processes in times of the socioecological polycrisis. Notably, it critically evaluates the Green Deal’s capacity to open and sustain spaces for translating sustainability across horizontally and vertically fragmented realms of EU governance.

## KEYWORDS

green deal, transport and mobility policy, sustainability, EU governance, governance architectures

## 1 Introduction

With its 2019 *Green Deal* strategy, the then-newly elected European Commission reaffirmed the European Union’s (EU) ambition to sustain a frontrunner role in the challenge of a global sustainable transition. President Ursula Von der Leyen self-consciously presented the Green Deal as Europe’s “man on the moon moment” (Von der Leyen 2019), facing the task of swiftly presenting a follow-up to the *Europe 2020* strategy as a governance architecture to shape the policy priorities of the EU and providing a narrative for European integration (Borrás and Radaelli, 2011; Felder and Stockmann, 2023).

This “bold and aim[ing] high” (Von der Leyen 2019) initiative came at a time when both the EU’s external frontrunner role and the Commission’s internal capacity to find acceptance for ambitious sustainability-related policies seemed to be highly contested (Steinebach and Knill, 2017; Burns et al., 2020). Policies to translate sustainability and climate goals into sectors

such as transport and energy are subject to stark polarization among member states and the wider public (Fraune and Knodt, 2018; Marquardt and Lederer, 2022), and the EU institutions are repeatedly characterized as ‘toothless’ in their attempt to bring forward implementation of and compliance with policies and legislative motions alike (Bondarouk and Mastenbroek, 2018; Zito et al., 2019). At the same time, the urgency for EU action keeps growing, with civil society and severe weather events pointing to climate and environmental issues as a more and more “fast-burning crisis” (Seabrooke and Tsingou, 2019).

The increasing politicization of climate and sustainability politics that emerges from this situation raises the question of how far the Green Deal as an EU governance architecture serves as a framework that provides spaces for coping with the contested meaning of sustainability and climate policies, in the sense of a translation, rather than cloaking the contestation and excluding polysemic meanings from the policy discourse. Building on critical-constructivist norm research, contestation is understood here as the engagement of actors with norms by which meaning becomes actualized (Wiener, 2004; Wiener and Puetter, 2009). Accordingly, the discursive actualization of sustainability within political realms, the concept’s *meaning-in-use* (Milliken, 1999), requires closer attention. The notion of translation underscores the interactive and dynamic character of this process. Accordingly, as sustainability is an inherently contested concept, there is no such thing as a ‘right’ or ‘most complete’ translation into policy-oriented norms as conventional policy diffusion of transfer studies would suggest (Hassenteufel and Zeigermann, 2021). Instead, the travel of normative meaning evolves in a non-linear fashion of “back-and-forth” movements (Zwingel, 2012) and coincides with the transformation of that very meaning (Çapan et al., 2021). Thus, translation as an analytical lens prompts the consideration of relational dynamics and structures of meaning-making as it “entangles the global, the national and the local, in an agency perspective [...]” and “entails the power relations between the different actors involved in the policy transfer process” (Hassenteufel and Zeigermann, 2021, p. 59).<sup>1</sup> This analytical framework advances the prevailing understanding of norm and policy diffusion in EU studies, which investigates the dynamics of a ‘most complete’ implementation of meaning in a foremost ‘top-down’ manner (Speyer and Stockmann, 2023) and, thus, taps uncharted analytical potential for EU studies as it is combined with established heuristics within this field (here, governance architectures, see below).

Approaching the puzzle of contested sustainability meaning in EU governance, this contribution aligns with recent research highlighting the ambivalent character of politicization in transitional governance which this *Frontiers Research Topic* tackles. In this sense, “the inevitability and desirability of political conflict for pursuing [...] transitions” (Paterson et al., 2022, p. 2) may clash with the aspirations of robust (that is: less contested) ecologically progressive yet socially

and economically inclusive transitional politics (also see Marquardt and Lederer, 2022). Accordingly, as we observe that the sustainable transition is politicized, rather than identifying ways to eliminate politicization and contestation, developing strategies to inclusively deal with these dynamics seemingly is the main challenge at hand.

Facing this tension, this explorative and problem-led paper provides empirical insights into one eminent policy context of the sustainability transition within the EU, the transport and mobility sector (Banister et al., 2011; Creutzig et al., 2015). Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions from this sector account for 24,6% of overall emissions in the EU. Furthermore, the sector has not substantially improved its performance in recent decades (European Commission, 2022), as was repeatedly highlighted in sectoral EU strategies for transport and mobility (e.g., the *White Papers* of 2001, 2011, 2020). Technological improvements and higher vehicle standards continue to be outweighed by growing travel demand and inelastic mobility practices, which are still dependent on individual motorized transport (European Environmental Agency, 2018; European Commission, 2022). Especially *urban mobility* has been approached as a realm in which the impacts of unsustainable transport condensate and which, at the same time, presents a high potential for sustainable change (Banister, 2008; European Commission, 2017). With this focus, the paper aims to add to the broad literature that has already scrutinized the challenges of complex EU multilevel sustainability governance (see, for example, Barnes and Hoerber, 2013; Wurzel et al., 2016; Fernandez et al., 2021). It furthermore establishes a link between this research on EU governance and literature that has problematized the polycentricity of global environmental and climate governance and hereby highlighted the role of inter-level interaction and local actors such as cities and city networks. However, this paper does not aim at a thorough (discourse) analysis of the Green Deal policies and their sectoral implementation (for such exercises, see for example, Schunz, 2022; Hereu-Morales et al., 2024).

I will develop my argument as follows: In the next section (2), I will discuss the eminent challenge of contested sustainability and establish that this results at least partly in attempts to (strategically) depoliticize sustainability within EU governance. Also, in this section, I will then provide a concise overview of the Green Deal as a novel EU governance architecture and develop my research hypothesis that the Green Deal may provide spaces to stipulate and cope with the contested meaning of sustainability. Following this, Section 3 sheds light on EU transport and mobility governance as a focal sector to achieve the Green Deal’s implementation and a meaningful sustainable transition, respectively. After a brief overview of this paper’s research design, I will present the results of the exploratory, qualitative-interpretive analysis of key EU policy and strategy documents and stakeholder interviews (Section 4). A discussion of the research contribution (Section 5) and a conclusion (Section 6) round up this paper.

