The EU Cities Mission: Recognizing the non-neutrality of climate policies.

Analysis of urban climate policy in a multi-level governance process with an environmental justice perspective

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A thesis submitted to the Department of Environmental Sciences and Policy
of Central European University
in part fulfillment of the degree of Marster of Sciences
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June 2024
Vienna, Austria

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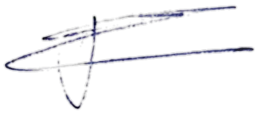

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ABSTRACT

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For the degree of Master of Science and entitled: The EU Cities Mission: Recognizing the non-neutrality of climate policies. Analysis of urban climate policy in a multi-level governance process with an environmental justice perspective.

June 2024.

The intersection of climate change and social justice is especially pertinent in urban environments, where inequalities are closely linked to the effects of climate change. This thesis investigates the EU Cities Mission, an initiative launched by the European Commission in 2021 to support 100 European cities in achieving climate neutrality by 2030. The EU Cities Mission provides a unique context to examine how governance structures can either facilitate or constraint the integration of environmental justice into urban climate policy.

The central research question addressed is: How are narratives related to environmental justice framed within the multi-level governance framework of the Cities Mission? Utilizing a critical environmental justice framework, this study employs a combination of grey literature review, discourse analysis, and interviews to uncover the architecture of the Cities Mission's governance. It assesses the extent to which environmental justice considerations are integrated into discourses of the European Commission and the cities of Marseille and Leuven, the chosen case studies.

The findings suggest that the experimental governance and innovation management approaches promoted by the European Commission risk reinforcing neoliberal environmentalism, which often conflicts with justice-informed environmentalism. Nonetheless, bottom-up governance and citizen involvement practices demonstrate a stronger potential for achieving equitable processes and outcomes in urban decision-making, provided they are conducted with careful attention to justice aspects. Lastly, the recognition of alternative urban transition models that emphasize resource and wealth distribution over economic growth is essential and should be acknowledged by the European Commission.

Keywords <Environmental justice; Urban climate governance; Mutli-level governance; Experimental governance; Bottom-up approach; Citizen involvement >

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my thesis supervisor Anke Schaffartzik for her advice, support and guidance on my research journey.

I would also like to thank the people who responded favorably to my interview requests for the valuable information they provided.

Finally, I would like to thank my friends and family for their support during the writing of my thesis.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CEU eTD Collection

CEU eTD Collection

CEU eTD Collection

CEU eTD Collection

CEU eTD Collection

CEU eTD Collection

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AP: Action Plan

CCC: Climate City Contract

C: Commitments

DG: Directorates-General

EU: European Union

GHG: greenhouse gases

IP: Investment Plan

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1. INTRODUCTION

Amidst escalating climate crise and growing social inequalities, cities have emerged as central field where the dual imperatives of sustainability and justice intersect. Cities are both major emission hubs and primary victims of climate change impacts due to their high population density and concentration of inequalities (Bulkeley, Edwards, and Fuller, 2014). Seeking to address these challenges, the European Commission introduced the EU Cities Mission in September 2021. This initiative aims to assist 100 European cities in achieving climate neutrality by 2030. The Cities Mission presents a unique opportunity to explore how governance structures can either constrain or facilitate considerations of environmental justice within urban climate policy. This thesis investigates how narratives related to environmental justice are framed within the multi-level governance framework of the Cities Mission. The argument posits that the governance framework plays a crucial role in shaping how environmental justice is addressed in urban climate policy.

1.1 Overview of the EU Cities Mission

The Cities Mission aims to achieve the objectives of the European Green Deal specifically within cities. The European Green Deal set out the political objective of reducing emissions by 55% by 2030 and achieving climate neutrality in the European Union (EU) by 2050 (European Council, 2021). The Green Deal encompasses the goal of achieving a "just transition," which entails shifting toward environmental sustainability through fair and inclusive processes and outcomes, ensuring that “no one is left behind.” (European Commission 2020, 1). However, climate change-related inequalities are intensifying along with the crisis (Khalfan, Ashfaq et al. 2023; Chancel, Bothe, and Voituriez 2023). Indeed, climate issues aggravate the vulnerability of the already most vulnerable (IPCC 2023), and climate policies should not ignore or exacerbate existing inequalities.

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The Cities Mission has generated considerable optimism and expectations among European cities, as shown by the 377 cities that applied for participation, though only 100 spots are currently available. The selected cities are intended to serve as exemplary models, inspiring all EU cities to adopt similar measures by 2050, ensuring that the solutions identified benefit the entire European Union. Between 2020 and 2022, the European Commission, with the Mission board, laid the foundation for the Cities Mission through consultations with citizens and stakeholders. The mission was officially launched in September 2021 and the selection of cities followed in spring 2022. The second phase involves the preparation of Climate City Contracts (CCC) by the selected cities, which detail the climate strategies, action plans, and investment plans of the cities. The Climate City Contracts must be signed by the municipalities, witnessed by the European Commission and the respective state. To support the selected cities, the European Commission will provide funding opportunities, advice and support through a state-level coordination, networking and learning opportunities, and support for citizen involvement in decision-making. Two cities that had signed their Climate City Contracts during the study period serve as case studies: Marseille and Leuven. These cities offer contrasting perspectives: Marseille, a large metropolis in Southern Europe characterized by significant inequality, and Leuven, a mid-sized university town in Northern Europe known for its proactive climate policies.

1.2 Motivation of the research

The link between climate change and social justice (Schlosberg and Collins 2014) is especially pertinent in urban areas, where inequalities are closely tied to climate policy impacts (Dooling 2009; Anguelovski et al. 2020). This thesis investigates how the EU Cities Mission addresses these intertwined challenges within a multi-level governance framework. The literature (see the qualitative systematic review made by Cairney, Timonin, and Stephan, 2023) emphasizes the

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necessity for policy and policy-making to increase collaborative efforts among diverse actors and to foster climate justice. However, there is a gap in understanding how justice principles are operationalized within specific multi-level policy frameworks. It is crucial to examine how governance frameworks may either perpetuate or correct inequalities, particularly concerning marginalized communities, given the risk of reproducing existing inequalities and power structures in climate policy design and implementation. The Cities Mission offers a pertinent subject for clarifying the potential impact of multi-level governance arrangements on addressing environmental justice issues. The relevance of this research is also practical. In terms of timing, the Cities Mission, launched in 2021, is entering its implementation phase in 2024, providing a timely opportunity to examine its impacts. In terms of content, Cities Mission represents the European Commission's first mission-oriented policy to tackle climate change, thus calling for in-depth investigation for further policy development.

1.3 Research question, objectives and methods

The research question is defined as: How are narratives related to environmental justice framed within the multi-level governance framework of the EU Cities Mission? This thesis posits that the governance framework significantly influences the consideration of environmental justice in urban climate policy. The objectives of the thesis are twofold: First, to assess the consideration given to environmental justice in the Cities Mission preparatory documents by the European Commission and in the Climate City Contracts of Marseille and Leuven and exploring qualitative differences (Objective N°1). Second, to unveil the implications of the governance framework of the Cities Mission for addressing environmental justice, particularly multi-level governance, the roles designated for citizen involvement, and experimental governance (Objective N°2). The aim of the research is to advance our understanding of how governance frameworks of urban climate policy

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affect the distribution of environmental benefits and burdens among social groups and the inclusiveness of decision-making processes. The thesis seeks to contribute to the broader discussion on how to address the climate crisis as a socio-ecological crisis, by recognizing the interconnectedness of the environmental and social dimensions. Employing a critical framework of environmental justice, this research combines a grey literature review, discourse analysis and interviews to reveal the architecture and principles of the Cities Mission's governance and to assess the extent to which environmental justice aspects are considered by the European Commission and the cities of Marseille and Leuven.

1.4 Outline

The body of the thesis is structured as follows: The literature review provides a comprehensive examination of research on urban climate policy, perspectives on environmental justice, and multi-level governance in urban climate action. It critically reviews background topics relevant to the Cities Mission, including mission-oriented policy, climate-neutral cities, smart cities, and citizen involvement. The methods chapter outlines the rationale for adopting a qualitative research approach and explains the selection of data sources, which encompass policy documents and interviews. It details the procedures for data collection and analysis, including systematic grey literature review and discourse analysis. Next, the theoretical framework guiding the analysis of governance structure and environmental justice is presented. The results chapter synthesizes findings from the grey literature review, discourse analysis, and interviews, offering a critical assessment of their implications for environmental justice within the EU Cities Mission. The discussion critically engages with key findings, examining the (lack of) alignment between governance structures and environmental justice principles while acknowledging limitations of the research. Finally, the conclusion summarizes the main findings and their implications for urban

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climate policy and environmental justice, highlighting the study's contributions to the field and outlines avenues for future research and policy development.

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2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews the relevant literature to situate the research problem and objectives. First, the stakes and challenges that cities confront in the context of climate change are briefly reviewed. Then the review delves into environmental justice scholarship, narrowing progressively on justice related to climate change effects, in particular in urban areas. Additionally, to grasp the organization and operation of urban climate action across governance levels, it's crucial to review research on climate policy and governance development at both EU and city levels, emphasizing their evolving interaction and integration into a multi-level governance framework. Furthermore, the Cities Mission draws upon concepts of mission-oriented policy, smart cities, climate neutral cities, and citizen involvement, as evident from its full name: "Smart and Climate Neutral Cities Mission - by and for the citizens". Therefore, the literature highlights various interpretations of these concepts, and this review emphasizes examining them through the perspective of environmental justice. It concludes by identifying the research gap.

2.1 Cities as sites of intertwined climate and social issues

To assess what kind of consideration is given to environmental justice in urban settings in the Cities Mission (Objective N°1), it is essential to briefly review the general situation of cities facing the climate crisis. The IPCC (2023) has issued warnings regarding the escalating impact of climate change on cities due to their high population densities. The impacts in Europe encompass direct consequences such as the increased frequency of extreme weather events, including heatwaves, heavy rain-induced floods, sea-level rise, storms, and fires (IPCC 2023). Additionally, climate

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stress threatens the access to vital resources, with risks of disrupting water and food supply chains (Cribb 2023).

In response, political speech predominantly revolves around two main categories of solutions: climate adaptation and climate mitigation. Climate adaptation involves adjusting to actual or expected climate and its effects (IPCC 2014, glossary). On the other hand, climate mitigation focuses on reducing greenhouse gas emissions or enhancing the sinks of greenhouse gases (IPCC 2014, glossary).

Cities worldwide are responsible for approximately 70% of greenhouse gas emissions, primarily due to high concentrations of transportation, energy consumption, and industrial activities (European Commission 2020). Despite representing only 4% of the EU's land, cities concentrate 75% of EU's inhabitants (The World Bank 2018), necessitating significant resource allocation and adaptation of infrastructures. Cities are grappling with demographic challenges, including increasing urban populations, and migration flows, notably induced by the climate crisis (European Commission 2021). Furthermore, the IPCC emphasizes that climate change will disproportionately burden urban communities with the most economically and socially marginalized groups (IPCC 2023).

2.2 Environmental justice offers an adequate lens to look at the disproportionate burden of climate change for vulnerable people living in cities

Environmental justice "is an expansion of the conception of social justice" to the domain of environmental disadvantage (Schlosberg 2013). This approach scrutinizes reality by examining systemic injustices. This scholarship is inherently critical of perspectives that disregard such injustices. To gain a comprehensive understanding of environmental justice, it's necessary to delve

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into its origins, trace its evolution, and show its multifaceted interpretations. The precise focus of this research is about justice issues within the specific context of urban climate policy. The review by Schlosberg and Collins (2014) served multiple times as a valuable resource tracing the evolution from the broader environmental justice movement to a focus on climate justice issues.

The environmental justice movement seeks to challenge traditional environmental movements, predominantly white, rich, and primarily concerned with nature and wildlife preservation (Wright 2011, as cited in Schlosberg and Collins 2014). In contrast, environmental justice places a stronger emphasis on human welfare and the threats posed to people's lives by environmental degradation (Novotny 2000, as cited in Schlosberg and Collins 2014). It underscores how these deteriorating environmental conditions disproportionately affect vulnerable groups within society. The review by Schlosberg and Collins (2014) demonstrates the evolution of the definition of environmental justice, which has broadened significantly.

In terms of whose voices are considered, literature initially concentrated on the lens of environmental racism against black communities in the United States (Bullard 1990). However, broader understandings of the concept have emerged. Impoverishment and low resistance expectations from industries and governments had also been identified as factors for environmental injustice (Mohai et al. 2009). This expanded framework includes workers, impoverished individuals facing similar systemic injustices (Martinez-Alier et al. 2016). Women constitute a distinct category that is disproportionately affected by climate change facing heightened risks of energy poverty (Alfthan et al. 2011), health problems, and socio-economic inequalities (Dankelman 2010).

Initially focused on toxic waste management (Heiman 1996), climate change emerged as a significant topic of environmental justice in the 2000s (Bullard and Wright 2009). As importantly

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highlighted by Schlosberg and Collins (2014, 12), climate change triggered a conceptual shift in environmental justice discourse. It has moved, from one "where environmental risk is seen as a symptom of social justice, to one where functioning environment is seen as necessary for any form of justice environmental, climate, or social". Climate change is both a sign of social injustice and a catalyst for it.

Climate justice inherently involves a tension between local and international considerations. Traditionally, environmental justice has focused on local life concerns such as health, access to water, or employment opportunities (Novotny 2000). However, the greenhouse effect, central to climate change, operates on a global and transboundary scale. Consequently, climate policies often seem distant from local concerns and may inadvertently overlook inequalities (Schlosberg 1999; Pellow 2007). For instance, carbon markets are mechanisms that can benefit polluters at the expense of disadvantaged communities (Bond and Dorsey 2020). Moreover, as explained by Schlosberg and Collins (2014), even seemingly straightforward measures like raising the price or limiting the supply of fossil fuels can disproportionately harm the poorest communities. This tension between local and international perspectives underscores the complexity of achieving climate justice. The climate justice movement emerged as part of the broader anti-neoliberalism movement, offering a critique of the global economy based on fossil fuels as source of larger inequalities, notably between the Global South and the Global North (Ikeme 2003). This critique also highlights how similar groups across regions are affected by environmental injustices (Schlosberg 1999; Pellow 2007).

At a more local level, concerns have arisen regarding the risks associated with climate change and the necessity for adapting to its effects. This thesis will delve into the latter aspect, focusing specifically on the urban level. As previously noted, social issues tend to be more concentrated in

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urban areas, where environmental and social risks are closely intertwined, disproportionately affecting vulnerable populations (IPCC 2023). Many cities have taken a leadership role in implementing ambitious environmental and climate actions (Betsill and Bulkeley 2006). However, there's a paradoxical risk that these actions may exacerbate inequalities and perpetuate power imbalances, for example through eco-gentrification. The concept of eco-gentrification, as identified by Dooling (2009), defines when urban planning efforts to create green spaces inadvertently lead to the displacement or exclusion of economically vulnerable populations. Anguelovski et al. (2020) emphasize the importance of considering who truly benefits from greening policies in cities, when planning or evaluating greening projects. The thesis specifically examines policy-making, aiming to understand how environmental justice issues are perceived and addressed by institutional actors

2.3 Urban climate action is governed across multiple levels

Understanding how urban climate action is organized and operates across governance levels, particularly between municipal governments and the EU supranational level, is crucial to discuss the implications of the governance framework of the Cities Mission on how environmental justice is addressed (Objective N°2). This involves delving into EU climate governance and the role played by the cities in climate action. As Roger et al. (2016) defined, studying governance entails examining both the policy dimension, focusing on the political instruments employed, and the politics dimension, which encompasses the involved actors and processes.

2.3.1 The EU emerged as a pivotal orchestrator of climate governance across Europe

The climate crisis is, in essence, global and transboundary and requires cooperation between various levels of authorities and actors. Consequently, the state is no longer the only central actor

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(Betsill and Bulkeley 2006; Vedeld et al. 2021). Decision-making and competencies are increasingly distributed among actors across different levels of governance. In this context, the European Commission displays its ambition to be a "climate leader" on the international stage (Wurzel and Connelly 2010), and a "climate policy entrepreneur" in the EU countries (Bürgin 2023).

The presentation of the European Green Deal in December 2019 marked a milestone in EU climate governance, setting the political objective to reduce greenhouse gases (GHG) emissions by 55% (compared to 1990) by 2030 and to achieve climate neutrality by 2050 (European Council, 2021). Although climate targets and policies have been in place since the 1990s, climate change has moved to the top of the EU's legislative agenda since 2019 (Rayner et al. 2023). Among various strategies and initiatives, the EU is advancing an urban transitions agenda, with the Cities Mission being an important element of the European Green Deal.

2.3.2 The growing role of cities in climate action

Cities have emerged as strategic actors in addressing the climate crisis, initiating their own actions. Around 80% of European cities with populations exceeding 500,000 have established climate mitigation and/or adaptation plans (Reckien et al. 2018). Not only do cities bear direct and substantial impacts from climate change, but they also occupy a central role in mitigation strategies, given their high levels of energy consumption and waste generation. Climate has increasingly become a priority for many municipal governments' agenda and in many cases, cities establish more ambitious climate goals than their respective nation-states (Reckien et al., 2018). This has led to the emergence of a new leadership role for cities in climate governance, described by Betsill and Bulkeley (2006) as "municipal voluntarism." Due to their proximity to citizens and

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firsthand experience with on-the-ground challenges, municipal governments are well-positioned to develop solutions that align with local needs and gain support from society (Huovila et al. 2022).

2.3.3 The development of the European multi-level governance of climate issues in urban area

The European Union has recognized the important role cities play in climate governance. Findings by Kern (2023) indicate that the relationship between cities and the European Union has evolved over time, giving cities an increasing voice in EU-level policy processes through the Committee of the Regions, and cities networks like the Covenant of Mayors[1]. This relationship has become more institutionalized, fostering a direct connection with the EU, especially regarding the climate change agenda (Bulkeley and Betsill 2013; Kern 2023).

The complex governance system linking the local and EU levels is often analyzed through the multi-level governance framework. This framework acknowledges that decision-making authority is shared among various levels - supranational, national, regional, and local (Hooghe and Marks 2001). EU governance is explicitly recognized as multi-level in key texts, such as the 2001 White Paper on Governance by the European Commission (2001, 34–35).

A core concept of multi-level governance is the bottom-up approach. In contrast with top-down processes which begin with directives and policies set at higher levels, bottom-up approach entails situating decision-making and actions at the local level whenever feasible, subsequently moving upwards to higher levels of governance (Rayner 2010). This approach is praised for fostering climate policy support, empowering citizens and providing leadership to their local communities

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[1] The Covenant of Mayors, initiated by the European Commission in 2015, brings together city mayors and locally elected officials with the objective of enabling the adoption of the EU Climate and Energy Package of 2008 at local level. As of April 2022, nearly 11,000 cities and municipalities had become signatories to this initiative. See more on the website: "Covenant of Mayors - Europe." n.d. Accessed May 25, 2024. https://eu-mayors.ec.europa.eu/en/home.

(Dirix et al. 2013). It is presented as an alternative to the perceived failure of the top-down approach in addressing the climate crisis (Rayner 2010).

Experimental urban climate governance, as a subset of bottom-up governance, embodies a novel governance model that brings together local governments, private entities, and civil society to collaborate on developing climate solutions at the city level (Bulkeley, Edwards, and Fuller 2014). It illustrates polycentric governance, entailing the involvement of multiple governance authorities at various scales without hierarchical control (Ostrom 2010). Experimental urban climate governance emphasizes experimentation through pilot projects, lesson-sharing, and scaling up successful initiatives while shifting from hard law to soft-law instruments that incentivize compliance positively (van der Heijden 2018). While experimental urban climate governance had been anticipated to create more effective instruments than those designed by distant bureaucrats (Lobel, 2012), criticism has emerged regarding its limitations.

2.3.4 Limitations of experimental and bottom-up governance models for just urban climate action

Critics argue that experimental urban climate governance does not always result in the creation of formal rules and regulations, potentially leading to a shortfall in integrating experimental outcomes into urban policy (Bulkeley 2014; Schroeder, Burch, and Rayner 2013). Besides, significant disparities exist in the competencies, autonomy, and resources of municipal authorities across different nation-states, potentially leading to an experimental urban climate governance approach that disproportionately favors frontrunner cities accustomed to setting climate experimentations, thus exacerbating inter as well as intranational inequalities in climate governance efforts (Kern, 2023). The majority of cities face limitations in their capacity to engage in effective climate action and experimentation, posing a significant obstacle to the implementation of bottom-up governance

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approaches (Bulkeley and Betsill 2013). Newell et al. (2015) discuss a 'governance trap' wherein both lower and higher governing bodies expect action from the other, resulting in stagnation. This trap extends to the urban scale, where cities are increasingly expected to tackle climate change but frequently lack the essential capacities and resources for effective action (Newell et al. 2015). Even though cities' governments and stakeholders endorse a crucial role in fighting climate change, coordination and support from higher levels are needed, as well as a clear distribution of responsibilities. Furthermore, regarding climate justice concerns, van der Heijden (2018) has stressed the apprehension that cities acting independently may not be held accountable for guaranteeing equitable participation to and distribution of benefits from climate action among all citizens. These findings will inform the thesis discussion regarding the Cities Mission governance, which emphasizes bottom-up and experimental approaches.

2.4 A critical review of the Cities Mission's background

The Cities Mission draws upon various concepts which have also been (previously) covered by academic literature: mission-oriented policy, smart cities, climate neutral cities, and citizen involvement. These concepts provide diverse perspectives on addressing urban transition challenges. This background may influence or serve partly as an explanatory element for discussing the discourses identified by the analysis.

2.4.1 Mission-oriented policy: a governance turned towards innovation and non-state actors

The Cities Mission emerges within the framework of urban climate multi-level governance developed over time and represents the EU's first attempt at implementing a mission-oriented policy. Originating from military policies of the 1960s and 1970s aimed at fostering defense-

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related research and development investment (Mowery, 2012), the concept of mission-oriented policy has evolved to address grand societal challenges through interdisciplinary solutions.

The Cities Mission was introduced in 2021 alongside four other missions addressing cancer, ocean, soil restoration, and climate change adaptation in regions. The application of the concept of missions in EU policy was developed mainly by Mazzucato (Mazzucato 2018, European Commission, Mazzucato 2019). The fundamental premise is that public action stimulates and guides innovation to address critical issues (Hekkert et al., 2020). Mission-oriented policy promotes the establishment of priorities and employs governance by experimentation to identify the strengths and weaknesses of a policy or project, thereby facilitating the exchange and sharing of best practices for replication (Foray 2018; Henriot et al. 2018).

According to Mazzucato (European Commission, Mazzucato 2019), missions ought to be interdisciplinary, involving multiple sectors and actors. Shabb et al. (2022) review of the key principles of the notion of EU Missions stresses the importance of redefining the economic role of the state and prioritizing participatory and bottom-up approaches, including citizen engagement. The mission approach aims to rally a diverse array of actors behind common goals and foster collaboration and planning across sectors and governance scales (Shabb et al. 2022).

2.4.2 Citizen involvement and equity in Smart Cities

The concept of smart cities emerged from the assumption that achieving sustainability and reducing GHG emissions would necessitate significant technological and social innovation (Hollands 2008; Shelton et al. 2015; Henriot et al. 2018; Cardullo and Kitchin 2019a,b; Michalec et al. 2019). Social innovation relates to the notion that new social practices, such as organizational forms, business models, and consumption habits, are essential for driving social-ecological

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transformation and sustainability, beyond just technological innovation (Krüger and Pellicer-Sifres 2020). Smart cities conceptualization includes reflections on governance, notably about citizen engagement. Indeed, one interpretation of smart cities (Beretta 2018) emphasizes citizen participation in creating smart solutions and using technology for citizen involvement (Giffinger et al. 2007; Hollands 2008; Caragliu et al. 2009). However, contrasting views argue that smart cities do not necessarily result in enhanced citizen involvement in decision-making processes. Instead, they suggest that the emphasis on technological solutions could lead to the depoliticization of urban policies (Henriot et al. 2018).

Similarly, despite the original aim of smart cities to enhance sustainability and quality of life, studies indicate that the social and equity dimensions of smart cities are often overlooked (De Jong et al. 2015, March 2021). Indeed, the emphasis on eco-innovation and technologies often omits the complexity of social issues and politics. As Michalec et al. (2019, 2) says "without the explicit reference to the justice discourse, 'smart cities' might become a buzzword, a term characterized by a high frequency of usage but a low potential for accountability". These last findings justify the research interest in examining the consideration of justice discourses in the EU Cities Mission. While the Mission strives to promote well-being and inclusiveness, there is a concern that it may deviate from its objectives by placing excessive emphasis on innovation and market-driven approaches.

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2.4.3 Climate neutrality in the city: what for, for whom, how?

The literature about the concept of climate-neutral cities encompasses various sub-concepts such as low-carbon city, carbon-neutral city, zero carbon city, and negative carbon city, which are widely discussed in policy discourse (Huovila et al. 2022). However, defining what these terms mean and their common understanding remains a subject of debate. The Cities Mission refers to

the IPCC's definition of climate neutrality (2018), as a state in which human activities result in no net effect on the climate system. And proposes three scopes of calculations on climate neutrality. Yet, there are numerous unresolved questions regarding its practical application (Hsu et al. 2020), including targets, geographical boundaries, and monitoring methods that are not addressed in that research.

Critical voices argue that the pursuit of climate-neutral city risk to become a "concept for branding and marketing" only (Huovila et al. 2022) and may overlook other key environmental and social aspects, particularly environmental justice issues (Beretta and Bracchi 2023). Indeed, its implementation requires careful consideration of trade-offs and attention to environmental justice concerns, rather than solely focusing on technical issues of reducing emissions (Beretta and Bracchi 2023). As discussed by Newell (2015), the concept of a climate-neutral city must address critical questions such as who determines the allocation of GHG emissions and whether there is a fair distribution of emission rights. It's crucial to consider broader issues, as focusing solely on emissions could divert attention from fundamental needs like access to food, health, mobility, education, and energy (Newell et al. 2015).

2.4.4 Citizen involvement

Citizen involvement has become increasingly prevalent in environmental policymaking since the 1990s (Bulkeley and Mol 2003). It is also an important theme in environmental justice, ensuring that everyone's voice is heard through fair procedures. Prior to characterizing the current role designated for citizen involvement in decision-making within the framework of the Cities Mission (Objective N°2), an exploration of the literature is necessary to unveil the different rationales behind this objective and the complex justice-related issues.

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2.4.4.1 Different rationales motivating citizen involvement in environmental governance

Implementation of citizen involvement requires careful consideration due to the ambiguity in the terms "citizen involvement" or "citizen participation." This concept covers a wide range of practical implementations, from citizens passively supplying data to actively participating in decision-making processes (Bastos et al. 2022). The literature identifies many different reasons for involving citizens in policy-making and projects. In science communication, a prominent theory is the 'information deficit model', based on the idea that well-informed citizens are more likely to accept policies and change their behaviors (Miller 1983). This model has been largely criticized, as it assumes a passive and reductive role for citizens as mere recipients of information and simplifies complex realities, however, it remains a largely utilized, especially about climate change (Simis et al. 2016; Suldovsky 2017).

A more compelling rationale for citizen involvement is its potential to enhance legitimacy. By securing public support for environmental policies, citizen participation can help prevent implementation problems and bolster democratic legitimacy (Mason 2011). This approach aligns with the information deficit model. Participatory processes may contribute to a renewal of democracy, addressing the observed erosion of faith and confidence in institutions and processes in Western countries (Rose 1993).

Opposing the information deficit model, the deliberative model seeks to involve active participants who contribute with their knowledge, experiences, and values to policymaking. This model promotes two-way communication channels that facilitate dialogue, deliberation, and collaboration between citizens, policymakers, and other stakeholders. Dryzek (2000) defines deliberation as "mutual communication that involves weighing and reflecting on preferences, values, and interests regarding matters of common concern." The rationale of such deliberations

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is to enhance democratic values and foster social inclusiveness. “In practice, citizen deliberation involves deliberative forums. They usually comprise individuals with no specific interest or knowledge of policy, tasked with developing reports or recommendations for policy issues. Unlike traditional political assemblies, citizen participation does not follow any partisan logic that can slow down the legislative process or prevent certain policies from being implemented due to internal politics strategies (Gottweis 2007). Additionally, it has been shown that citizens are just as capable as political professionals in identifying issues, especially in environmental matters, and often provide perspectives that professionals may overlook (Fiorino 1990). While experts’ consultation tends to prioritize technical reasoning, citizen deliberation can bring practical knowledge derived from personal experience and contextual understanding (Fischer 2007).”[2] Citizens also tend to pay more attention to the normative, emotional, and moral dimensions of issues (Blue, Dale 2016). Nonetheless, such citizens’ deliberation and participation require strict procedures for ensuring quality of the debates and equitable representation of different interests and opinions. However, there is no straightforward or guaranteed connection between involving people in participatory processes and achieving greater justice.

2.4.4.2 Citizen involvement into environmental decision-making: a key component for ensuring justice

Participatory processes can be the site of inequalities and reinforcement of the status quo. Therefore, attention to procedures is crucial. The overarching concept of procedural justice recognizes that the structures and procedures framing citizen participation in environmental decision-making can generate or exacerbate injustices (Schlosberg 2004).

[2] Mina Leopold, 2023, final paper of *Environmental Governance, Politics and Justice* (GPJ) class (2023-24), taught by Alexios Antypas and Tamara Steger, Environmental Sciences and Policy department of Central European University, Vienna.

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First, citizen participation practices can reproduce existing hierarchies of social power and relations, thereby further marginalizing already marginalized perspectives (Blue and Dale 2016). Arnstein (1969, 1) argues that "participation without redistribution of power is an empty and frustrating process for the powerless." Arnstein views participation as an opportunity for redistributing power, enabling excluded citizens to be included in future political and economic processes. However, she notes that what is termed citizen participation often encompasses a wide range of practices, from mere informational processes to genuine citizen's empowerment. She categorized these practices into a typology of eight levels of participation, known as Arnstein's ladder of participation (Arnstein 1969).

Second, unequal access to resources and differences in participants' abilities to influence decisions are important factors to consider when pursuing just outcomes. Fraser (2009) found that procedural justice cannot be guaranteed when there are diverse capabilities among people who engage in such procedures. Similarly, Fainstein (2010) emphasizes that even with intentional inclusion in participatory processes, the outcomes are not necessarily just. Indeed, variations in resources, the ability to voice opinions publicly, or the financial capability to allocate time for participation can greatly contribute to inequalities in citizen engagement practices and lead to make the debates are captured by powerful interests. Exclusion issues are particularly marked in public matters requiring a high degree of technical knowledge, such as environmental, health, and technological issues (Wynne 2007). To improve participatory practice, Blue, Rosol, and Fast (2019, 1) make three recommendations: "a) require appropriate procedures to ensure that all relevant people and perspectives are represented at the appropriate scale; b) ensure all perspectives - not just dominant ones - are recognized and valued; and c) respond to and mitigate the inequitable distribution of wealth and resources".

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2.5 The gap in the literature

From the literature review, it is clear that climate policies need critical examination from an environmental justice perspective to ensure they do not exacerbate existing inequalities and ideally work to rectify them. This is particularly relevant for smart cities and climate-neutral city programs, which often emphasize technical solutions for addressing the climate crisis, potentially overlooking justice issues. Citizen involvement, a key aspect of the European Commission's strategy to ensure inclusivity in the Cities Mission outcomes (Beretta and Bracchi 2023), is susceptible to perpetuating injustices without procedural justice considerations. This research builds on literature findings to examine how environmental justice principles had been integrated into the Cities Mission's governance framework. Beretta and Bracchi (2023) have begun preparatory work on considering environmental justice issues within the Cities Mission documents issued by the European Commission. However, Beretta and Bracchi (2023) did not use discourse analysis, while this method can provide a nuanced insight into the diverse interpretations of justice issues and expose the underlying assumptions embedded in a policy. Besides, environmental justice has not been explored yet during the implementation phase by the cities as they develop their Climate City Contracts. This phase is compelling as it involves the articulation of different levels of governance and insights into the interactions between the European Commission and participating cities. Finally, although the relationship between governance, notably bottom-up and experimental governance, and just urban climate action has been explored in existing literature, this has not been specifically examined for the Cities Mission, which is touted as a novel mode of governance (Mazzucato 2018).