## 2 Sustainability and EU governance

Over the past decades, sustainability has arguably evolved as a focal ideational orientation for policy on different scales, including EU governance. Foremost, this observation implies that sustainability serves as a boundary object against which practices and structures are normatively evaluated, both in scholarly as well as public discourse

<sup>1</sup> I provide a detailed theoretical discussion of norm translation in the context of EU urban mobility governance in my thesis (Stockmann, 2024), which also forms the background of this particular paper. Here, I limit myself to superficial explanation of the conceptual framework as the focus of this contribution lays on the policy implications that norm translation entails with regard to the current Green Deal-related dynamics.

(see, for example, [Dingwerth and Pattberg, 2009](#); [Feldhoff et al., 2019](#)). Nevertheless, while the omnipresence of sustainability is easily identified, the concept's internal complexity, allowing, among others, for stronger or weaker sustainability ([Davies, 2013](#)), makes it prone to substantive, context-dependent contestation ([Schwindenhammer et al., 2017](#); [Breitmeier et al., 2021](#)).

To further line out this paper's connection of the contestation and translation framework with the case under investigation, this section first reviews the sustainability assessment in EU governance. Secondly, it presents the Green Deal as a critical development for the translation of sustainability within the EU.

## 2.1 Sustainability and the EU: a conspicuous silence

One such context in which to observe the meaning-in-use of sustainability is EU governance. The EU has committed to international treaties and regimes such as the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Climate Accord. Thus, adhering to sustainability as a boundary object for policy action, the EU is (a) addressed by sustainability as a normative aspiration and, therefore, (b) faces the need to facilitate a translation of sustainability into sectoral Union policies.

Further expanding this policy-oriented perspective, critical and interpretative policy and governance studies have already contributed to a better understanding of the role of discursive dynamics and wagers in implementing EU sustainability policies ([Barnes and Hoerber, 2013](#); [Remling, 2018](#)). From such an interpretivist governance perspective ([Bevir and Rhodes, 2003](#); [Wagenaar, 2015](#)), it is implausible that actors, including the European Commission, are not trying to exert agency and alter a discourse using techniques such as policy framing. From this perspective, European Integration and the ideational grounding of EU sectoral policies emerge as a struggle between contested hegemonial projects ([Bulmer and Joseph, 2016](#)). Thus, successfully translating sustainability into EU sectoral governance hinges on the capacity of actors such as the European Commission to establish a hegemonial project attributing meaning to sustainability norms within EU governance discourses ([Barnes and Hoerber, 2013](#); [Machin, 2019](#)).

As [Remling \(2018\)](#) has shown, within the EU, such a discursive fixation coincides with a depoliticization of sustainability, as meaning-making is framed as an overtly technocratic practice separated from political contestation. However, what is problematic about such a depoliticized sustainability governance in the EU? While we know that as a concept, sustainability is utterly polysemic, so-called 'weaker' understandings of sustainability continue to dominate in policy and governance practice (see the seminal works by [Hajer, 1995](#); [Dryzek, 1997](#); [Bernstein, 2001](#), among others). EU policy is not exempt from this and continues to be shaped by an ecological modernization discourse presented "as rational, realistic, consensual and beneficial to all" ([Machin, 2019](#), p. 223). In this vein, for example, strategies of technological improvement and market-based instruments are considered sufficient to bring about a sustainable transition.

However, this apparent consensus is all but apolitical. Instead, it manifests eminent power relations and path dependencies for (transitional) governance. Accordingly, the observed fixation of sustainability must not be without alternatives. Scholars and political

activists already challenge the conspicuous silence around sustainability by opting for sharper boundaries to the sustainability concept (see, for example, [Swyngedouw, 2007](#)). Such "strong" accounts of sustainability prioritize the ecological and social dimension of sustainability over economic concerns and ascertain the need for a deep sociocultural transformation rather than gradual modernization ([Davies, 2013](#); [Neumayer, 2013](#)).

Even as a weak understanding of sustainability prevails, previous empirical research has highlighted inconsistencies and low performance in the ability of the European Commission, as the executive branch of the EU, to facilitate compliance with and the implementation of environmental and climate policies among and within member states ([Bondarouk and Mastebroek, 2018](#); [Börzel and Buzogány, 2019](#); [Burns et al., 2020](#)). Such implementation gaps in EU governance are often explained from an intergovernmental perspective by member state resistance, either in the individual implementation of EU policies or through a "watering down" of legislation in the EU council ([Schäfer, 2006](#)). For example, [Zito et al. \(2019\)](#), p. 201 conclude, that while "the environmental policy sector will continue to be one of the 'success' stories of European integration and held to be such, this picture is less positive for those pushing an environmental agenda, seeking both material and ideational change."

In light of these observations, the 2015 United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change (UNFCCC) Paris Agreement provided an open juncture for the future development of EU sustainability policy. While the Paris Agreement was univocally considered a vital step for global climate governance, also reflecting the EU's high ambitions, it was also apparent that the EU would need major internal governance and policy adjustments to meet the ambitious targets themselves ([Wurzel et al., 2016](#); [Oberthür and Groen, 2017](#)).

Following the Paris Agreement, various sectoral strategies, many of which included substantive "soft" provisions to facilitate the implementation of the Union's climate goals were established. The most comprehensive of such strategies was the *Winter Package* consisting of different policies establishing the "Energy Union" proposed in 2016, a declared policy goal of the Juncker Commission ([Ringel and Knodt, 2018](#)). As part of the Winter Package, especially the so-called "EU Governance Regulation" (Regulation 2018/1999) was considered a major adjustment of the EU's working procedures in the context of the sustainable transition. Particularly, more active forms of multilevel engagement in a horizontal and vertical dimension were envisioned to meet the complex challenges of meeting the carbon reduction objectives the EU had subscribed to in the Paris Agreement. Herewith, the Governance Regulation formed a blueprint for subsequent policy action beyond the energy sector, also informing the establishment of the Green Deal as the new EU governance architecture as detailed in the next section.