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3. THEORY

To address the research question, the theoretical framework integrates two approaches: environmental justice and multi-level governance. The environmental justice approach provides the conceptual means for examining the interplay between justice and climate policies in cities. Besides, this study investigates the justice aspect in the context of the Cities Mission's governance framework, examining the interactions between the European Commission and participating cities in establishing urban climate governance. The multi-level governance approach enables explaining these complex interactions, revealing their stakes and implications.

3.1 Environmental justice

A multi-dimensional approach to environmental justice is employed to establish a framework for analyzing how environmental justice issues are addressed within the Cities Mission. This approach decomposes environmental justice into three dimensions: procedural justice, distributional justice, and recognitional justice. These dimensions will be utilized to assess the consideration given to environmental justice in the Cities Mission (Objective N°1), as detailed later in the methods chapter.

The distributional conceptualization of environmental justice refers to a just allocation of costs and benefits associated with climate change (Ikeme 2003; Lazarus 1994). In this context, costs refer to the disproportionate burdens of environmental degradation, particularly those related to climate change. These include energy expenses, housing and mobility costs, and broader socio-economic impacts. As Lazarus (1994) notes, goods and services may become more costly due to environmental regulations or the depletion of resources. On the other hand, the benefits of

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environmental protection, specifically climate action, include improved air quality and health, more green spaces, and overall better well-being.

The procedural conceptualization of environmental justice emphasizes that inclusive decision-making on environmental issues is essential for achieving fair outcomes (Lake 1996; Shrader-Frechette 2002; Ikeme 2003; Fraser 2009, Newig and Fritsch 2009). This concept is particularly relevant for characterizing the role currently designated for citizen involvement for decision-making in the Cities Mission (Objective N°2). Procedural justice is both a prerequisite for fair distribution and a domain where injustices and power dynamics can persist. The literature review has shown that decision-making processes can perpetuate inequalities, often overrepresenting the interests of the most advantaged while marginalizing those of minorities and lower socio-economic groups.

The concept of justice as recognition is fundamental to addressing both procedural and distributive issues (Schlosberg 2007; Fraser 2009). In terms of distributive justice, recognition involves acknowledging that socio-economic disparities are closely linked to historical, cultural or symbolic injustices affecting specific groups, such as racial communities and the working class (Fraser, 1997). In terms of procedural justice, recognizing inequities in procedures and decision-making is fundamental. This concept is rooted in Fraser's notion of "participatory parity" (2009), which asserts that just political deliberation requires acknowledging and addressing the fact that individuals do not have the same capabilities to voice their opinions and advocate for their interests.

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3.2 Multi-level governance

The multilevel governance framework, developed by Hooghe and Marks (2001) is highly relevant to this research as it addresses the multiple layers and processes where issues are framed, shaped,

and contested, ultimately shaping policy and influencing policy outcomes. This framework is particularly useful in two main ways: First, it helps contextualize the narratives identified in the discourse analysis, allowing for a detailed exploration of how governance levels align or diverge in their consideration of environmental justice in urban areas. Second, it provides a lens to examine the structure of the Cities Mission governance, detailing how the Mission's governance arrangements facilitate coordination among various actors across different levels. The discussion chapter will later explore the implications of this governance framework on the integration of environmental justice within the Cities Mission, thereby synthesizing the two theoretical approaches employed in this research.

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4. METHODS

The empirical research combined the methods of grey literature review and discourse analysis. It spans from June 2020, encompassing the preparatory phase of the Mission's launch, through to April 2024, when the empirical work has been conducted.

4.1 Method 1: Grey literature review

Initially, a grey literature review has been conducted to gain a comprehensive understanding of the governance architecture of the Cities Mission.

4.1.1 Data collection

The corpus includes official documents published by the European Commission about the Cities Mission between 2020 and 2024, including European Commission policy documents, institutional communications, and expert reports. (see table 1). These documents are relevant for the study as they form the foundational framework for the Cities Mission and its governance architecture and provide initial expert analyses for the Commission's internal work. These documents are free of access online. Additionally, the information gathered during an exploratory interview conducted in English with an expert consulted by the European Commission for a report on the Cities Mission helped clarify the official documents and focus on crux of the of the problem in terms of environmental justice and citizen involvement within the Cities Mission.

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Table 1: Overview of the documents used for the grey literature review.

Document title	Type of document	Author/source	Publication date	Number of pages
100 climate-neutral cities by 2030 - by and for the citizens	Report of the mission board for climate-neutral and smart cities	European Commission, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, Gronkiewicz-Waltz, H., Larsson, A., Boni, A. et al.,	2020	48
European Missions: 100 Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities by 2030. Implementation Plan.	Implementation Plan.	European Commission, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation,	2021	62
European Missions: 100 Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities by 2030. Info kit.	Info kit.	European Commission, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation	2021	129
Mission Area: Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities. Foresight on Demand Brief in Support of the Horizon Europe Mission Board.	Foresight report	European Commission, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, Dinges, M., Borsboom, J., Gualdi, M., Haindlmaier, G., & Heinonen, S.	2021	48
Study supporting the assessment of EU missions and the review of mission areas – Mission Climate-neutral and smart cities assessment report	Assessment report	European Commission, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, Kaufmann, P., Wieser, H., Kofler, J. et al.	2023	64

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4.1.2 Data analysis

Key information about the governance architecture has been extracted, and the policy methods and tools planned by the Commission for the Cities Mission. Understanding the governance architecture of the Cities Mission is crucial for the subsequent analysis of various scales of governance.

4.2 Method 2: Discourse analysis

Discourse analysis is suited for answering the research question and achieving the aims of the study, as it enables to examine assumptions, narratives and political goals that underpin and shape urban climate policy. Discourse analysis posits that policies result from how problems are defined and framed by various actors. According to Farrelly (2010), discourses are "the way in which a part of the world is represented, or imagined, when one speaks or writes," and Hansen (2013) describes them as "constructions of problems and subjectivities." Studying discourse is an essential part of examining policies because the way discourse is mobilized influences policy development. Shapiro (1990) notes that "policy discourses construct problems, objects, and subjects, as well as solutions," directing actions in specific ways. Different discourses can lead to different solutions and tools and define who is responsible for what (Wardekker 2021). Indeed, discourses can serve as resources for planning for climate action (Lindseth 2005). In brief, policy discourses are part of the foundations for policy by shaping its development, and they also generate political effects by steering policy in a particular direction (Hansen 2013). Discourse analysis defines not only the way in which framing of an issue is disseminated, but also the context in which a discourse is elaborated (by whom, where, when, for whom, how) (Schmidt 2008). Competing discourses can emerge on the same topic. Climate change and justice issues both involve high stakes in discourse analysis because of their complexity and the varied interpretations they can generate. Climate change can be framed in numerous ways (Blue and Dale 2016), such as in terms of mitigation versus adaptation and resource challenges (O'Riordan 2015). It can also be seen as a technical issue solvable by scientific and technological means (Demerrit 2006), or as a societal issue requiring changes to political and economic systems (Klein 2014). Justice issues also present multiple possible interpretations, with terms like "fairness" and "inclusiveness" often being vague

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and subject to different conceptions (Arnold 1998). Particularly, inclusive decision-making is a prominent theme in certain discourses aimed at ensuring just outcomes in policy for ecological transition. However, inclusive decision-making can also provoke different interpretations and concepts like “citizen involvement” and “democratic participation” need to be understood beyond their use as broad governance slogans. Different discourses on the same topic can coexist, and this research examines what discourses the European Commission and city governments have regarding complex situations, such as environmental justice issues within the conduct of the Cities Mission.

4.2.1 Cases selection

The analysis is based on a case study of two cities: Marseille (France) and Leuven (Belgium). These two cities present very different urban contexts, making them particularly interesting to study and compare. Marseille, with around 870,000 inhabitants, is part of the 2 million residents Greater Aix-Marseille-Provence metropolitan area, which notably oversees transportation. In contrast, Leuven is smaller, with a population of 100,000, though it is growing. The two cities present very different socio-economical landscapes. Marseille is a former industrial city with a poverty rate of 26% (INSEE 2024), whereas Leuven is a university town with few industry and a 15% poverty rate (Statbel 2024). Both INSEE and Statbel are using EU statistics on income and living conditions for defining poverty rate. Addressing poverty is a pivotal justice issue, and the analysis will scrutinize the discourses surrounding it in the Cities Mission. The selected cities also represent different levels of engagement with climate policy-making and European projects. Leuven is recognized as a leader in climate change policy and participation in European projects, while Marseille has been a late adopter of climate policies and had limited engagement at the European level over the past decades. Access to the Climate City Contracts was necessary for the

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study, and at the time, only 33 out of 100 cities had signed these contracts, including Marseille and Leuven. This limitation reduces the choice of cities and suggests that these two may be among the more advanced in terms of involvement in the Cities Mission. Additionally, the Climate City Contracts needed to be available in English or French. The European Commission is not considered a case study in this research. Instead, the Commission's documents are considered as given data presenting the Cities Mission without delving into the internal negotiation processes behind the narratives in the official documents, which could be the focus of another research.

4.2.2 Data collection

The qualitative data for this case study consists of two main types: primary data through semi-structured interviews and secondary data through policy documents. The corpus of policy documents includes publications issued by the European Commission's staff, which establish the framework of the Cities Mission and reflect the Commission's perspective (see table 2). They are easily accessible online. Additionally, the corpus includes the Climate City Contracts from Marseille and Leuven, which were requested and received via email from the municipalities, since they are not freely available online. Leuven's CCC was available in English, while Marseille's CCC was partly available in English, partly in French. These documents are comprehensive, as they outline the cities' climate strategies and summarize all climate actions taken to fulfill the Cities Mission, while also drawing on previous programs and policies.

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Table 2: Overview of the documents used in the discourse analysis.

Document title	Type of document	Author/source	Publication date	Number of pages
100 climate-neutral cities by 2030 - by and for the citizens	Report of the mission board for climate-neutral and smart cities	European Commission, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, Gronkiewicz-Waltz, H., Larsson, A., Boni, A. et al.,	2020	48
European Missions: 100 Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities by 2030. Implementation Plan.	Implementation Plan.	European Commission, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation,	2021	62
European Missions: 100 Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities by 2030. Info kit.	Info kit.	European Commission, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation	2021	129
Marseille 2030 Objectif Climat. Contrat Ville Climat	Climate City Contract of Marseille	City of Marseille and Metropole Aix-Marseille-provence	2023	Action Plan: 188 Investment Plan: 37 Commitments: 15
Climate City Contract. 2030 Climate Neutrality	Climate City Contract of Leuven	City of Leuven and Leuven 2030.	2023	Action Plan: 188 Investment Plan: 91 Commitments: 98

Since policy documents may not fully reflect actual practices, the analysis is complemented with semi-structured interviews. A total of three interviews were conducted: one with an expert for exploration of the topic in March 2024 (previously mentioned in the paragraph regarding grey literature review), and two for actual data collection with representatives from the case study cities. Interviews with city representatives were important because the Climate City Contracts, primarily addressing climate mitigation and technical issues and being directed to the European Commission, might not fully capture the municipality's political vision on environmental justice.

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These interviews aimed to uncover any additional nuances or counter-discourses not adequately represented in the contracts. The selection process for the latter two interviews involved preliminary mapping of municipal actors engaged in the Cities Mission. Interviewees were chosen based on their significant roles within the municipality concerning ecological transformation, climate policy, and citizen engagement policy. One of the interviews was conducted in French with a member of the government of Marseille and another in English with a sustainability advisor to Leuven. Both interviews were conducted in May 2024, online and lasted one hour. They had been recorded with the interviewees' consent. The interviews were based on flexible questions designed to capture the interviewees' perspectives, understand the meanings they attribute to the climate strategy of their cities, and trace interactions between municipalities and the EU. The objective is to explore the origins, influences, and potential frictions of and within discourses. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed using the same method for data analysis explained below as the policy documents. The case-used data collected in French has been translated to English by the researcher. Access to the original version is available upon request.

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Table 3: Overview of interviews information.

	Position	Date	Location	Duration	Language
Interview 1	Expert	14.03.2024	Online	1 hour	English
Interview 2	Member of the local executive government of Marseille, in charge of the ecological transition, the fight against and adaptation to climate change and the citizens' assembly of the future and co-chairman of the energy transition commission.	06.05.2024	Online	1 hour	French
Interview 3	Sustainability advisor to the municipality of Leuven, point of contact for Leuven officials and policymakers, in charge of citizen participation.	13.05.2024	Online	1 hour	English

4.2.3 Data analysis

Epistemologically, this study's analysis is grounded in the environmental justice framework. The dimensions of distributional justice, procedural justice, and recognition guide the construction of discourse categories. The guiding questions for developing the data analysis framework are inspired by Newell et al. (2015). These questions include: How are rights and responsibilities related to climate change narrated in policy responses and climate governance? Which parts of society are acknowledged? What are the dominant policy narratives? Are there emerging alternative discourses, and if so, which ones? What are the convergences and divergences between the narratives of Marseille and Leuven, and between those of the two cities and the European Commission? How do the European Commission and the cities of Marseille and Leuven shape urban climate policy discourse according to their political visions and capacities?

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The data analysis framework was developed in four steps:

1) Identifying the topics of a 'Just Transition' and associating them with keywords

Three themes related to justice in urban transition are identified, based on the three dimensions of environmental justice described in the theoretical framework: distributional justice, procedural justice, and recognition. The themes are:

i) Ensuring equitable distribution of the benefits and the costs of the transition across society

Keywords: distribution, benefits, access to resources, amenities, services, well-being, quality of life, air quality, health, green spaces, energy costs, housing quality, socio-economic impacts, infrastructure

ii) Recognizing differentiated impacts of climate change related to social injustices

This includes recognizing that climate change has differentiated physical impacts (such as vulnerability to extreme weather events, energy poverty, transport poverty, pollution, unemployment) and socio-economic impacts, particularly through consumption patterns (notably consumption of basic need products like food and energy). It acknowledges that both the climate crisis and climate policies can disproportionately burden certain groups, especially those facing historical injustices.

Keywords: vulnerability to climate extremes, energy poverty, transport poverty, pollution, risks, marginalized, migration, lower eco-social status, women, historical injustices

iii) Promoting citizen involvement in decision-making processes

Keywords: democracy, citizen participation, consultation, involvement, decision making

2) Isolating passages containing mentions of these themes

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3) Analyzing context to draw discourses

The results are interpreted in context to associate them with specific meanings and identify the main discourses. It also assesses the degree of prominence of different discourses and the degree of abstraction of the discourses.

This methodology enables to understand which elements are included in actors' discourses and which are omitted. Regarding the reliability of the method, the analytical framework is designed to produce consistent results due to its precision in articulating themes and using keywords as the basis for coding discourses. However, coding discourse inherently involves subjective interpretation (Saldaña 2013), and the researcher acknowledges that others may interpret the data differently.

4.3 Limitations

Limitations of this research design include the recognition that the identified discourses may evolve over time, making them only valid for the duration of the study. Additionally, given the recent launch of the Cities Mission, there are not many official documents available yet. The researcher recognizes that the limited number of materials can pose a limitation for discourse analysis which is conducted over large corpus of documents and could potentially reduce the robustness of the results. However, further research may yield more comprehensive insights as more materials become available. Besides, the relatively small number of interviews means that individual positions might be prominently represented. Another limitation is that this thesis does not investigate the national level and its interaction with city and EU levels. At this stage, too few documents have been produced, and the integration to the Cities Mission governance is still underdeveloped, making it difficult to analyze.