## 2.2 Enter Green Deal: a new governance architecture to cope with sustainability challenges

The analytical perspective and practical challenge of translating sustainability is also of key relevance to understanding the potential of a reconfiguration of EU sustainability governance in light of current challenges, with some even suggesting that the EU may have the

capacity “to make environmental, and in particular climate, policies its central thrust, purpose and vision, taking over the role that was once occupied by integration and the internal market” (Davies, 2021, p. 9). As it becomes more difficult for actors to maintain silence around sustainability in the wake of a more and more fast-burning socioecological crisis, the focus may need to shift from unilateral control to other strategies of coping with ambiguous normative meaning (relatedly, see Linsenmaier et al., 2021). Only in this way, a shift from weaker to stronger meanings of sustainability can be facilitated. Arguably, such coping requires reconsidering the spaces for and practices of interaction among different stakeholders and their diverging understandings of concepts such as sustainability as it is translated within sectoral EU policy.

With their conception of *governance architectures*, Borrás and Radaelli (2011) have proposed a framework to assess the dynamics of normatively contested meaning within EU (multi-level) governance (also see our discussion in Felder and Stockmann, 2023). The authors define governance architectures as “strategic and long-term political initiatives of international organizations on cross-cutting policy issues locked in commitments about targets and processes” (Borrás and Radaelli, 2011, p. 464). They consist of and combine ideational and organizational components and, as a result, aim to render possible the governance of value-based and aspirational meaning. They function as a link between encompassing governance and decentred (sectoral) policy programs (Borrás and Radaelli, 2011, p. 469).

Consequently, governance architectures can be considered a tool to (temporarily) structure and stabilize the travel of meaning within EU governance deployed by the European Commission to facilitate the translation of ideational priorities across sectoral structures. This way, they provide institutional space in a horizontal and vertical dimension. Horizontally, governance architectures as overarching strategies span different policy sectors and may, for example, facilitate conversation among different services within the European Commission or different stakeholder groups. Vertically, governance architectures propose patterns for the interaction of different political levels between the EU institutions, member states and beyond in the light of ideational and structural aims to be achieved. In both dimensions, governance architectures can be understood as attempts of either a one-sided fixation of meaning or proactive coping with normative contestation. In the former understanding, governance architectures can be thought of as tools to facilitate the ‘most complete’ top-down transmission of EU norms, as the norm and policy diffusion scholarship examines (see, for example, Checkel, 2001; Börzel and Risse, 2012). The largely unquestioned dominance of a technocratic ecological modernisation discourse as the normative orientation of EU sustainability policy shown above results from such a perspective. The latter understanding, on the contrary, focuses on the inherent conflict and politicization of norm dynamics. Here, governance architectures open up (material and immaterial) interaction spaces in which meaning is negotiated and opened for transformation as it moves horizontally and vertically within the EU. It is this politicizing potential of governance architectures that I want to chisel out in more detail in this article.

Over the past decades, the EU has used different governance architectures, with the *Lisbon Strategy* launched in 2000 and the *Europe 2020* strategy launched in 2010 being the most comprehensive (see Borrás and Radaelli, 2011). In November 2019, the then-newly elected European Commission under the presidency of Ursula Von

der Leyen proposed a new governance architecture to replace *Europe 2020: the Green Deal*. The Green Deal qualifies as a “long-term political initiative” (evidently) “of an International Organization” (the EU, represented here through the European Commission) and concerns “cross-cutting political issues.” The Green Deal as such has already been followed by concrete policy proposals and actions (“commitments about targets and processes”) within multiple sectors (Siddi, 2020; Szulecki, 2020), summarized in the *Fit-for-55* package, the Commission introduced in July 2021 (European Commission, 2021b). In this capacity, the Green Deal even substantively outweighs previous governance architectures, in which the link between strategy and operational sectoral implementation has been considered more affirmatory than substantive (Davies, 2021, p. 14). Just as its predecessor, the Green Deal was quickly framed by the Commission leadership, including among Von der Leyen two veterans from the Junkers era, Frans Timmermans and Margarete Vestager, as the EU’s attempt to live up to the most urgent challenges the EU was currently facing. Thus, while *Europe 2020* was set up in the wake of the EU Financial and State Debt crisis, the Green Deal reaffirmed the EU’s commitment to respond fiercely to the looming climate crisis.<sup>2</sup>

Given the success of previous EU governance architectures in ‘mainstreaming’ ideational orientation within sectoral governance, basically adhering to narratives of ecological modernization (see above, again Remling, 2018; Machin, 2019), the question arises whether the Green Deal can indeed provide a stimulus to reconfigure the challenges regarding sustainability in EU overall and sectoral governance as discussed above. Specifically, given the attachment of a relatively empty understanding of sustainability to eminent ideational discourses, one may ask if the Green Deal, although in itself contingent on the eminent understanding of sustainability in the EU, can open spaces to cope with the ambiguity of sustainability’s meaning in EU sectoral governance.

### 3 The transport and mobility sector as a mercurial part of the EU sustainability transition

A focal sector to investigate sustainability-related dynamics in the EU is transport and mobility due to the sector’s multiple transitional challenges. As I will investigate in this section, the complex and often fragmented structure of EU transport and mobility governance is historically entwined with significant “lock-ins” regarding the eminent meaning of sustainability. In this context, lock-ins are “path dependence that entrench technical, institutional, and behavioral systems with known technical and environmental disadvantages” (Seto et al., 2016, p. 427). In transport and mobility policy specifically, two examples of such lock-ins which are also reflected in the EU governance approach (Gössling and Cohen, 2014), are the dominance of individual motorized transport, generally dubbed as “car dependency” or “automobility (see, Paterson, 2007; Haas, 2021), and the entwinement of transport with economic prosperity and (in the

<sup>2</sup> And indeed, not much later, also the emerging Covid-19 pandemic and more lately the energy crisis following the Russian invasion of Ukraine (see Dupont et al., 2020; Felder and Stockmann, 2023; Wiertz et al., 2023).

EU case specifically) integration (“derived demand”; see Attard and Shiftan, 2015; García Mejuto, 2017). Due to these ‘lock-ins’, which are reflected in the sector’s stalling sustainability performance (see, for example, Creutzig et al., 2015; Dyrhaug and Rayner, 2023), transport and mobility also plays a crucial role in the deployment of the Green Deal governance architecture.