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4.4 Ethics and positionality

The research adheres to ethical standards. The safety of the researcher had been ensured, as interviews were conducted remotely. Prior to the interviews, a consent form was sent to participants via email, providing detailed information about the research project and their rights. This form was discussed with participants at the outset of the interviews to ensure their understanding and voluntary participation. The anonymity of the participants is guaranteed and the way they are depicted in the thesis had been discussed with them for ensuring they are not recognizable. Their data will remain strictly confidential according to the privacy rules of CEU's Data Protection Policy and all legislation relating to data protection.

The researcher previously completed an internship focusing on the Cities Mission, which provided them with prior knowledge and interest in the topic but may also introduce bias. However, the researcher aims to conduct a critical and objective study by maintaining reflexivity and questioning any potential assumptions. Language and personal interest played a significant role in selecting the case studies and are closely linked to the researcher's positionality. Representatives of Marseille's city government were likely easier to approach in French, which facilitated data collection. Conversely, the interview in English with the Flemish-speaking representative from Leuven may have limited the collection of data.

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5. RESULTS

The first section (5.1) presents the results related to the European Commission, uncovering the architecture and principles of the Cities Mission's governance through a review of grey literature. It also reveals the discourses surrounding the distribution of benefits and costs of the transition, citizen involvement, and recognition of vulnerable groups in the preparatory documents of the Cities Mission. The second section (5.2) focuses on the two case study cities, analyzing the discourses in their Climate City Contracts and providing insights into each city's climate governance background. It examines how these cities approach the Cities Mission and the support they anticipate from the EU for achieving their climate objectives.

5.1 The European Commission: setting the governance architecture and the narratives at the foundation of the Cities Mission

This section focuses on the analysis of European Commission documents, presenting the results of the grey literature review (5.1.1) and the discourse analysis (5.1.2). It aims to reveal 1) the architecture and principles of the Cities Mission's governance 2) the types of discourses used to discuss the distribution of benefits and costs of the transition, citizen involvement, and recognition of vulnerable groups. The grey literature review shows that the Cities Mission's framework emphasizes three main governance approaches: multi-level governance, bottom-up and participatory approach, and innovation management (Mission Board report 2020, Implementation Plan 2021, Infokit 2021). The review also highlights that the Cities Mission relies on a key governance instrument, the Climate City Contract, which plays a central role in linking cities with the European Commission, citizens, and other stakeholders. The discussion will later address how these governance arrangements can influence environmental justice considerations in policy. The discourse analysis reveals that environmental justice considerations in these documents are

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generally abstract, particularly lacking recognitional justice discourse that addresses existing inequalities and their connection to climate change and policy. However, the Info Kit for cities stands out, demonstrating more precise and prominent environmental justice considerations.

5.1.1 Findings of the grey literature about the governance architecture of the Cities Mission

This section presents? the results of the review of grey literature composed of official documents released by the European Commission (see table 1 in the methods chapter). The review identifies that the governance architecture of the Cities Mission, as set by the Commission, is organized founded on three main pillars: multi-level governance, participatory and bottom-up approach, and innovation management. These results will serve for discussing the implications of governance arrangement for the way environmental justice is considered in the Cities Mission.

5.1.1.1 Multi-level governance: distributing the roles and responsibility across the different levels

The reviewed document (see table 1 in the methods chapter) all explicitly refers to the aim of fostering the coordination and alignment of actions across national, regional and local levels. For example, multi-level governance is regarded in the Mission Board report (2020, 12) as "an indispensable ingredient for the Mission's success". The review has identified the involved levels and outlined their roles, as documented in the Implementation plan (2021) and the Assessment report (Kaufmann et al. 2023)

At the European Commission level, the Cities Mission has been designed and is currently managed by two Directorates-General (DG): DG Research and DG Environment. DGs are policy departments within the European Commission, each overseeing a specific policy area. They are tasked with developing, implementing, and managing EU policies and funding programs

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(European Commission 2019). For implementing the Cities Mission, the Commission's services primarily rely on funding and providing advice and coordination, which are soft policy tools. Soft policies are often favored by the EU, particularly when it lacks the competence to act (Beveridge, 2012). According to the Assessment report (Kaufmann et al. 2023) of the Mission, the role of the Commission has evolved since the beginning of the Mission. Initially focused on designing the mission and providing infrastructure, its role has shifted towards ensuring that cities have the necessary capacities to implement the mission and facilitating access to funding. This shift is more aligned with leveraging and maintaining political support (Assessment report, Kaufmann et al. 2023). The European Commission is advised by the Mission Board, which comprises a diverse array of experts from fields such as innovation, research, policymaking, civil society, and practitioner organizations. In particular, the Mission Board works closer with national governments and local stakeholders (Assessment report, Kaufmann et al. 2023).

As emphasized in the Assessment report (2023, 25), cities are placed "in the driving seat" of the Cities Mission. Their role involves several key responsibilities. Firstly, cities are tasked with elaborating their Climate City Contracts in collaboration with their citizens and overseeing their implementation. Additionally, cities are responsible for mobilizing other stakeholders to contribute to the Mission's objectives. This mobilization occurs through various means, including leveraging their planning powers, acting as shareholders of utilities, initiating projects aimed at citizens, offering incentives, and catalyzing investments that target multiple stakeholders, as outlined in the Implementation Plan (2021).

Cities are supported by the Mission Platform, a project backed by the European Commission (European Commission 2021). The platform's objective is to offer essential technical and regulatory assistance to cities in the development and implementation of their Climate City

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Contracts. Additionally, it serves as a platform for knowledge sharing among cities (Implementation plan 2021). The role of national and regional authorities has been defined as providing financial and regulatory support to enable cities to take the necessary steps toward achieving climate neutrality (Implementation Plan 2021).

The relationships between the various actors, bodies, and institutions involved in the negotiation and networking processes associated with the Mission are depicted in Figure 1. This diagram provides a detailed overview of how each level interacts and connects. As summarized in the assessment report (2023, 25), the Cities Mission aims to establish "a polycentric and experimental governance model that empowers cities to lead". While multi-level governance is common in EU policies (European Commission 2001, 34–35), the Cities Mission's model seeks to innovate by adopting a bottom-up approach, concentrating on the needs of cities and offering them tailored support.

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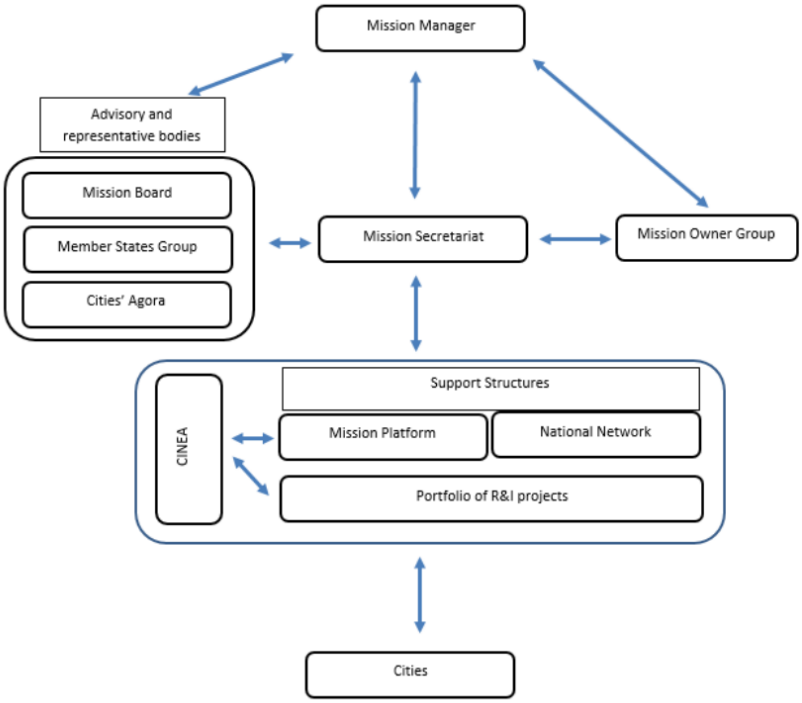

Figure 1: *Governance Structure to illustrate how the Mission will work in practice* (Source: European Commission, European Missions: 100 Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities by 2030. Implementation Plan, DG Research & Innovation, 2021, 40)

5.1.1.2 Bottom-up and participatory approach: co-creation as the key element of the Mission

The reviewed documents consistently highlight "co-creation" as a central concept of the governance model of the Cities Mission. First, the Mission Board report (2020) indicates that the Mission itself was designed through a co-creative process, involving extensive consultations with city governments, civil society, industry representatives, citizens, and Member States. Notably, thirteen citizen engagement events were held prior to the Mission's formulation (Mission Board report, 2020).

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Second, the governance model emphasizes a bottom-up approach for conducting and refining the Mission throughout its implementation according to the demands of the cities. The goal is to move away from traditional top-down methods and instead gather information from cities to shape the Mission. According to the Implementation Plan (2021, 20), "cities rarely receive demand-driven assistance, i.e., specifically tailored to their specific situation to achieve climate neutrality." The Mission aims to address this gap by responding to the individual needs of each city. However, the European Commission's documents do not specify how exactly this bottom-up approach will be implemented, indicating that the Mission is evolving step by step and remains open to modifications.

Furthermore, a very special focus is made on citizen involvement. Indeed, the objectives of the Mission include to define a "new role for the citizens" (Mission Board report 2020, 7) and to "promote citizens to become agents of change through bottom-up initiatives" (9). Citizen involvement is to be implemented by "creating new forms of participatory and innovative governance" (Mission Board report 2020, 12). This is extensively highlighted throughout the documents reviewed, making it a core element of the Cities Mission governance system.

5.1.1.3 Innovation management approach involving multiple stakeholders

The Cities Mission is built on the model of mission-oriented policy, a policy framework based on directing public action towards supporting innovation. Innovation is depicted throughout the reviewed document as encompassing technological innovation, social innovation, and innovative governance, with the Implementation Plan specifying that innovation should be understood "in all senses of the word" (2020, 4). The reviewed documents explicitly mention the importance of social innovation, alongside technological one. Despite the program's focus on smart cities concepts, digital technologies, and eco-innovation, there is acknowledgment of the importance of integrating

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social innovation into the mission's objectives. It is acknowledged that "technology alone will not do the job" (Foresight report, Dinges et al. 2021). The Mission also aims to introduce new governance practices, including more bottom-up and participatory approaches as discussed earlier, and new governance tools such as the Climate City Contract described in the following section.

The Cities Mission operates under the Horizon Europe program, which supports research and innovation projects across Europe. A primary goal of the Cities Mission is to transform participating cities into "innovation hubs" (Mission Board Report 2020, Implementation Plan 2021, Info kit 2021), with the intention of subsequently disseminating the findings to other European cities. For implementing it, the Cities Mission replies on innovation management, which encompasses supporting research and innovation endeavors to experiment with solutions, identify strengths and weaknesses, particularly the "good practices" (Henriot et al. 2018), and facilitate their dissemination and scaling up. This relates very much to polycentric and experimental urban climate governance, orchestrating pilot projects and scaling up successful initiatives.

5.1.1.4 The Climate City Contract: the cornerstone of the architecture of the Cities Mission governance

The Climate City Contract serves as the strategy devised by municipal governments to attain the objectives of the Mission within their respective cities. It formalizes the planning for action, investment, and the commitments made by cities to implement climate neutrality policies. It is the main governance tool for the Cities Mission, connecting cities with the European Commission, citizens, and other stakeholders.

The examination of the grey literature review of the documents issued by the European Commission (see table 1 in the methods chapter) reveals that the Climate City Contract holds a pivotal position in the governance structure of the Cities Mission. It serves as the platform where

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all the outlined principles (see section 5.1.2) are put into action: Firstly, it establishes a foundation for collaboration across various levels of governance. Secondly, it is designed by the Cities Mission framework that is must be co-created with citizens and incorporating plans for ongoing citizen involvement. Lastly, it serves as a focal point for partnerships with stakeholders from both business and public sectors around innovative projects.

The Climate City Contract is a noteworthy governance tool. First, it represents a political commitment that is ethically, rather than legally, binding. This is because the EU does not have exclusive competence over urban transitions and acts within the principle of subsidiarity. Second, signing the contract grants cities a Mission Label from the European Commission, which serves to acknowledge the quality and feasibility of their commitments under the contract. Although participating cities do not receive direct funding, the Mission Label aims to help them access additional support and funding from private, national, and regional sources. Third, the involvement of citizens for its elaboration prerequisite contributes to shaping the policy-making practices of city governments. While experimentation management is common in Horizon Europe policies, the Climate City Contract represents a novel governance tool (Interview with an expert, March 2024). This has led to it being described as an "innovative governance device" (Kern 2023).

Concluding this section on the grey literature, it was found that the Cities Mission governance aligns with mission-oriented policy theory, integrates various governance levels, and focuses on cities' needs and leadership. It emphasizes participatory processes with citizens and research and innovation stakeholders. These findings will be discussed in relation to literature on the political implications of governance choices, especially regarding environmental justice. Potential biases in this review may arise since the policy documents come from the same institution, reflecting an institutional perspective and possibly presenting a limited or one-sided view.

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5.1.2 Discourse analysis of European Commission documents: evaluating the consideration for environmental justice

This section presents the results of the discourse analysis of three following publications by the European Commission setting the framework of the Cities Mission (see table 2 in the methods chapter):

i) The Mission Board report, published in September 2020, guided the development of the Cities Mission and establishes its governance principles.

ii) The Implementation Plan, published in September 2021, details the objectives, processes, and governance of the Cities Mission.

iii) The Info Kit, also published in September 2021, introduces the Cities Mission to potential participants and provides guidelines for involvement.

5.1.2.1 Analyzing the Mission Board report: dominance of utilitarian discourse and lack of justice-sensitive considerations

The analysis of the theme of distribution of benefits and costs of the transition shows a lack of justice-sensitive discourse. While the document acknowledges co-benefits from climate policies such as improved air quality, job creation, and healthier lifestyles, it fails to specify how these benefits are distributed across society or address potential inequalities. There are only vague references to a "just transition" (7, 33), without concrete details on addressing unequal distributions.

When examining the citizen involvement's theme, different discourses are identified, each reflecting distinct perspectives on the role of citizens within the Cities Mission. First, citizen involvement is seen as a way to "enhance policy legitimacy of public policymaking" (26). The document explains that many citizens feel unrepresented and distrust institutions, and that direct

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involvement could address these issues and improve policymaking (26). Second, citizens are seen as enablers of the transition through their behaviors and choices in energy use, building retrofitting, and mobility, viewing them more as users rather than participants in decision-making. These considerations fall under utilitarian discourses, reducing citizen involvement to a means for policy success, which are prominent in the Mission Board report. However, another discourse on citizen involvement, termed participatory discourse, highlights the value of incorporating citizens' perspectives and knowledge to improve the policy and make it more adapted to the needs. Meanwhile, procedural justice discourse related to environmental justice is implicitly mentioned only once, stating, "to be effective, citizen engagement has to be inclusive, deliberative, and influential" (26). Although it aims for inclusiveness, the reference is too vague to fully represent procedural justice.

Additionally, there is no recognition of the link between vulnerability to climate change and social status or marginalization in that document. However, recognition is a crucial aspect of environmental justice theory, forming the foundation for developing just procedures and distributive actions. Without recognition, there is a risk of perpetuating inequalities and overlooking the specific needs and vulnerabilities of marginalized groups in environmental policies and practices. Therefore, its absence highlights a significant gap in addressing environmental justice concerns comprehensively and inclusively.

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Table 4: Summary of the discourse analysis' results of the Mission Board report for the 100 climate-neutral cities by 2030 – by and for the citizens.