### 3.1 Development of EU transport and mobility governance

Despite the Union’s founding treaties mentioning the field of transport as a core area of EU policy, it was not until the 1990s that the EU Commission put forward a comprehensive EU transport strategy, the 1993 White Paper *The future development of the common transport policy* (see Stevens, 2004; Ponti et al., 2013). While the White Paper prominently referred to “sustainable mobility” in its subtitle, trans-continental traffic networks and other infrastructure-related policies accounted for most of the initiatives proposed in the document (Humphreys, 2011; Sack, 2014). This trend continued in the 2001 update *European transport policy for 2010: time to decide* that perpetuated the Commission’s focus on cohesion and economic competitiveness in terms of transport policy, despite the growing international awareness of the sector’s externalities. And still, the 2011 White Paper *Roadmap to a Single European Transport Area – Toward a competitive and resource efficient transport system* found no substantial progress toward a more ecologically sustainable transport system (for an overview, see Dyrhaug, 2013). However, with the 2011 edition, the Commission demonstrated a growing openness for a more comprehensive understanding of transport that was more amenable to what, not long before, Banister (2008) described as a “sustainable mobility paradigm,” the sociotechnical and sociocultural prerequisites of mobility systems and practices. Accordingly, the Commission actively sought new competencies in transport and mobility, proposing stand-alone strategies for urban mobility, among other things (Rommerts, 2012; May, 2013).

Amidst the continuous expansion of Commission competencies in different areas of transport and mobility policy under the guiding principle of achieving “sustainable mobility,” the eventual meaning of this ideational orientation remained shallow, mirroring the assessment of EU sustainability governance at large as discussed above (Dyrhaug, 2014, 2021). Indeed, eminent policy strategies in the field of mobility predominantly focus on the improvement of existing transport technology while ‘stronger’ transitional strategies are discursively sidelined. As such, the EU has put forward substantive technological standardization for combustion engine vehicles and introduced wide-ranging legislation regarding the regulation and roll-out of electric vehicle technology and related infrastructure (see, for example, the *Clean Vehicles Directive*, 2019/1161/EU). While both policy areas aim at a sustainability-related contribution, they still reproduce car dependency as a focal economic and cultural lock-in for EU governance. Moreover, the dictum of “mobility may not be curbed” (Transport White Paper 2011, COM 2011/144) reaffirms the central role of mobility for the functioning of the single market that the EU Commission attributes to transport. Combined with the aspiration of a technology-neutral mobility policy, advertising the “greening of all modes” (COM 2020/789) the Commission thus has seemingly watered down its own transformative ambition. In turn, stronger policies such

as a more rigid regulation of short-haul flights, carbon-friendly sectoral subsidies and tax exemptions have not emerged at the EU level. Most recently, the heavily polarized debate on a ban on combustion engine vehicles from 2035 on has been an additional prime example of these dynamics (Birel et al., 2024).

However, the reasons for this cannot exhaustively be explained by the responsible Directorate-General for Transport and Mobility’s (DG MOVE) incapacity or unwillingness to come forward with a coherent and effective engagement with the sustainability concept. On the contrary, I consider the high complexity of transport and mobility governance as similarly important to explain this dysfunctionality (Tschöerner, 2016; Strassheim and Canzler, 2019). While DG MOVE puts forward the strategic and legislative framework for transport policy within the EU, other policy areas have been closely connected to these dynamics. Most noteworthy, much of the actual funding for transport and mobility policies is facilitated through the structural and regional funds of the EU and the research and innovation schemes. Furthermore, legislation from other policy areas, such as environment, energy and climate, is closely linked to mobility and transport policy (Dyrhaug, 2021; Stockmann and Graf, 2023). This list is non-exhaustive. Taken together, the eminent scholarly assessment that mobility is a sector that is substantively ‘locked in’ on its way toward an ecologically sustainable transition is further aggravated by its structural complexity and fragmentation (Goldthau and Sovacool, 2012; Creutzig et al., 2015).

A closer look into one specific transport and mobility governance area, urban mobility, exemplifies this observation. A significant share of transport’s negative externalities occurs in urban areas. Not only does (road) traffic within the boundaries of cities account for 23% of all GHG emissions of the transport sector EU-wide (European Commission, 2021a) but also, more local environmental conflicts, such as air or noise pollution and spatial conflicts, are most apparent within urban contexts. Meanwhile, cities within the EU have faced continuous struggles with urban ambient air pollution, also producing the impression of ‘laggards’ to a sustainable transition, such as Brussels, Glasgow or Hamburg (Stockmann and Graf, 2023). Since air pollution from the 1990s had been considered an issue of EU-wide concern (due to its epidemic health effects), with its *Directive 2008/50 – Clean Air for Europe*, the Commission had established a legally binding device to account for persistent air pollution (Bondarouk and Liefferink, 2017). Air quality plans containing measures to address air pollution locally were demanded if cities and urban regions did not meet certain thresholds. Since 2015, the Commission has brought infringement procedures against eight member states, including Germany, for not complying with the directive (Gollata and Newig, 2017). Measures that cities and regional governments imposed to comply with the directive and to forego infringement included the so-called “driving bans,” which sparked a controversy in the German public together with the simultaneous “Diesel scandal” (Palmer and Schwanen, 2019). As a result, this observation shows the intersections of urban mobility with other policy areas, such as the environment and public health and potential frictions between these normatively loaded policy goals (Stockmann and Graf, 2023).

At the same time, cities in the EU and beyond are scholarly and practically applauded for their capacity for a sustainable transition and have established the image of being at the forefront of climate efforts even against the backlash of national governments (Bouteligier, 2013; Bansard et al., 2017; Smeds and Acuto, 2018). Within the EU, a group of ‘frontrunner cities’ such as Copenhagen, Ghent or (more recently)

Paris are commonly perceived as “real-world laboratories” for sustainable mobility change. Also, a variety of city networks such as the *Covenant of Mayors* in the field of energy or *Eurocities* and *POLIS* in the field of mobility are considered spearheads with substantive potential to upscale and diffuse sustainable innovations within the EU (Kern, 2019). Accordingly, in successfully translating global sustainability norms, cities obtain the role of partners for international actors and global civil society. Therefore, establishing a governance mechanism that includes cities and sustains a ‘translation space’ can be regarded as a vital organizational aspect of a successful governance architecture.