Distribution of benefits and costs of the transition	Citizen involvement	Recognition of vulnerability of certain groups
Neutral discourse on co-benefits generated by climate policies (does not specify how they are distributed across society) ¤ Prominence (*[3]) ¤ Abstraction (***[4])	**Utilitarian discourses** - citizen involvement enhance policy legitimacy - citizens considered as enablers of the transition ¤ Prominence (***) **Participatory discourse** emphasizes the value of citizen involvement in bringing new perspectives to improve policy (citizens knowledge) ¤ Prominence (***) ¤ Abstraction (***) **Procedural justice discourse** ¤ Prominence (*) ¤ Abstraction (***)	None

5.1.2.2 The Implementation Plan: dominance of utilitarian discourse and abstract justice-sensitive considerations

Examining distributional aspects, the analysis of the Implementation Plan reveals dominance of the utilitarian discourse over the distributional justice discourse. The document repeatedly provides arguments geared towards justifying the Mission to the citizens by highlighting visible

[3] The asterisks signal different levels of prominence: (*) indicates low prominence, (**) indicates medium prominence, (***) indicates high prominence

[4] The asterisks signal different levels of abstraction: (*) indicates low abstraction, (**) indicates medium abstraction, (***) indicates high abstraction.

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benefits, such as improved air quality, less road congestion, healthier mobility, fewer road deaths, and reduced noise. This is exemplified by the quotation: “there is a strong and positive ‘spill-over’ effect from policy measures to reduce GHG in cities which will help them ‘sell’ or justify such measures to their citizens” (7). The distributional justice discourse is limited to abstract mentions of a “just transition” with only one somewhat specific reference: “supporting the territories facing serious socio-economic challenges [...] thus ensuring that the transition to climate neutrality leaves nobody behind” (35-36).

Regarding the theme of citizen involvement, the utilitarian discourse is prominent, emphasizing the opportunity for citizen engagement to “provide the policy legitimacy for climate action” (13) and help “win public support for the European Green Deal’s objectives” (45). It refers to citizen involvement as “a major communications opportunity for the Commission” (5). Additionally, a participatory discourse emerges, emphasizing the importance of informing citizens and involving them actively in decision-making and in the creation and implementation of the Climate City Contracts (48). However, no methods for actually involving citizens are specified, leaving this statement somewhat abstract. There are some instances of procedural justice discourse, such as the aim to “build inclusive participation in effective climate action” (23), but again this remains quite abstract. Another notable discourse, termed social innovation discourse, is more prominent. It emphasizes the importance of novel approaches and practices in governance that actively include citizens. An entire section is dedicated to this concept, titled “Innovative city governance models and citizens’ engagement”.

Again, there is no recognitional justice discourse present.

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Table 5: Summary of the discourse analysis' results of the Implementation Plan of the 100 Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities by 2030 (2021).

Distribution of benefits and costs of the transition	Citizen involvement	Recognition of vulnerability of certain groups
Utilitarian discourse Justifying the mission to the citizens by the benefits ¤ Prominence (***) **Distributional discourse** ¤ Prominence (*) ¤ Abstraction (***)	**Social innovation discourse.** Emphasizes the value of novel approaches and practices in governance that actively include citizens ¤ Prominence (***) ¤ Abstraction (***) **Utilitarian discourse** Emphasizes legitimacy and ownership ¤ Prominence (***) **Participatory discourse** emphasizes citizen involvement in decision making and governance ¤ Prominence (**) ¤ Abstraction (***) **Procedural justice discourse** ¤ Prominence (*) ¤ Abstraction (***)	none

5.1.2.3 The Info Kit: more extensive and richer in environmental justice discourse

In contrast to the previous documents - the Mission Board Report and the Implementation Plan - the Info Kit provides more content interpreted as environmental justice discourse. Regarding the theme of distribution of benefits and costs of the transition, a genuine distributional justice discourse is evident, acknowledging the need to ensure that "benefits are equitably distributed across society and that potential adverse impacts are recognized and mitigated early on" (71-72). Additionally, the document advocates for integrating justice dimensions into evaluation criteria,

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monitoring, and assessment to ensure that the program "ultimately benefits all citizens" (72). Although not highly prominent, this discourse occupies more space and is less abstract than in the two other studied European Commission's documents. The utilitarian discourse remains present, emphasizing the importance of "developing 'ownership' of the overall climate neutrality objective" and "gaining sufficient 'buy-in'" (2) to enhance policy legitimacy.

With regard to citizen involvement's theme, the Info Kit adopts a participatory discourse, emphasizing the importance of quality processes for integrating citizens into decision-making. It highlights the need for meaningful deliberation, "access to important decision-making venues," (64), "empowering citizens" (64) and "to move beyond tokenism" (17). Tokenism refers to situations where citizens appear to have a say but lack real influence. The European Commission explicitly promotes targeting the upper stages of Arnstein's Ladder of Participation, specifically stages 6 to 8 (64), demonstrating a clear understanding of the importance of citizen empowerment and the potential barriers to it. The Info Kit raises awareness about these issues and advocates for processes that enable citizens to have a genuine say in policies (17). It encourages city governments to "take citizens' views seriously and respond constructively" to their proposals and recommendations (64). The document includes a detailed section on "Planning Citizen Engagement," offering guidelines and warning about pitfalls in designing citizen involvement's practices. Additionally, it recognizes the value of citizen knowledge, as "citizens can often provide new perspectives and solutions" (63).

Importantly, the Info Kit shows a much more detailed and prominent procedural justice discourse than the two previously analyzed documents. For example, it states: "inclusive planning processes, co-creation, and engaging communities from the beginning can improve immediate climate equity outcomes" (72). It also mentions that recognizing and respecting diverse groups' knowledge,

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cultures and value in decision-making and providing culturally accessible climate information, and honoring existing cultural knowledge and values are crucial for a just transition (72). Additionally, it notes that "empowering citizens at more levels of governance can provide historically excluded citizens with access to important decision-making venues" (64) and emphasizes the need to "empower vulnerable social groups via participation" (69). It explicitly links inclusive participation in decision-making with climate equity outcomes and recognizes socially and environmentally vulnerable groups as well as historically excluded citizens, which is fundamental to procedural justice.

Unlike the other two documents, the Info Kit presents a recognitional justice discourse, acknowledging existing inequalities, their link to climate change, and how climate policies can exacerbate them. It identifies several situations where environmental injustices can occur, such as energy poverty, transport poverty, vulnerable households, marginalized communities, single-parent families, and people with disabilities. It also notes that climate policies "may disproportionately affect vulnerable households" (71) and details typical environmental injustice issues like welfare losses, gentrification, and "renoviction" (the displacement of low-income tenants caused by building renovations) (71). Interestingly, the document highlights the interrelation between gender and climate injustice. Indeed, women are disproportionately affected by climate change, being more vulnerable to energy poverty (Alfthan et al., 2011), health issues, and socio-economic disparities (Dankelman, 2010). The document acknowledges this. It also notes that women represent 85% of single parent families, which are often more vulnerable. It advocates for "moving from gender-blind to gender-transformative policies within the European Green Deal" (71). Overall, recognition of environmental injustice is quite prominent, with an entire page devoted to "What can cities do to ensure a just transition?" (71-72). Despite being just one page in

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a document of over 100 pages, its inclusion demonstrates an understanding of the intersection between climate and justice issues.

Besides, the social innovation discourse is also present, with a dedicated section on "Social Innovation Enabling Fair Transitions" (67-68). It stresses the potential of innovation to engage citizens and develop inclusive decision-making methods. To achieve this, the document advocates for experimentation with new forms of multi-level and integrated governance, as well as new business and finance models that empower citizens (3). Moreover, a discourse on technological innovation for enhancing citizen participation is also observed. It advocates the utilization of smart city technologies and digital tools for engaging citizens. A dedicated section discusses "the use of smart cities technologies for involving citizens." Interestingly, the document recognizes the importance of inclusivity for older or vulnerable groups with lower levels of digital literacy, thereby integrating justice issues into this topic.

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Table 6: Summary of the discourse analysis' results of the Info kit for cities for the 100 Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities by 2030 (2021).

Distribution of benefits and costs of the transition	Citizen involvement	Recognition of vulnerability of certain groups
Utilitarian discourse Emphasizes on rendering co-benefits of climate policies visible to enhance policy legitimacy **Neutral discourse on co-benefits generated by climate policies** (does not specify how they are distributed across society) ¤ Prominence (***) ¤ Abstraction (*) **Distributional justice discourse** ¤ Prominence (*) ¤ Abstraction (**)	**Participatory discourses** - Attention paid to quality process ("access to important decision-making venues", "to go beyond 'tokenism'", "empowering citizens") - Citizen knowledge (as citizens can often provide new perspectives and solutions) ¤ Prominence (***) ¤ Abstraction (**) **Procedural justice discourse** - Recognition as the basis for inclusion: "marginalized citizens", "socially and environmentally vulnerable groups", "historically excluded citizens" "diversity as a criteria" "respecting existing cultural knowledge and values" ¤ Prominence (***) ¤ Abstraction (**) **Social innovation discourse** ¤ Prominence (***) ¤ Abstraction (**) **Technological innovation discourse for improving citizen participation** ¤ Prominence (**) **Utilitarian discourse (legitimacy)** ¤ Prominence (*)	**Recognition discourse** Emphasizes the necessity to recognize and address the situation of vulnerable groups and individuals (historically excluded citizens, less digitally literate, gentrification. disproportionally burdens, greater risks, energy poverty, transport poverty, vulnerable households, women, single parent families, people with disabilities) ¤ Prominence (***) ¤ Abstraction (**) **Recognition of the risk that climate policies can exacerbate existing inequalities**

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5.2 The cities: case studies of Marseille and Leuven

This section examines how the two case study cities have approached the creation of their Climate City Contract and the extent to which they integrate environmental justice discourses. The Climate City Contracts (CCC) are composed of three parts, the Commitments (C), the Action Plan (AP), and the Investment Plan (IP). These abbreviations will be used to reference the quoted sources in subsequent sections. Then, the cities' responses and expectations regarding the Cities Mission governance framework is analyzed, revealing significant differences in their climate governance backgrounds. Both cities express regret over the lack of bottom-up governance within the Cities Mission, despite this approach being emphasized by the European Commission.

5.2.1 Analyzing Marseille Climate City Contract: prominent and rich distributional, procedural and recognitional justice discourses

Regarding the distribution of benefits and costs of the transition, the CCC of Marseille prominently emphasizes distributional justice. This is evident in the core aims of the climate policy, which include "an energy and ecological transition based on solidarity, addressing climatic, social, economic, and environmental challenges" (4 AP) and "contributing to a significant reduction in the local poverty rate" (8 C). This discourse is recurrent throughout various sections of the action plan, starting from the first section titled "Marseille, a laboratory for carbon-neutral and socially just Mediterranean cities," and extending to specific sections focusing on energy, health, transport, food, and employment sectors.

Regarding citizen involvement's theme, participatory discourse is prominent in Marseille's CCC. It is stated that the city "has systematized the inclusion of stakeholders in its policy-making process" (175 AP) and "increased the number of citizen consultation mechanisms" (175 AP). Marseille's CCC demonstrates a commitment to participatory processes through various initiatives

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like regular conferences, debates, seminars, workshops, and the General Estates for housing (175 AP). The municipality has established the "Citizens Assembly for the Future," a group of 111 citizens. Although planned before the Cities Mission to examine different topics of political actions, this assembly will now monitor the Climate City Contract. The interview with a member of the local executive government highlighted the city's commitment to high-quality deliberative procedures in their citizens' assembly. This assembly "goes beyond simply acting as a counter-power" (Interview with Marseille's representative, May 2024), it should genuinely participate in co-decision-making, providing recommendations to the city government. The approach aims to create a true deliberative body.

Importantly, the procedural justice discourse is highly prominent in Marseille approach. "Citizens' participation and social inclusion" are among the five fundamental principles in the Commitments section. The interview revealed that the 'Citizen Assembly for the Future' is designed to be inclusive, involving 25 people in situations of exclusion (mostly foreigners, precarious, and poorly housed individuals). The idea is to involve them in the city's future, as it concerns them as much as anyone else" (Interview with Marseille's representative, May 2024). The assembly also includes 16 youths aged between 16 and 18 years old from different high schools, for the sake of intergenerational justice. Besides, the interviewee explained that efforts were made to minimize power imbalances in the procedures. Having observed other citizens' assembly experiences, the city government identified a common pitfall where "power is grabbed by a few individuals" (Interview with Marseille's representative, May 2024). To address this, they implemented annual member renewals and organized work in small groups of 25 and sub-workshops in very small committees, ensuring that everyone felt comfortable speaking. "Out of the 111, participation

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[between all participants] was almost equal, and even in plenary sessions, we ensured equal speaking time distribution." (Interview with Marseille's representative, May 2024).

Another rationale for citizen involvement is to restore the trust of the citizens in their role and democratic culture, referred to as democracy discourse. This is particularly relevant in a city like Marseille, "where citizenship has been severely undermined" (Interview with Marseille's representative, May 2024). The interviewee described decades of a harsh clientelist system damaging people's understanding of their role as citizens and had detrimental effects on the common good. This system relies on exchanging favors, jobs, or benefits for political support, reinforcing social inequalities and eroding trust in institutions. As a result, little consideration was given to the city's future or collective progress (Interview with Marseille's representative, May 2024). Therefore, the municipal government aims to rebuild trust with the inhabitants and create a stronger sense of democracy through these initiatives aiming at "rethinking the city collectively" (Interview with Marseille's representative, May 2024).

Another important topic related to citizen involvement is the emphasis on social innovation, referred to as social innovation discourse. This is prominently featured with a dedicated section on social innovation (175-177 AP), covering topics such as energy communities, food distribution, and community gardens. Social innovation is defined in the CCC as measures for "mobilizing stakeholders around the issues of climate transition and social justice. and social justice" (175 AP), The CCC highlights that "Marseille has a vibrant network of socially committed associations and can rely on a network of social centers in close proximity to the population" (148 AP). The municipality also bases its strategy on social innovation to achieve its goal of social justice, highlighting that "the strong involvement of citizens, associations, and the creative class promotes an urban model of social and ecological justice for the Marseille territory" (11 AP). The utilitarian

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discourse, which refers to ownership and acceptability of climate action, is also present in the CCC and the interview, but has low prominence.

The recognitional justice discourse is also highly prominent. The CCC demonstrates recognition of various histories and cultures of different groups and acknowledges that situations of poverty and exclusion are inextricably linked to climate justice. It also illustrates a political commitment to using climate action as a means for social progress, evidenced by the statement: “Contributing to poverty reduction and social emancipation will be inseparable from climate action.” (8 C). Indeed, tackling poverty and social inclusion is one of the primary objectives of the city’s climate strategy. During the interview, the interrelation between social status and environmental injustices was spontaneously raised right from the beginning by the interviewee. The interviewee mentioned how impoverished neighborhoods have been terribly impacted by pollution from ships (Marseille has a big industrial port), air pollution from major urban highways and by soil pollution - the city’s industrial heritage. “The working-class neighborhoods of the city of Marseille face a kind of triple penalty” (Interview with Marseille’s representative, May 2024). The interview highlighted various groups that are acknowledged and integrated into the city’s climate strategy. These include young people who have dropped out of school, individuals with unstable jobs, those experiencing social exclusion, the African countries diasporas, and single-parent families. Recognition of these groups is important, as it forms the basis for procedural and distributional justice. Marseille’s climate strategy focuses on the specific needs and challenges of these groups, aiming to ensure that transformations primarily benefit the city’s most vulnerable populations (Interview with Marseille’s representative, May 2024). Spatial disparities are recognized, particularly in identifying affluent and impoverished neighborhoods. The northern neighborhoods, characterized by social housing and inhabited by economically disadvantaged residents, are acknowledged as

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more vulnerable to climate change compared to other parts of the city, notably the greener and less densely populated southern areas. Similarly, the city center of Marseille, one of Europe's poorest neighborhoods, faces challenges such as building renovation and energy consumption issues. However, the interview highlighted the incomplete nature of efforts to map out climate injustices, revealing a lack of comprehensive study to evaluate climate vulnerability across the entire city.

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Table 7: Summary of the discourse analysis' results of the Climate City Contract of Marseille (2023) and of the interview with a member of the local executive government of Marseille (May 2024).

The Climate City Contract of Marseille (2023)		
Distribution of benefits and costs of the transition	Citizen involvement	Recognition of vulnerability of certain groups
Distributional justice discourse ¤ Prominence (***)	**Procedural justice discourse** ¤ Prominence (***) **Social innovation discourse** ¤ Prominence (***) **Utilitarian discourse** Ownership and acceptability ¤ Prominence (*)	**Recognition of tackling poverty and social inclusion as important issues in the transition policy** ¤ Prominence (***)
The interview with a member of the local executive government of Marseille (May 2024)		
Distributional justice discourse ¤ Prominence (***)	**Participatory discourse** - Attention paid to quality deliberative procedures - Making recommendations to the city government - Making it a genuine co-decision assembly ¤ Prominence (***) **Procedural justice** - inclusion of everyone, including people in situation of exclusion and youth - attention paid to power relations ¤ Prominence (***) **Democracy discourses** - Citizen involvement through cooperative projects - Restoring citizenship and democracy culture ¤ Prominence (**) **Utilitarian discourse** ¤ Prominence (*)	**Recognition that certain populations face more the impacts of pollution and climate change and energy crisis** - impoverished neighborhoods - dropping out of school young people - people whose job is unstable - people in situation of social exclusion - diasporas of African Countries - single-parent families - Spatial divide ¤ Prominence (***) **Mapping out climate injustices** Observed and some studies, but no unique and comprehensive mapping yet

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5.2.2 Analyzing Leuven Climate City Contract: rich distributional and recognitional justice discourse, while citizen involvement is mainly framed with social innovation discourse

The Climate City Contract of Leuven prominently features distributional justice discourse, which is core to its overarching vision and evident across various action areas. The general vision emphasizes the importance of aligning social justice with decarbonization efforts, ensuring equitable distribution of costs and benefits, and fostering inclusive processes responsive to diverse voices (5 C). This includes the abstract yet pertinent statement of holding individuals with a larger environmental footprint more strongly accountable (10 C). The distributional justice discourse is also visible through the various areas of action, such as providing suitable housing renovation options for disadvantaged groups (66 AP), ensuring lower energy bills and improved living conditions (66 AP), and guaranteeing sufficient mobility options to prevent certain neighborhoods from being left behind (69 AP). Leuven's approach to climate policy design, outlined in the CCC, involves consistently evaluating new policies through a social justice lens, asking "who does this measure benefit?" (71 AP). This demonstrates a keen understanding of the distributional justice aspect in climate policy. However, the document acknowledges that clear solutions to systematically ensure fair distribution are still needed and require further work (67 AP).

The procedural justice discourse is nearly absent from Leuven's climate strategy. Instead, the social innovation discourse dominates. Only one abstract mention of procedural justice appears in the CCC, stating that "processes are designed to be inclusive and responsive to a wide range of voices" (5 C). The findings of the interview with a sustainability advisor from Leuven revealed that the city had preferred social innovation practices over deliberative ones. The interviewee explained that Leuven's experience with an open Advisory Board on Environment and Sustainability was unsuccessful. Meetings were misused by individuals with unrelated agendas.

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Despite the principle that "participation should be open to everyone," (Leuven Interview) the municipality of Leuven had to close the meetings. Consequently, Leuven doesn't have a large citizens' assembly on sustainability. Leuven does have several Councils and Boards (on Nature and Biodiversity, Food and Agriculture, Health, and Spatial Planning) which comprise some citizens, but most members are professionals from organizations or NGOs. Besides, the interviewee noted that involving citizens in designing the CCC was challenging and unsuccessful due to the project's technical complexity and limited time for organizing proper citizen involvement. Instead, Leuven collaborated closely with businesses, NGOs, and academia, leveraging its well-established "quadruple helix" governance model[5] (Interview with Leuven's sustainability advisor, May 2024). This aligns with the social innovation discourse, emphasizing stakeholder management. The involvement strategy does not focus on citizens but rather considers them as one group among many stakeholders, including the private sector and academia. Leuven's climate policy is more projects-based, involving citizens and stakeholders in design and implementation of multiple projects in neighborhoods, rather than citizen deliberation on the overall climate strategy.

Another discourse related to citizen involvement focuses on empowering individuals to take sustainable actions in various aspects of life, as outlined in the CCC, which emphasizes encouraging citizens to make sustainable choices and facilitating behavioral change (175 AP). Additionally, Leuven has crafted a 'climate adaptation toolkit', "to activate and empower citizens to take action" on their own properties, such as greening their spaces or implementing Nature-

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[5] Quadruple Helix refers to an open innovation model where government, industry, academia and citizens work together to co-create innovations and foster structural changes. This approach is particularly encouraged in the European Framework Program for research and innovation Horizon Europe (Curley 2015).

Based Solutions (72 AP). This discourse prompts inquiries into the distribution of responsibility regarding climate change and adaptation. It must be recognized that not all citizens possess the necessary resources to participate in such initiatives. The emphasis on individual action and responsibility resonates with neoliberal discourses, as elaborated upon in the subsequent discussion.

Furthermore, there is a discourse on technological innovation for enhancing citizen involvement, which interestingly emphasizes inclusivity, particularly for vulnerable groups in technology tools (85 AP). Additionally, a utilitarian discourse underscores the importance of citizen involvement in fostering ownership of climate policy, as highlighted in interviews.

Finally, recognitional justice discourse is evident in Leuven's CCC, which acknowledges the "intersection between climate action and social justice" (60 AP). The document also plans to recognize and integrate the perspectives of marginalized communities into the climate policy, facilitated by two members of the Board of Directors of Leuven 2030 who work directly with marginalized communities. Additionally, there is acknowledgment that climate policy risks exacerbating inequalities, highlighting the "the need for policies that proactively link climate goals and social objectives" (181 AP) When asked about identifying climate-vulnerable groups and mapping climate vulnerability, the interviewee disclosed that Leuven had conducted risk and vulnerability assessments, but they were inadequate, lacking detailed spatial analysis. Currently, the municipal government relies on statistics to identify wealthier and poorer areas of the city. Since vulnerabilities like heat stress are closely linked to socioeconomic factors, particularly in older housing, the municipality prioritizes areas with more deprived populations. Similarly, they acknowledge that areas with heavy traffic are often near the poorest neighborhoods, resulting in

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poorer air quality for disadvantaged populations. Overall, Leuven acknowledges the necessity of enhancing risk and vulnerability mapping, with plans for future improvements.

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Table 8: Summary of the discourse analysis' results of the Climate City Contract of Leuven (2023) and of the interview with a sustainability advisor Leuven (May 2024)

Distribution of benefits of the transition	Recognition of vulnerability of certain groups	Citizen involvement
The Climate City Contract of Leuven (2023)		
Distributional justice discourse ¤ Abstraction (*) ¤ Prominence (***)	**Recognition discourse** Recognition of marginalized community and intersection between climate action and social justice ¤ Prominence (***) **Recognition that climate policy risks to exacerbate inequalities**	**Social innovation discourse** ¤ Prominence (***) **Technological innovation for enhancing citizen involvement discourse** ¤ Prominence (*) **Utilitarian discourses** - Inclusion for ensuring greater support and policy success ¤ Prominence (***) - Empowering citizen to take individual action, for ensuring policy success ¤ Prominence (**) **Procedural justice discourse** ¤ Almost **Absent** (one mention) ¤ Abstraction (***) **Participatory discourse** - Emphasizes the value of citizen involvement in bringing new perspectives to improve policy (citizens science) ¤ Prominence (*)
The interview with a sustainability advisor Leuven (May 2024)		
Distributional justice discourse ¤ Prominence (*)	**Recognitional justice discourse** ¤ Prominence (**)	**Social innovation discourse** ¤ Prominence (***) **Utilitarian discourse** - Involvement for creating ownership of climate policy ¤ Prominence (*)

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5.2.3 Cities' responses and expectations to the Cities Mission governance framework

5.2.3.1 Governance structures adopted by two cities to implement the Cities Mission

The two case-studies cities had to reorganize their governance or even create new services to implement the Cities Mission, albeit to different extents. In Marseille, addressing the challenge of administrative capacity was crucial, qualified teams were needed to develop and manage the Cities Mission's implementation. Previously, Marseille's municipal administration lagged significantly in ecological matters, without any local administration focusing on the topic, despite having 13,000 employees (Interview with Marseille's representative, May 2024). The city started from a very disadvantaged position. Currently, the administration has established ecological transition services. Although the team remains insufficient, it is now in place (Interview with Marseille's representative, May 2024).

Marseille's municipal government typically prioritizes urgent repairs and immediate crises, sidelining long-term city planning. Initially, only a few elected officials and local actors advocated for the city's urban transition agenda, which gradually gained momentum. The Cities Mission acted as an incentive to promote ecological planning in Marseille (Interview with Marseille's representative, May 2024).

Moreover, Marseille historically had limited engagement with the European Commission or European networks. Participation in the Cities Mission required Marseille to re-engage at the European level and build connections with other participating cities. The interviewee was pleased to observe that cities' network has opened dialogue opportunities and allowed Marseille to advocate its urban transition vision within a European context.

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In the following sections, it will be explained that the Cities Mission did not fully meet the cities' expectations at the moment of the study. Nevertheless, the interviewee emphasized that the most important achievement is that Marseille managed to establish a roadmap through its Climate City Contract (CCC). This includes a structured approach to managing the transition, supported by the creation of new administrative bodies and a collaborative dynamic with citizens and stakeholders.

Unlike Marseille, Leuven has long-term experience with climate policy, stakeholder involvement, and engagement with the EU. Leuven has been active in sustainability efforts since the late 1990s and had already established a climate neutrality roadmap by 2019. The city's governance model for climate issues, in preparation for over a decade (Interview with Leuven's sustainability advisor, May 2024), is well-established and familiar to both the city and its stakeholders. This model, based on stakeholder management for small projects and innovation, includes an NGO, Leuven 2030, to coordinate stakeholders while the local authority focuses on policy creation and implementation. This approach has been successful for Leuven, a city of 100,000 inhabitants, with 40,000 students, which features a progressive population and high acceptance of climate policies (Interview with Leuven's sustainability advisor, May 2024). Besides, as an old university city, Leuven benefits from academic research to develop local solutions.

The city is also well-integrated into European networks. Leuven has a history of engagement in EU projects, winning the European Green Leaf Award in 2018 and the European Capital of Innovation in 2020, demonstrating its strong integration into EU initiatives.

Regarding administrative capacity, Leuven already had departments for sustainability and citizen engagement. However, the Cities Mission prompted the administration to "break the silos" and create trans-sectoral teams for climate policy. This led to the integration of various departments, including social issues, mobility, housing, and energy, into the Climate City Contract. This

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initiative marked the beginning of a more intensive and structured collaboration within the municipality (Interview with Leuven's sustainability advisor, May 2024).

5.2.3.2 The cities lack support from the Cities Mission to truly enabling bottom-up initiatives from citizens

As previously stated, the Cities Mission aims to "empower citizens as change agents through grassroots initiatives, innovation, and new governance models" (Mission Board 2020, 7). The Climate City Contracts were intended to involve citizens in their design. However, it has been found that there's a gap between the Commission's expectations and the support provided to cities for fostering direct citizen-led initiatives.

First, the concept of participation within the Mission lacks clear definition, resulting in ambiguity. European Commission documents mention different methodologies, ranging from citizen-led projects to initiatives initiated by authorities, like neighborhood assemblies, participatory online platforms, co-creation, and deliberation forums. However, the governance structure fails to specify the extent of power to be given to citizens by city governments and how citizens will be involved in decision-making (Assessment Report 2023).

Second, tensions emerged because cities had limited time to implement citizen involvement practices (Interview with Leuven's sustainability advisor, May 2024), which require substantial preparation to be effective and inclusive. Cities were expected to develop their Climate City Contracts within tight timeframes to progress in the implementation process. This lack of support and time poses significant challenges for local administrations.

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5.2.3.3 The cities, disappointed by constraining call for proposals and 'one size fit all' logics, advocate for genuine bottom-up approach

The interviews revealed significant disappointment among the studied cities regarding financial support for implementing their CCC. This dissatisfaction stems not only from the amount of funding available but especially from what is funded. Indeed, at that time of the research, the European Commission's funding mechanisms for the Cities Mission are exclusively through projects funded under the Horizon Europe framework.

First, this mechanism generates a lot of frustration, as cities must apply for competitive research and innovation projects that are highly technical, time-consuming, and often require dedicated staff (Interview with Leuven's sustainability advisor, May 2024, Interview with Marseille's representative, May 2024). Additionally, these applications are "not always cost-effective" since there is no guarantee of winning the funding (Interview with Marseille's representative, May 2024). The interviewee from Leuven expressed a strong desire for dedicated seed money to implement the Climate City Contracts, rather than relying on the project application system.

Second, Marseille was disappointed with the financial expectations: "We were promised billions for this Mission. It mobilized us significantly, and we thought we would win numerous project calls. We're receiving some European money, but not as much as we hoped." The interviewee cited the war in Ukraine as a major factor reducing research funding for the Cities Mission (Interview with Marseille's representative, May 2024).

Third, when asked about to what extent they perceive the Cities Mission as relying on bottom-up approach, the interviewees both noted that "unfortunately" the Mission relies on the same competitive methods of proposal calls, "creating a logic of pitting territories against each other" (Interview with Marseille's representative, May 2024). Leuven's interviewee suggested that a

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more bottom-up approach would be asking cities what they need to tailor the fundings. An opinion also expressed by Marseille's interviewee, who noted that funding tends to adhere to European frameworks, overlooking unique projects that don't fit standardized European calls for proposals (Interview with Marseille's representative, May 2024). Leuven's interviewee suggested that a more genuine bottom-up approach would involve asking cities about their needs to tailor the funding. This opinion was shared by Marseille's interviewee, who noted that fundings tends to be "one size fits all" and align with the political agenda of the Commission only, sometimes overlooking singular projects that don't fit standardized European calls for proposals.

This is particularly evident in the case of Marseille, where the interview revealed a deliberate decision by the municipal government to diverge from the urban transition framework outlined by the European Commission in the Cities Mission. Instead, Marseille aims to propose alternative projects grounded in principles of "frugality" and "popular ecology", rather than relying on smart city concepts and technological solutions. Marseille's climate vision revolves around the concept of democratizing access to resources like food and energy. The interviewee highlighted the challenge posed by overarching national or European models, stating, "Marseille won't necessarily dismantle the agri-food model, for instance. However, it can lead the way in exploring alternative models" (Interview with Marseille's representative, May 2024). For example, Marseille is experimenting with food security as social welfare. Opposing to the centralized national energy system in France, Marseille proposes a decentralized model, based on solidarity and cooperative between producers and consumers.

Perhaps the Cities Mission could serve as an opportunity to bring cities' needs and visions to the European level? However, currently, this is not effectively happening. The situations described in the interviews underscore the missed opportunity to utilize Climate City Contracts as a foundation

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for developing bottom-up policies and funding. In that regard, Marseille's government views it as crucial for their ideas to influence higher levels, particularly the EU and national government. They emphasize the importance of lobbying the European Commission to amend regulations, especially those governing public procurement. However, cities must also possess substantial organization and advocacy skills to effectively engage in this process. cities, they "clearly have a role to play, both in terms of supporting projects and experimentation and in terms of advocacy." (Interview with Marseille's representative, May 2024).

In summary, the Cities Mission brought both encouragement for planning climate action and a network to the cities. However, Leuven and Marseille differ significantly in their preparedness. Leuven, a front-runner in climate policy, is well-prepared with a solid governance structure and strong integration with EU initiatives. In contrast, Marseille joined the mission quickly despite having lagged far behind not long ago. The lack of appropriate means to support citizen involvement had been highlighted through the analysis and both cities expressed dissatisfaction with the project-funded system, advocating for more bottom-up funding designs. Additionally, Marseille pointed out that the call for proposals is not suited to alternative visions for urban transformation, which will be interesting to discuss in light of literature about the implications of governance models.