Amidst this generally acknowledged potential of cities, the principle of subsidiarity grants EU member states high autonomy regarding sub-national issues, including urban affairs and intrastate transport. Therefore, since the “EU added value” of Union action was hard to quantify, the 2013 *EU Urban Mobility Package* was only confirmed by the EU Council after a veto of the German government, among others, had blocked it for more than a year. As a result, the 2013 package established a direct funding link for the European Commission for urban transport through the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) within the Structural and Regional Funds framework.<sup>3</sup> However, legal liabilities to engage in mobility planning, such as the mandatory establishment of Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMP) in cities or provisions for urban vehicle access regulations (UVAR), were not established at the EU level (see Werland, 2020; Franssen et al., 2023, respectively). Instead, EU policy regarding urban mobility remained largely confined to *soft law* measures such as funding provisions, recommendations and related network activities.

## 3.2 Mobility and the Green Deal

Previous European Commission’s transport strategies and adherent policy initiatives were already closely linked to the contemporary Commission’s overall governance architectures. The 2001 and 2011 White Paper explicitly reference the all-encompassing, long-time Commission governance architectures, the *Lisbon strategy* (2000) and the *Europe 2020 strategy* (2010), respectively. In line with these architectures, the sectoral transport strategies were amenable to their core ideational components, namely European competitiveness and cohesion (Dyrhaug, 2013, 2014). They thus reinforced the initial economically grounded values of the European Community. Efforts relating to ecological (and partly social) aspects of sustainability, which had risen onto the global agenda, were addressed but remained somewhat ambiguous and ill-defined. This is illustrated through the repeated admittance of failure regarding the aims of the previous White Paper (also in the mid-term reviews). In consequence, whereas the EU policy initiatives in the sector of mobility and transport were relatively successful in translating economic norms (such as the single market for transport; see 2011 White Paper), sustainability-related norms remained relatively ‘empty’, that is being referenced without filling them with definite meaning (Machin, 2019).

With the Von der Leyen Commission introducing the Green Deal strategy in late 2019, it quickly became clear that the update of the

transport and mobility White Paper scheduled for 2020 needed to respond to this new priority. Re-branded as a strategy rather than a white paper, the *Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy – putting European transport on track for the future* (EUSSMS) was published in December 2020, under the auspices of the Green Deal and the ongoing Corona pandemic. The EUSSMS (as had been in previous White Papers) is connected to a wide array of more concrete policy proposals, some of which had been introduced before the actual strategy. Others again were announced in the working plan of DG MOVE and the 2021 *Fit-for-55* package (European Commission, 2021b). This set-up of documents, the Green Deal program, the EUSSMS and the adherent policy proposals constitute the frame for the analysis sought in this paper’s contribution. They are the elements through which ideational and organizational components of the Green Deal are (potentially) linked, and as they form “political sites in themselves (rather than mere outputs of political processes) that actively build and contest” meaning in EU governance (Remling, 2018, p. 482). As argued above, the contested competencies within the Commission and between the Commission and member states (and subnational entities within those) pose a challenge to achieving these linkages. Accordingly, a translation through the Green Deal architecture would also need to address this organizational challenge.

The upcoming empirical part of this paper aims to answer to what extent the EU Green Deal as a governance architecture is situated within this arena and whether it can provide spaces to engage in the meaning-making of sustainability across EU governance. As established in Section 3, the EU faces the challenge of translating, that is, transforming outcomes of global sustainability governance, such as the Paris Climate Accord or the Sustainable Development Goals, into sectoral policy. To facilitate such a translation of contested ideational components, in the context of this paper the meaning of sustainability, the European Commission makes use of governance architectures. As shown in Section 2, those can either be mobilized to facilitate a ‘most complete’ transmission of meaning in a top-down understanding or they may be understood as instruments that make space for a more politicized, interactive meaning-making across vertical and horizontal realms. In conclusion, these observations stipulate whether the European Commission’s new governance architecture, the Green Deal, can provide spaces to cope with the inherently contested meaning of sustainability, potentially advancing stronger notions of the concept.

An empirical analysis of this puzzle must take as its starting point and investigate whether the organizational components of the governance architecture have changed in a way that would benefit the translation of sustainability as an ideational orientation. As background for this evaluation, this contribution proposes looking at the transport and mobility policy sector. Our initial investigation into this field has highlighted the relevance of this sector for a sustainable transition and, at the same time, unveiled necessary governance adjustments, among other things, in intra-Commission processes and competencies as well as in the inter-level interaction between EU actors, member states and subnational entities.

## 4 Analysis: is the green Deal a catalyst for a translation of sustainability in the transport and mobility sector?

In this article, up to now, I have introduced the essential problem of this contribution, the depoliticized coping of the EU with contested

<sup>3</sup> Through the “Horizon” research and development programs project funding for urban mobility projects had been established in 2001 through the *CIVITAS* initiative already (Pfleger, 2014; Cavoli, 2015).

sustainability and the question of whether the Green Deal governance architecture can work as a catalyst for translation in Section 2. Furthermore, I have presented the transport and mobility sector as a focal area for these dynamics in Section 3. In this section, I empirically substantiate my observations by presenting the results of an exploratory analysis of the Green Deal's (perceived) effects and potentials.

## 4.1 Empirical research design

Approaching dynamics within complex EU governance requires a sound methodological framework to identify meaning within sectoral policy and consider the structural and discursive context of normatively guided meaning-making. Qualitative-interpretive methods have already informed EU policy research and provide an extensive toolbox for such an analysis (Yanow, 2007; Wagenaar, 2015). Therefore, in this paper, I will also pursue an analysis that follows the interpretative logic of accessing meaning in an exploratory and reflexive manner. Specifically, I aim to present the results of a qualitative-interpretative analysis of central policy documents and expert/stakeholder interviews<sup>4</sup> that I conducted between June 2020 and May 2021. Documents and experts were selected via a theoretical sampling, following the overall research interest of better understanding the Green Deal Initiative's dynamics and its sectoral implementation in transport and mobility policy. Taking inspiration from a constructivist grounded theory (CGT) approach (Charmaz, 2014), the material was selected and accessed in an iterative process going back and forth between the fieldwork and the initial coding of the material.

The Green Deal strategy of the European Commission of December 2019 was the starting point for this research process. As the initiative evolved, additional policy and technical working documents were added to the data corpus up to the *Fit for 55* package the Commission presented in July 2021. Since the project aims to investigate how the Green Deal facilitates the translation of sustainability meaning to transport and mobility governance, documents referring to this sector supplement the data. In particular, the 2020 *EU Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy* (EUSMS, December 2020) was identified as the focal adaption of the Green Deal to transport and mobility policy. Beyond that, I also accessed the EU Commission's DG MOVE working plan for 2020–2024 and documents guiding the novel *EU Mission on Climate-neutral and smart cities* (2020).<sup>5</sup> Analyzing these documents serves the interest of better understanding the meaning of sustainability within the EU governance architecture and its translation to sectoral policies (Remling, 2018). It further serves to identify how different actors are

addressed and how processes are framed to account for changes in sustainable (urban) mobility governance.

To triangulate this analysis and assess the processes and power structures behind these dynamics, 28 half-standardized expert interviews with EU officials,<sup>6</sup> civil society actors, private actors and other observers were conducted in 2019–2021.<sup>7</sup> Through the interviews, I aimed to assess the perception of meaning and meaning-making interaction among professionals in the field. With this, it becomes feasible to uncover trajectories and junctions for reconfiguring governance dynamics through the meaning-making processes facilitated through the Green Deal. Further material was also considered for mapping the extant discourse situating the research field (Wagenaar, 2015; Clarke et al., 2018). Following the logic of CGT, all material was then coded and memo-rized in several loops of analysis, enabling the material-encompassing identification of meaning-making processes and structures. I focused on identifying relevant actor constellations and relative positions within the urban mobility governance arena.

## 4.2 Results

After briefly sketching the research design, I will now present the results of this study in more depth. I focus on the horizontal and vertical dynamics attributed to the Green Deal governance architecture. As I will show, these dynamics may be beneficial to cope with rather than overcoat the contested meaning of sustainability in EU governance.

### 4.2.1 Horizontal dynamics

Horizontal interaction between actors in EU governance has often been characterized as occurring in sectoral “silos,” which would perpetuate fragmented and technocratically framed policy solutions (Hartlapp et al., 2014; Meuleman, 2019). However, as the results of my analysis show, this perception must not be indefinitely fixed but may be subject to a reconfiguration in the context of the Green Deal architecture.

Many interviewees highlighted the role of executive vice-president Frans Timmermans inside the Commission (see Interviews 3,7,8,10). He was perceived as a critical change agent and ‘honest broker’ for the Green Deal, closely linked to his person, as a senior staff member for a European City network observes:

*“I think of in general, the role the Commissioner Timmermans has played over the last year, even if he's not in charge of mobility, but I think he brought this environmental awareness more strongly into the view of the Commission and even tackling different aspects, of course, mobility is concerned.” (Interview 3)*

<sup>4</sup> Due to travel restrictions in the course of the Covid-19 pandemic the interviews were conducted remotely using different video communication tools. Possible implications of this approach have been reflected for instance by Howlett (2021). An anonymized list of the interviews is provided in the Annex to this paper.

<sup>5</sup> For an overview see: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/research-and-innovation/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe/missions-horizon-europe/climate-neutral-and-smart-cities\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/research-and-innovation/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe/missions-horizon-europe/climate-neutral-and-smart-cities_en)

<sup>6</sup> Commission DGs MOVE, REGIO, CLIMA, ENVIRONMENT, RTD, ENERGY; Cabinet of the Vice-President for the Green Deal, other EU institutions, e. g. European Parliament, Committee of the Regions, Court of Auditors, European Investment Bank, INEA.

<sup>7</sup> An anonymized list of all interviews will be provided in the Annex to this paper. The index numbers of the interviews are 1–49 due to a bigger dataset from which the interviews were eventually elicited.

A structural view into the Commission organization unveils the sector-encompassing portfolio of the Vice-President and his team. In interviewees' perceptions inside and outside the Commission, this allows for a more dynamic interaction beyond established Commission procedures (e.g., Interview 8).

In (urban) mobility specifically, many interviewees have pointed to the parallel structures of programs, award schemes, and networks organized by different Directorate-Generals (again perpetuating different discourses and operationalizations; Interviews 6,8,19,24,38). Here, the hope is articulated that these structures can be streamlined through the leadership of the Vice-Presidency. Indeed, some interviewees have reported progress in re-framing initiatives from their departments to respond more comprehensively to the Green Deal. This is, for instance, mirrored in the restructuring of the previous *Innovation and Networks Executive Agency* (INEA), which in 2021 became the *Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency* (CINEA) with more clear-cut and sector-encompassing funding schemes and competencies (see Interviews 7,15).

This spotlight shares a high commonality with research on policy norm dynamics within International Organizations (Park and Vetterlein, 2010; Vetterlein and Moschella, 2014). I assert that through the restructuring within the Commission, voices that were marginalized or fragmented before become audible. Here, the dynamics also concern the practices of the Commission staff itself, as a senior executive at DG MOVE expresses:

*"When you look at the sources of that, it's things like missions: staff missions, you know, I fly to go to a conference or have a meeting with the German Transport Ministry; it's paying for others to come to conferences or having a conference which people come to, even if you don't pay for them to come; it is, of course, a mission from buildings and everything else"* (Interview 6)

Of course, structural rearrangements of the Commission have also happened in previous administrations. Therefore, no estimation is possible (yet) of how resilient these dynamics will be (see discussion below). Nevertheless, the intra-Commission governance is a crucial factor to consider when assessing the Green Deals' capacity to get back to coping with rather than excluding the contested meaning of sustainability. Arguably, different Commission services hold and articulate different meanings of sustainability. For example, DG MOVE may put forward a technological-optimist understanding of sustainable mobility as detailed above, DG Environment fosters a socio-ecological understanding of sustainability putting health at the centre, while, DG Clima, again, prioritizes the climate-neutral transition (see for a more detailed discussion, Stockmann, 2024). If those different articulations exist alongside each other without being related, they risk being unevenly received in sectoral policy, with the 'loudest', that is, the most politically pressing or appealing understanding becoming dominant. As demonstrated, this, often enough, leads to a "weak" or at least fuzzy reception of sustainability. Now, it is not like the Green Deal is vanishing away these tensions and frictions instantly and altogether. But by altering the 'how' meaning is made horizontally across the Commission (and beyond), it may well provide new spaces and practices to accommodate politicized meaning-making that eventually allow for different translations of sustainability.