CEU eTD Collection

6. DISCUSSION

First, the limitations encountered during the research are discussed, highlighting the constraints of the research design and the scope of the study that may influence the discussion. Then, by combining discourse analysis and a review of grey literature, the discussion argues that governance arrangements of the Cities Mission can either constrain or facilitate environmental justice considerations. This argument is developed through three key points aligned with the theoretical concepts of environmental justice: citizen involvement and just representation; just distribution of resources and responsibilities; and recognition of environmental injustices and of alternative visions on climate change in cities. Each point is subdivided into thematic sections addressing two dimensions. The first dimension examines the Cities Mission governance's capacity to provide a framework for developing climate policies in cities that are informed by environmental justice. This involves assessing the impact of governance approaches on citizen involvement practices, the influence of experimental governance on the just distribution of resources and opportunities, and the relationship between neoliberal governance and recognitional justice. The second dimension considers the broader impact of the Cities Mission governance on multi-level urban climate governance within the EU, focusing on the "governance of governance." This includes evaluating the potential of the Cities Mission to establish procedures for just representation and power balance within multi-level processes, ensure a fair distribution of resources and responsibilities among various authorities, and recognize alternative visions of "good urban climate governance".

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6.1 Limitations encounter during the research

6.1.1 Limitations in methodology and theoretical approach

Including more empirical data would have enhanced the generalizability of the results, given the limitations imposed by the small sample size of both analyzed documents and interviews. The study was constrained by the availability of official documents published at the time of research. The study is particularly focused on the EU multi-level governance system and two cities in the Global North, specifically in Europe, where socio-economic conditions are privileged, and urbanization is highly developed. It remains uncertain how applicable these findings might be in other urban contexts.

Discourse analysis alone proved insufficient to fully comprehend the underlying motives shaping the design of the Cities Mission. This was particularly evident in the European Commission's documents, that were written in institutional language that is highly polished. Besides, it was challenging to discern the rationale of the differences in discourse usage between two contemporaneously published documents: the Implementation Plan (2021) and the Info Kit (2021). This lack of consistency could potentially be attributed to different target audiences. The absence of insights into internal deliberations and the policy formulation process surrounding these documents highlights a gap for future research. Moreover, the Climate City Contracts may not fully encompass the municipality's entire vision on climate policy and environmental justice, as they primarily focus on climate mitigation and are directed towards the European Commission. Thus, interviews were crucial in providing additional context and validating findings from the discourse analysis. Yet, the restricted number of interviews conducted could have limited the robustness of the results generated.

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In this research investigating the interplay between governance structures and environmental justice in climate policy, several potential confounding factors were not adequately addressed, which could affect the reliability of the conclusions. The socio-economic context, although acknowledged, was not thoroughly examined, particularly the distinct socio-economic profiles of Leuven and Marseille. Similarly, while some aspects of the political backdrop were touched upon in relation to the European Commission's policies (such as the Green Deal's alignment with neoliberalism), there was insufficient exploration of the political dynamics within municipal governments, which could influence policy approaches significantly.

6.1.2 Limitations in the scope of the study

The study does not address the national level and its role in the governance of the Cities Mission, which would be crucial within its multi-level framework. However, practical challenges arose in integrating this aspect into the research due to its incomplete implementation and the undefined nature of their role at this stage. It is uncertain to what extent the findings can be generalized across all cities; therefore, other cities participating in the Mission need to be examined. For a more comprehensive understanding of multi-level governance and participatory processes, further case studies and comparative analysis are necessary to validate and extend the findings.

6.2 The influences of the Cities Mission's governance on citizen involvement practices and just representation

6.2.1 Evaluating the impact of local governance models on the approaches to citizen involvement in case study cities

An interesting finding from the empirical research was that the two case study cities diverged in the way they frame citizen involvement. In Marseille's Climate City Contract (CCC), procedural justice discourse was strongly emphasized, highlighting the importance of inclusivity and

CEU eTD Collection

representation in decision-making processes to promote justice (see section 5.2.1). In contrast, Leuven's CCC predominantly focused on social innovation discourse, stressing the need for new social practices and organizational forms to drive sustainability (see section 5.2.2). The interpretation in this research is that this divergence reflects different governance arrangements. The discourse on citizen involvement in Marseille's CCC emphasizes a desire to transform the political culture by granting more decision-making power to citizens over climate strategy of the city, primarily through the Citizen Assembly for the Future. This interpretation was corroborated by the interview with a member of Marseille's local executive government, who confirmed explicitly the desire to renew the political culture. When talking about this Citizen Assembly, he highlighted procedural justice considerations, focusing on balancing power relations and including marginalized people in political matters. In contrast, Leuven's approach considers citizens as one group among others within the broader governance framework. For example, Leuven's interviewee explained that the councils and boards managing the city's transition include diverse stakeholders and professionals, and not only citizens. This difference can be attributed to the distinct governance arrangements of the two cities. In Marseille, citizen involvement in climate policy is relatively new, having begun in December 2020. This initiative was introduced to break away from a long history of clientelism. The Citizen Assembly for the Future aims to contribute to rebuilding citizens' understanding of their role and restoring their connection to the common good, improving democratic life, and ensuring every voice is heard. Leuven, on the other hand, has established its governance model over the past decade, based on social innovation and the principles of the quadruple helix which involves collaboration among administration, business, academia, and citizens. Citizen involvement is part of a stakeholders' management strategy, focusing on smaller-scale projects rather than creating a large citizen assembly for political

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orientation. This model has been successful in Leuven, partly due to the progressive population and high acceptance of climate policies, as explained by the interviewee. The divergence in discourse and governance approaches between Marseille and Leuven indicates also that citizen involvement strategies are shaped by each city's historical, political, and social contexts. Marseille's focus on procedural justice and empowering marginalized voices reflects its need to rebuild trust and political culture. In contrast, Leuven's focus on social innovation indicates a commitment to fostering new practices and models for achieving social-ecological transformation.

6.2.2 Evaluating the impact of the Cities Mission's governance arrangements on fostering procedural justice in climate policy-making in cities

While both cities started citizen involvement practices prior joining the Cities Mission, their participation in the program added another dimension by making citizen involvement in climate policy a requirement. Indeed, the grey literature review indicates that citizen involvement is a fundamental pillar of the Cities Mission's governance, with a clear emphasis on achieving inclusive participation. How does the governance framework operationalize support for procedural justice? The three preparatory documents – the Mission Board report (2020), the Implementation Plan (2021), and the Info Kit (2021) - lack specific guidelines on implementing just procedures. Notably, the Mission Board report (2020) and the Implementation Plan (2021) predominantly emphasize utilitarian perspectives (see sections 5.1.2.1 and 5.1.2.2), viewing citizen involvement as a means to reduce opposition to climate policies and enhance policy legitimacy (Newig and Fritsch 2009). This finding is intriguing as it highlights a pragmatic approach by the European Commission, suggesting that citizen engagement is primarily valued for its potential to facilitate policy implementation, rather than for fostering deeper democratic involvement or addressing justice concerns. Besides, even though the Info Kit (2021) demonstrates a solid understanding of

CEU eTD Collection

procedural justice principles (see sections 5.1.2.3), it lacks detailed guidance on practical implementation. For example, it does not address methods to prevent the replication of power dynamics or ensure adequate representation of all interests, particularly those of marginalized communities, which are essential for achieving procedural justice. However, the literature on citizen involvement in urban climate policy-making emphasizes the necessity for specific support mechanisms for citizen involvement in climate planning in urban areas, for example a long-term funding program for citizen projects, especially for "open up climate decision-making to lay citizens and marginalized groups" (Satorras 2021, 18). Regarding research on the initial stages of the Cities Mission, Shabb et al. (2022) criticized the "oversimplification of participatory approaches" in the Mission Board report (2020). They highlighted a limited understanding of the challenges and complexities involved in engaging citizens and stakeholders in the Cities Mission approach. The present research confirms that these issues persist across the rest of the preparatory documents setting the foundation for the Cities Mission governance. Additionally, the present research found that the timeline provided by the European Commission to deliver the Climate City Contracts was too short to effectively incorporate citizen involvement in its creation, even though this was initially a prerequisite (see section 5.2.3.2). These findings, when considered alongside the literature, suggest that the governance framework may not adequately support the implementation of procedural justice in developing climate policies for cities.

6.2.3 Framing just representation and power balance within the multi-level processes

The findings indicate that the Cities Mission aims to cultivate a bottom-up approach to urban climate policy (see section 5.1.1.2). The aim is to offer EU support based on the cities' demands and to promote co-creation in the development of the Mission with cities and local actors. This

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observation raises several pertinent questions for discussing this aim through the lens of justice: What defines a just bottom-up approach in urban climate governance? How effectively can bottom-up governance at the EU level enhance participatory decision-making to ensure equitable climate policy outcomes in cities? Can this approach mitigate environmental injustices? The Cities Mission presents an opportunity to delve into these inquiries, evaluating its capacity to implement fair representation and equitable power dynamics across multiple levels of governance, thereby contributing to the development of a "just governance" model. This includes ensuring equal voice for diverse cities and fostering balanced negotiations among various tiers of authorities for example. However, the results of this study fail to provide empirical data to fully answer this matter. While the European Commission's documents frequently reference bottom-up approaches, they remain vague overall and do not specify how this approach will be implemented. This suggests that the Mission is evolving step by step without precisely defined bottom-up structures. Perhaps another method of data collection or an interview with a member of the European Commission would have provided more clarity.

Despite the lack of concrete answers from this study, the question remains highly relevant. Indeed, a bottom-up approach could offer the opportunity to diversify the venues for problem definition, allowing for a broader range of perspectives to be included in the policy-making process (Silver, Scott, and Kazepov 2010). This diversification holds the potential that the voices of various stakeholders, including marginalized communities, are heard and considered in developing and implementing urban climate policies. Consequently, it can lead to more a more inclusive approach to multi-level governance and could open the door to locally relevant expressions of environmental justice (Browne, Gunn, and Davern 2022). For instance, the Cities Mission could potentially institutionalize to channel concerns expressed in city-level citizen assemblies or other participatory

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practices back to the EU, thereby influencing the European Commission's agenda. This could enhance participation of cities and their citizens in urban climate governance. However, the assumption that a bottom-up approach would necessarily elevate environmental justice topics through the levels of governance should be taken with caution. Power dynamics still pose a challenge in conveying information from the local level to national and EU levels. The critical question is: who gets to have their ideas and interests represented at higher levels? Therefore, the focus should be on better representation of diversified interests rather than simply greater participation.

6.2.4 Renewal of the political culture through citizen involvement vs. "involvement washing"

Finally, it is important to maintain a healthy skepticism about citizen involvement practices and its potential to enhance justice in decision-making: is it genuine participation in climate policy or just a superficial change? What power is truly given to citizens? Indeed, citizen participation is frequently used as a buzzword, risking the perpetuation of existing narratives and power dynamics. In many instances, the European Commission's documents describe citizens as "enablers of the transition," emphasizing the need for them to change their behavior. This perspective aligns more with a neoliberal view, seeing citizens as consumers rather than political actors (Cardullo and Kitchin 2019a,b). Critical literature on neoliberal governance raises concerns that government or elite-driven citizen participation is often a superficial effort to secure legitimacy for pre-existing policies favoring capitalist interests (Silver, Scott, and Kazepov 2010). In contrast, grassroot bottom-up initiatives are seen as more genuine expressions of citizen sentiment and resistance to neoliberal objectives (Silver, Scott, and Kazepov 2010). Further research is needed to evaluate to what extent grassroots bottom-up participation efforts can be integrated into the multi-level

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governance framework of the Cities Mission. Climate change challenges us to reconsider "whether the political modes of thought and practice caused the problem are, in part, responsible for the problem itself" (Blue and Dale 2016). Fully engaging with citizen involvement on climate issues could pave the way for a reevaluation of our democratic system and make radical shift in political culture. Maybe our societies require fundamental transformations in their democratic frameworks, considering citizen involvement practices not merely as supplementary but as a transformative approach to address both ecological and democratic crises.

6.3 The effects of the Cities Mission governance on just distribution of resources and responsibilities

6.3.1 Distribution of responsibilities in a polycentric governance model

The results demonstrate that both cities' Climate City Contracts (CCC) prominently feature discourses on distributional justice. Leuven's CCC systematically incorporates distributional justice across sectors such as energy, health, transport, and food, showing a solid understanding of the intersection between climate action and social justice (see section 5.2.2). In Marseille, the distribution of climate action benefits and the reduction of climate burdens are political priorities as highlighted in interviews where these topics were discussed in detail (see section 5.2.1). This significantly surpasses the depth of distributional justice found in the European Commission's documents (see section 5.1.2). This raises critical questions about who gets to define, implement, and monitor environmental justice norms within a polycentric governance model, such as the one employed by the Cities Mission. This study does not aim to provide a definitive answer but rather seeks to understand dynamics that are common to governance arrangements. A top-down implementation offers the advantage of having the highest authority to establish clear guidelines regarding the distribution of costs and benefits and to monitor progress. In contrast,

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decentralization can potentially improve the implementation of distributional justice by granting local policymakers and stakeholders' greater autonomy to develop solutions that are better suited to local circumstances, thereby promoting more equitable outcomes (Huitema et al. 2016). Van der Heijden (2018) argues that polycentric governance, as identified for the Cities Mission (see sections 5.1.1.1 and 5.1.1.3) can diminish accountability for ensuring environmental justice. He points out that when cities act independently of national or supranational governments, the distribution of responsibility for ensuring that all citizens equally contribute to and benefit from climate action can become blurred. A solution in such polycentric governance systems would be to enhance mutual adjustment and cooperation among different entities to create coherent policies (van der Heijden 2018). Further research could explore the policy processes of the Cities Mission, investigating the distribution of responsibilities for distributional justice over time and examining the extent to which the Cities Mission and participating cities adapt to each other.

6.3.2 Experimentation governance and just distribution of resources and opportunities within the cities

As highlighted in the results section, experimental governance plays a crucial role in the Cities Mission framework (see sections 5.1.1.1 and 5.1.1.3). It promotes the experimentation with new climate governance instruments such as policy innovation and collaborative learning. City governments are encouraged to self-organize collaborations with private sector and civil society actors to foster innovative approaches to urban climate governance (van der Heijden 2018). The literature on urban areas has emphasized their role as hubs of innovation and knowledge production (Johnson, Toly, and Schroeder 2015). The belief that all experimentation in urban governance is inherently beneficial is a common assumption (van der Heijden 2018). However, these governance methods often favor certain private actors, especially those in niche sectors with

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sufficient resources to engage in innovative projects (Castán Broto and Bulkeley 2013). Thus, this approach tends to exclude ordinary firms and citizens, potentially perpetuating inequalities. Besides, participating in experimental projects involves financial risks, such as the possibility of not achieving a return on investment, which not everyone can afford. Chien (2022, 8) identifies three types of inequality related to innovation: "(1) inequality of wealth/income, regarding the distribution of economic resources; (2) inequality of opportunity to innovate, which pertains to the production of innovation; (3) and inequality of access to innovation, about the affordability and availability of innovation". Therefore, experimental governance may not be the best fit for promoting the equitable distribution of resources and addressing the burdens of climate change.