#### 4.2.2 Vertical dynamics

In addition to the horizontal dynamics within and beyond the European Commission, vertical dynamics, as well as potential depoliticizing barriers, have been discussed at length concerning sustainability and beyond (Bondarouk and Mastenbroek, 2018; Kern, 2019). As these studies show, level-encompassing movements of meaning have often been shaped by a conflictive, oppositional notion, where one realm renounces the other's capacity for required action. As the case of urban mobility governance shows, cities have often been perceived by the EU as merely passive "laboratories" (see Interview 12). On the contrary, city representatives and civil society regularly call out "the EU," represented through the Commission," for being too distant and technocratic (Smeds and Cavoli, 2021). The reverberating notion of the EU subsidiarity principle as a "knock-down" argument at the disposal of member states, for example in the case of stricter vehicle access regulation, further aggravates the disturbed vertical relationship within EU sustainability politics (van Kersbergen and Verbeek, 2007). As a result, the politicized nature of the sustainable transition is not catered for, leading to a watering down to weaker understandings of sustainability and a latent retreat from inclusive contestation.

The exploratory analysis presented here shows that the Green Deal entails opportunities and challenges in facilitating new vertical governance mechanisms in the EU multi-level system that may counter this predominant perception. Notably, on the one hand, interviewees from city networks and civil society, generally speaking, have voiced hesitations since they feel the pressure to 'do' something with the Green Deal without substantial Union and member state support (financial and operational; see Interviews 3,8,10):

*"So, what we see now also in view of the new multiannual financial framework, the new financial instruments that are coming, the Green Deal also, now the plan is really to say, 'OK, we need to deploy and we need to implement [the SUMPs]. We have done enough planning, we need now to build, to execute."* (Interview 8)

On the other hand, the Green Deal might have stipulated a more open discussion on the concept of subsidiarity within the Commission. Findings from the interview demonstrate that these discussions occur formally and informally within the Commission and together with other stakeholders. Some interviewees mentioned a working group (closely linked to Timmermans, in the previous Commission already) engaging with the idea of 'active subsidiarity', elaborating new ways of interacting with actors beyond the member states (Interviews 6,7,8). More formally, new, 'soft' ways of interaction – and "deal-making" – are also sought in the *Climate-neutral and smart cities mission*, the Commission's flagship initiative to stipulate urban progress toward climate neutrality until 2030. Here, the portfolio outlines commitments to be negotiated between the Commission, member states, and the local level in an unprecedented way (Interviews 7,42).

The need for new forms of interaction is also mirrored in sectoral strategies such as the EUSSMS. Moreover, it seems as if the Green Deal could benefit from the experience gained in networks in the urban mobility sector before the Green Deal. Using these existing structures instead of inventing new ones can be perceived as another potential for the Green Deal as it evolves. Furthermore, it would ensure that the local level has a voice in appropriating the implementation of the Green Deal. As interviewees highlighted, the operationalization of the Green Deal (and previous strategies) tended to happen in the



intergovernmental arena, perpetuating national projects and priorities. The needs and potentials of cities as drivers of sustainable transitions were left out of focus. The opening up through the Green Deal might also enable reconsidering these trajectories and the development of new interaction models, although clearly national hesitance against “harder” EU governance will persist (relatedly, see [Knodt and Schoenefeld, 2020](#)). This once again highlights the need to find ways to gradually harden soft governance instruments which, as this exploratory analysis suggests, may be facilitated through the establishment of multiscale translation spaces.

As a result, governance innovations in the context of the Green Deal may well have an effect beyond facilitating a silent and smooth transfer of policy across political levels. Conversely, they may allow for coping with dissonances and procedural contingencies rather than evading conflict by falling back to one-sided policy design and latent institutional opposition. As the establishment of or even hardening of new instruments may open spaces for inter-level meaning-making, a reconfiguration of sustainability, resulting in a more coherent translation, may be feasible.

## 5 Discussion: the green Deal – beacon or already burned-out?

As becomes apparent, the Green Deal has stipulated changes in governance mechanisms and structures within and beyond the European Commission. Inside the Commission, the vice-presidency of Frans Timmermans has facilitated a more interactive engagement with sustainability, making space for the contestation of different meanings of the concept. In the inter-level dynamics of the EU system, the Green Deal provokes the reconsideration of established interactions perpetuated through principles such as subsidiarity. Acknowledging that the Green Deal will not be successfully implemented without a more integrated interaction between levels and stakeholders, the strategy speaks to attempts to render subsidiarity more ‘active’ rather than a passive concept to defend member state competencies. Nevertheless, whether the Green Deal’s initial coping qualities can be sustained over time remains to be seen.

First, the EU is shattered by what is increasingly widely understood to be a ‘polycrisis’, underscoring the concurrent relevance of other competing ideational orientations for EU governance. There is room to suggest that the Commission has the capacity to link the Green Deal’s initial objectives to crises such as those posed by the Covid-19 pandemic or the Russian invasion of Ukraine and may even use these as catalysts for normative reconfiguration ([Felder and Stockmann, 2023](#)). Indeed, the provisions for both the *Next Generation EU* pandemic reaction facility as well as the *REPower EU* program to react to the war-induced energy crisis provide ample links to the Green Deal and mobility as a focal sector thereof. At the same time, the immediacy of crises also raises substantive questions regarding the “justness” of a sustainable transition, as can, for example, be seen concerning energy prices and the costs associated with the change of energy carriers for households in Germany and other countries (see [Wiertz et al., 2023](#)).