6.3.3 Experimentation governance and just distribution of resources and opportunities between cities

By promoting a governance mode that supports solutions derived from innovation projects, the Cities Mission risks favoring front-runner cities while leaving others behind. Experimentation governance within a multi-level governance context can overlook geographical disparities, such as differences in cities' resources to address climate change (Bulkeley, Broto, and Edwards 2014). These disparities include access to infrastructures, funding, private investments, academic resources, skilled and educated population, political and administrative support for climate action, and a strong and active civil society (Kern 2023). The present research highlights a clear disparity between Leuven and Marseille in their readiness for climate policy (see sections 5.2.3.1). Leuven exemplifies the key characteristics of a "front-runner" city in climate policy. With long-term preparation for its climate governance, Leuven has effectively engaged stakeholders, particularly from academia. Leuven hosts leading universities and research institutes, which significantly contribute to its successful climate policy by bringing knowledge and expertise. The city is well-

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integrated into city networks, thereby benefiting from knowledge sharing opportunities. The interview with Leuven's sustainability advisor confirmed all of this, noting that Leuven's climate governance model has an excellent reputation across Europe. In contrast, Marseille is clearly among the "lag behind" cities. It has only recently developed environmental administrative capacities and has a background in heavy industry rather than a long academic history. While Leuven benefits from established structures, Marseille is still organizing its efforts. Moreover, many cities, especially smaller, have even fewer resources. This stresses the need to "strengthen governance capacities", including time, skills, knowledge, and administrative reorganization (Kern 2023), which are crucial in experimentation governance to avoid an "implementation gap" (Johnson, Toly, and Schroeder 2015) that affects numerous cities.

Beyond the risk of exacerbating inequalities between cities, the experimentation governance model raises questions about its effectiveness in supporting cities to develop and implement their transition policies. The empirical study revealed that the Cities Mission, which relies on a call-for-proposal mechanism under the Horizon Europe funding program, falls short of achieving its objectives (see section 5.2.3.3). This approach is overly competitive, provides insufficient funding, and is narrowly framed, leaving little room for alternative visions (Interview with Marseille's representative, May 2024, Interview with Leuven's sustainability advisor, May 2024). The Cities Mission's scope clearly extends beyond experimentation and replication program alone (Mission Board report 2020, 5), its aim is to encourage cities to engage in climate planning tailored to local contexts (Interview with an expert, March 2024). This presents a core paradox in the Cities Mission governance. It raises the question: should the Cities Mission be part of the Horizon Europe program? Such a mismatch between means and objectives poses significant challenges for ensuring support to urban climate policy, including environmental justice.

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6.4 What place in the Cities Mission governance for the recognition of environmental injustices and alternative visions for addressing climate change in cities

6.4.1 Implementing recognitional justice principle in cities

Recognitional justice, which acknowledges structural inequalities and their intersections with environmental issues, is a crucial foundation for addressing both procedural and distributive challenges and developing fair policies (Schlosberg 2007; Fraser 2009). Implementing recognitional justice at the local level implies that policy must anticipate and address diverse climate impacts on various groups and make sure that climate policies do not reinforce existing inequalities. Nonetheless, both case study cities demonstrated a deficiency in having comprehensive studies and established methodologies to map out climate injustices in their areas (see sections 5.2.1 and 5.2.2). While recognitional justice discourse was prevalent in both cities, translating it into practical spatial and social recognition of vulnerable and marginalized populations remains unfulfilled. One potential solution could lie in leveraging the multi-level governance structure of the Cities Mission. This could involve establishing common methodologies or guidelines and facilitating knowledge-sharing networks. Such initiatives would lay foundations for further just procedures for citizen involvement and equitable distributional policies.

6.4.2 Recognitional justice is especially important when promoting social innovation governance

Social innovation plays a significant role in the Cities Mission. It is central in the European Commission's documents (see section 5.1.1.3), forms the core of Leuven's governance model (5.2.2), and, though to a lesser extent, is also present in Marseille's practices involving associations and citizens (5.2.1). However, the literature suggests that a "harmonious bias" can affect social

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innovation, leading to an idealized view of stakeholder collaboration and neglecting potential power dynamics and conflicts (Krüger and Pellicer-Sifres 2020, 3). This can ultimately depoliticize urban climate policies, which contradicts the principles of environmental justice. Therefore, the Cities Mission governance, which strongly advocates for social innovation as a governance approach, should incorporate greater recognition of power dynamics and potential inequalities that could hinder the achievement of socially just outcomes of such practices.

Moreover, the discourse of social innovation is embedded within a broader neoliberal narrative that by essence contrasts with environmental justice-informed perspectives. Social innovation is rooted in modernization theory, which posits continuous development leading to technical and social progress (Kropp 2015). Innovation narratives also assume "permanent activation of not yet fully exhausted sources" and advocate for efficiency and productivity improvements (Krüger and Pellicer-Sifres 2020, 3). Thus, the concept of social innovation remains connected to the logic of growth and acceleration, typical of a neoliberal approach.

6.4.3 Neoliberal urban governance and its consequences for justice considerations

Besides the neoliberal influences on social innovation, the analysis indicates that the Cities Mission governance aligns with several other aspects of neoliberalism. For instance, perceiving citizens primarily as consumers (see section 6.1.2.) is typical of a neoliberal perception (Cardullo and Kitchin 2019b). Likewise, experimental urban climate governance (see section 6.2.2.) can be employed to support a neoliberal development agenda, which may not prioritize environmental or social sustainability (Evans et al. 2016). Experimental governance increasingly incorporates the private sector in developing urban transition solutions, while also biasing towards areas like smart cities technologies. This is partly because municipalities often lack the capacity, expertise, skilled

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personnel, and time to independently lead such initiatives, leading them to delegate tasks to private entities (van der Heijden 2018). However, it's notable that businesses, often multinational corporations, may not engage in these partnerships purely out of altruism but rather view climate policies as opportunities to access new markets and sell their products (van der Heijden 2014, 8).

These innovation projects can potentially exclude participants who lack resources for experimentation and innovation, thus raising concerns related to (environmental) justice. Moreover, a mere accumulation of small experiments does not substitute for strategic planning. This planning should particularly address issues of social and spatial redistribution and foster inclusive decision-making (Lorrain, Halpern, and Chevauché 2018). These governance choices - innovation focused, experimentation, citizens considered as consumers - support this argument that the Cities Mission governance aligns with neo-liberal assumptions. The concept of "neoliberal environmentalism," applies a neoliberal and managerial approach to environmental issues with a strong focus on innovation aimed at fostering economic growth (Cairney, Timonin, and Stephan 2023). Blanco, Salazar, and Bianchi (2020) refer also to "urban neoliberalism" to characterize neoliberal narratives in urban governance. Neo-liberal approaches have been criticized for exacerbating both the climate crisis and social inequalities, often overlooking those already marginalized by growth-oriented systems, including vulnerable populations and minorities (Newell et al. 2015). Counter-discourses to neoliberalism emphasize social justice, decentralization of power, and focus on marginalized groups (Zannakis 2015). The literature also suggests that the neoliberal model itself has contributed to the socio-ecological crisis, attributing environmental degradation to economic growth, industrialism, and capitalism (Rosa, Dörre, and Lessenich 2017, 61).

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More broadly, the European Green Deal is rooted in neoliberal assumptions, viewing sustainable policy through a growth-centered lens that promotes markets and technologies. It endorses "'win-win' narratives of ecological modernization and green economy thinking" that shape EU climate policy (Rayner et al. 2023, 14), and assumes that climate solutions in cities lie in smart city technologies and innovation (Beretta and Bracchi, 2023). Interestingly, the Cities Mission, while influenced by neoliberal governance assumptions, shows a notable commitment to environmental justice, particularly highlighted in the Info Kit (2021) (see section 5.1.2.3). Nonetheless, the neoliberal narrative of sustainability frequently conflicts with perspectives informed by environmental justice. The main aim of the neoliberal vision remains "economic growth over other aims, including sustainability and reducing inequalities"(Cairney, Timonin, and Stephan 2023, 4) . While neoliberalism tends to depoliticize climate policy by trusting market logic and economic growth to bring prosperity, a justice-informed vision places recognition and power balance at the core of climate policy to ensure equity and justice (Cairney, Timonin, and Stephan 2023).

6.4.4 Recognizing alternative visions for urban governance

"Cities have been a privileged scenario for the development of neo liberalization, but they may also become central stages for building its political alternatives" (Blanco, Salazar, and Bianchi 2020, 4). The empirical research illustrates well this statement by identifying Marseille as a site of alternatives, opposing the neoliberal concepts of the Cities Mission framed by the European Commission. Governed by a coalition of left parties, Marseille has decided to offer a different vision for urban transition and climate policies. The interviewee explicitly mentioned proposing an "alternative model" to that of the European Commission, rejecting the concepts of Smart Cities and technological solutions in favor of "frugality" and "popular ecology," grounded in a grassroots approach (see section 5.2.3.3). Marseille's climate strategy emphasizes social justice, prioritizing

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social rescue, inclusion, and the reconstruction of basic social rights. The city's climate strategy aims to bridge the social divide by providing access to essential resources like energy, food, and housing, ensuring a just standard of living rather than relying on economic growth to distribute wealth (see section 5.2.3.3). This approach frankly contrasts with the European Commission's narratives.

What place for an alternative narrative within the Cities Mission? Despite its explicit opposition to some core principles of the Cities Mission's governance, Marseille was selected to participate in the program. Literature suggests that "space must be created for debating alternative conceptions of prosperity and economic development to establish a renewed sense of what might be possible in the context of climate change" (Newell et al. 2015). Is the Cities Mission opening up to recognize alternative visions of climate policy? Possibly, but this study cannot provide definitive proof. The Marseille interviewee noted that it was unclear whether the city's focus on frugality over techno-solutionism appealed to the jury, or if Marseille's significance as a large Mediterranean city, long absent from European projects and EU networks, played a more critical role in its selection.

The potential for the Cities Mission to bring cities' needs and visions to the European level is significant. However, the results indicate that this potential is not currently being fully realized (see section 5.2.3.3). There is room for improvement that will require institutionalizing mechanisms that allow cities to channel their ideas to the European Commission. Additionally, it will be necessary to adapt the Commission's support to accommodate a more diverse range of urban climate policies. At present, cities' advocacy efforts with the European Commission remain crucial for steering EU support in this direction. Without these efforts, the alignment between city-specific needs and broader EU policies may continue to fall short.

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7. CONCLUSION

In light of the escalating climate crise and growing social inequalities, the EU Cities Mission emerges as a critical initiative aimed at shaping urban climate policy within the European Union. This thesis has explored the interplay between the Cities Mission's governance arrangements and environmental justice considerations, providing valuable insights into the complexities of pursuing just and sustainable urban climate policies. The central research question of this thesis was: How are narratives related to environmental justice framed within the multi-level governance framework of the Cities Mission? It was proved that the Cities Mission's governance can either constrain or facilitate environmental justice and stresses the necessity for a more robust justice-informed approach to urban climate policy.

7.1 Main findings

The Cities Mission promotes a governance model notably based on citizen involvement and bottom-up approach, paving the way for better consideration of environmental justice in urban climate policy. By involving citizens - while being mindful of power dynamics and existing inequalities - decision-making has the potential to be more inclusive, particularly to marginalized communities. Ensuring diverse venues for problem definition and equal voice for various stakeholders, including marginalized communities, allows for a more inclusive approach to multi-level governance. Bottom-up governance also fosters balanced negotiations among different tiers of authorities and can lead to locally relevant expressions of environmental justice.

However, several limitations in integrating environmental justice considerations in the Cities Mission were highlighted in the research. The European Commission's documents often present limited and abstract consideration of environmental justice, focusing more on utilitarian

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perspectives for justifying the Mission. Although the Info Kit (2021) displays a better understanding of environmental justice dimensions, it still lacks concrete guidance and tools for cities to implement these principles effectively.

Additionally, the emphasis on urban experimental approaches risks excluding certain actors and cities, as not all are equally equipped to engage in innovation. This focus aligns with the neoliberal assumption that innovation equates to progress, overlooking the fact that innovation is not inherently democratic or inclusive. Climate change should be treated as a political issue rather than just a technical or managerial challenge (Cairney, Timonin, and Stephan 2023). Relying solely on innovation management, particularly in developing Smart Cities technologies, is insufficient for ensuring justice and can, in fact, exacerbate inequalities. Moreover, social innovation narratives and practices must be complemented with strong aspects of recognitional justice to avoid overlooking power dynamics and excluding certain groups. For instance, the city of Leuven, which embraces the Cities Mission's concepts of experimental and social innovation, also demonstrates a solid understanding of environmental justice in terms of distribution and recognition.

In opposition, the city of Marseille focuses its climate strategy on "frugality" and "popular ecology," prioritizing access to essential resources over economic growth. This approach challenges the neoliberal environmentalism narrative, which often conflicts with justice-informed environmentalism due to unavoidable trade-offs between economic growth, environmental sustainability, and social concerns (Cairney, Timonin, and Stephan 2023). Bottom-up governance offers opportunities to promote environmental justice by making the actual needs of all city inhabitants, including marginalized communities, heard. It also allows for alternative visions of governance to be considered and supported at higher levels. However, achieving this necessitates adequate resources, policy support, accountability, and clear systems for channeling information

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and implementing justice-informed practices at the municipal level, which this study found to be insufficient within the Cities Mission.

7.2 Contributions to the field

This thesis contributes to the broader discussion on addressing the climate crisis as a socio-ecological issue, highlighting the interconnectedness of environmental and social dimensions. It provides insights into how governance structures can either support or hinder the pursuit of environmental justice in urban climate policies. The findings suggest that experimental governance and innovation management are not the most effective means of addressing environmental justice issues, on the contrary, they risk perpetuating neoliberal environmentalism assumptions that conflict with justice-informed environmentalism. However, bottom-up governance and citizen involvement hold greater potential for fostering just procedures and outcomes in decision-making. Finally, recognition of alternative urban transition models that prioritize resource distribution and wealth equity over economic growth is promising and would gain to be acknowledged by the European Commission.

7.3 Recommendations

Reevaluating urban climate governance approaches is desirable and aligns with one of the core principles of mission-oriented policies, which aims to redefine economic development by focusing on addressing societal objectives rather than solely measuring growth (Mazzucato 2018; Shabb et al. 2022). Moreover, the Cities Mission represents a significant experiment for the European Commission, which has not previously implemented mission-oriented policies, suggesting potential flexibility for reassessment in the coming years.

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Aspects that could be considered for ensuring a better integration of environmental justice considerations into the Cities Mission governance are: 1) The European Commission could develop more concrete guidance and tools to support cities in implementing environmental justice principles effectively, particularly focusing on citizen involvement practices and equitable procedures. 2) Efforts can be made to ensure that innovation processes are inclusive and democratic, recognizing the political nature of climate change and addressing it accordingly. 3) The Cities Mission has the potential to establish institutionalized mechanisms that promote bottom-up governance, ensuring more inclusive and participatory decision-making processes at various levels. 4) The European Commission should acknowledge and support alternative urban transition models that emphasize resource distribution and social equity.

7.4 Conclusion on the thesis process

By critically examining the governance structures and decision-making processes underpinning the Cities Mission, this study contributes to advancing our understanding of how justice principles can be integrated into urban policy governance to foster more equitable and sustainable cities. However, there is a gap in real-life implementation perspective, suggesting the need for further research on the ongoing implementation of the Cities Mission, particularly focusing on the outcomes of the Climate City Contracts by cities. In conclusion, the Cities Mission represents a significant opportunity to reevaluate current urban climate governance approaches and redefine roles and governance arrangements to better address climate justice. By embracing bottom-up governance and recognizing alternative models for urban climate governance, the European Union can make advances toward achieving its climate goals in a just and inclusive manner.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Interview guide for the interview with the representatives of the municipality of Marseille and Leuven

Questions about consideration of climate justice	Question about the vision of the municipality of climate-related inequalities
	Question about setting on the agenda of climate-related inequalities
	Question about methods to identify injustices related to climate change and climate policies
Questions about citizen involvement	Question about type and structure of citizen involvement practice
	Question about setting on the agenda of citizen involvement
Question about the relation between the municipality and the European Commission in the framework of the Cities Mission	Question about the coordination with the European Commission
	Question about the influence of the participation in the Cities Mission on the climate and social agenda of the municipality
	Question about internal organization for implementing the Cities Mission
	Question about advocacy and communication with the European Commission

Appendix 2: Interview guide for the interview with an expert

Question about the Cities Mission governance	Question about support to citizen involvement practices within the framework of the Cities Mission provided by the European Commission
	Question about the relation between citizen involvement and innovation policy
	Question about the place for the municipality, and especially the mayors in the policy-making of the Cities Mission
	Question about the relation between citizen involvement and smart solutions

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