Second, political trajectories within the EU multi-level system may well affect the evolution of and prioritization of projects within the Green Deal architecture, with an uncertain outcome. The recent resignation of Frans Timmermans as Vice-president of the Commission to pursue a run in the 2023 Dutch elections illustrates

this caveat. As much as stakeholders within and beyond the Commission have applauded Timmermans’ entrepreneurship and conviction, there is still uncertainty about whether his successor in the position, Wopke Hoekstra, a former Shell executive and avid critic of EU financial integration, will display the same conviction and charisma. Especially as the Von der Leyen Commission enters the last year of its tenure, with anti-European and climate-skeptical forces rallying up for the next European elections in June 2024, the architecture of the Green Deal still has to prove its resilience against a possible backlash in the next Commission’s tenure at the latest.

Third, the analysis of transport and mobility as an exemplary sector in the climate transition has unveiled close, long-lasting relationships between different actors that have shaped the governance architecture’s anchoring in the sector and obtained a considerable power position *vis-a-vis* EU policymaking. In particular, the analysis has uncovered ‘revolving door’ mechanisms of staff of different actors and a considerable identification of key actors within a network that was repeatedly characterized as a “family” within the interviews and at stakeholder events I observed. At the same time, it becomes evident that their influence is curtailed by actors (top-down *and* bottom-up) who strategically choose not to be part of this dense community. The limits of the community are, among other things, characterized by persistent language barriers that continue to exclude actors and a logic of ‘self-sustainment’ employed by key community actors. In that logic, particular objects, such as SUMP, are pushed forward since they guarantee funding and are thus vital for the community’s survival. On the contrary, this indicates a potential lack of innovation and dynamics within the community, which may well lead to a shrinking of translation spaces as actors evade conflict and contestation to sustain ‘peace in the family’.

Taken together, there is indeed enough reason to be skeptical about “whether [the Green Deal] is good enough, both to save the climate, and to save the EU” in the light of the omnipresent backlash against EU integration and transitional policies ([Davies, 2021](#), p. 14). While the stakes for both a robust, deep-reaching climate policy and a new integrative narrative for the EU itself are becoming higher in a truly “fast burning” fashion ([Seabrooke and Tsingou, 2019](#)), the more dynamic governance the EU may provide horizontally and vertically is far from being politically secured.

## 6 Conclusion

Concluding from these three spotlights, we currently witness a critical juncture of and for the Green Deal. Its capacity to attain the reverberating effect previous governance architectures had hinges primarily on its capacity to institutionalize the changing horizontal and vertical patterns of interaction beyond an “institutional void” ([Hajer, 2003](#)). With this, it becomes apparent that the needed reconfiguration of sustainability meaning within EU governance may need to be ‘locked-in’ again to some extent to stabilize spaces of meaning-making. Accordingly, this analysis gives empirical relining to the dilemma of transition scholars of the desire to “making policy and institutional development *irreversible*” while at the same time insisting “on the inevitability and desirability of political *conflict*” ([Paterson et al., 2022](#), pp. 1 f.), already explained in the introduction to this article. In other words, while it is the transformational potential of governance architectures that this paper wanted to establish, countering a one-sided understanding of them as mere top-down

diffusion facilities, effective use of governance architectures in the light of the sustainability polycrisis will eventually again require ideational and structural fixation. Accordingly, this paper does not renounce the justification (or even requirement) of normative stances but instead makes a proposition about how to govern those inclusively under the condition of policy complexity and uncertainty.

This paper has approached the Green Deal as an architecture for sectoral EU governance and policymaking. This way, it has updated the initial work on the concept of governance architectures to account for the newest policy and governance developments within the EU and especially focused on governance architectures' capacity to provide spaces for coping with polysemic meaning(-in-use) of ideational orientations such as sustainability. The empirical insights gained through an exploratory, interpretive-qualitative analysis of the transport and mobility sector as a focal area of meaning-making dynamics indicate that this characterization and the potential attributed to the Green Deal may hold. It is vital for complex, 'locked-in' sectors such as transport and mobility that governance architectures can provide a frame for political interaction and necessary rearrangements of governance. Accordingly, the analysis has revealed emerging spaces opened up through the Green Deal, accounting for interaction across different stakeholders and their conception of sustainability in a horizontal and vertical dimension. However, iterating existing criticism of the Green Deal, this article falls short of answering the question if the new governance architecture did (already) bring about a transformative shift or just a mere reproduction of an EU "vanilla climate policy [...] not threatening to current power holders" (Davies, 2021, p. 15).

Accordingly, these observations may inform further research in the field of transport and mobility as well as in other policy areas that are similarly important *and* contested in the context of the sustainable transition. In this regard, also the current farmer protests (i.e., the agriculture sector), the EU biodiversity regulation or the disputes around EU corporate reporting regulation must be understood as politicized struggles around the contested meaning of sustainability in times of the European polycrisis. Such future research might use this assessment as a starting point to evaluate the Green Deal's performance over time since the architecture is still 'at its beginning' and is intended to have a more long-lasting influence. While critics have already dismissed the Green Deal as a mere "repackaging" of already agreed ecological modernization-aligned policies (Schunz, 2022; Hereu-Morales et al., 2024) or even an "EU first" strategy, perpetuating hegemonial EU market policy (Vela Almeida et al., 2023), this paper provides room to suggest that it may however inform a sustained policy debate about the *how-to-govern* within the EU, including, among other things, a reconfiguration of the Commissions 'soft' role vis-à-vis other political levels (also see, Knodt and Schoenefeld, 2020; Thaler and Pakalkaite, 2021). Relatedly, it seems interesting to consider differences between the Green Deal and previous governance architectures or similar initiatives in other regions, such as the United States. This prospective research could formulate a more general description of 'deal-making' as a new mode of coping with normative indeterminateness in complex governance situations even beyond the field of sustainable transitions.

## Data availability statement

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

## Ethics statement

Ethical approval was not required for the study involving human participants in accordance with the local legislation and institutional requirements. Written informed consent was obtained from the individuals for participation in the study and for the publication of any potentially identifying information included in the article.

## Author contributions

NS: Conceptualization, Data curation, Methodology, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

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## Conflict of interest

The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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## Supplementary material

The Supplementary material for this article can be found online at: <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpos.2024.1356897/full#supplementary-material>

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