Wageningen University – Department of Social Sciences

MSc Thesis Public Administration and Policy

Dissecting the primeval policy soup

An exploration of contextual factors of influence to policy entrepreneurs pursuing the sustainable development of EU agricultural policy.

March 2023

MSc program: International Development Studies (MID)

Specialization: Politics and Governance of Development

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Thesis code: PAP80336

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ABSTRACT

To realize a sustainable agricultural system in the EU we need actors willing to advocate for the necessary policy change. Policy entrepreneurs as defined by Kingdon are a type of actors that fill this role description. This research addresses the knowledge gap in literature regarding the context in which policy entrepreneurs emerge and work, with a focus on the sustainable development of EU agricultural policy. A systematic literature review along with six semi-structured interviews were conducted to answer the question: What contextual factors influence policy entrepreneurs who advocate for the sustainable development of EU agricultural policy, and to what extent are these factors represented in the current academic debate? The data revealed contextual factors influencing policy entrepreneurs that can be grouped into four categories: structural, institutional, network and problem context. These factors are interdependent and create complementarities that enable agential action. Sustainability-oriented policy entrepreneurs in the field of EU agriculture are indeed affected by these four categories of factors. The structural and institutional context are quite enabling for sustainability-oriented policy entrepreneurs, while the network and problem context proved to be less favourable. In the case of EU agricultural policy, complementarities were found that created both enabling and disabling conditions for the policy entrepreneurs. The conclusions from this research can aid policy entrepreneurs in shaping context to their advantage, and EU officials in identifying areas of improvement to better accommodate these policy entrepreneurs. Ultimately, this could aid the EU in its aspiration to lead the world's imperative sustainable transitions.

Key words: policy entrepreneurs, context, sustainable development, EU agriculture

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, I want to thank my supervisor Dave Huitema for his supervision these past six months. Without his expertise and guidance this thesis would have looked entirely different. I also want to thank the people I interviewed for their time and invaluable contributions to my research. Their passion for the sustainable development of EU agriculture was inspiring and makes me hopeful that it is not as far out of reach as I previously thought.

Finally, I feel grateful for my friends and family, especially Louis, my parents, my brother, and my housemates. They supported me, thought along with me, and most importantly reminded me to talk about things other than my thesis every once in a while.

1. INTRODUCTION

The threats that humankind is facing as a result of climate change are becoming increasingly clear. The 2022 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability* explains how short-term global warming of 1.5 degrees Celsius would lead to ‘’unavoidable increases in multiple climate hazards and present multiple risks to ecosystems and humans’’ (Pörtner et al., 2022, p. 13). With the growing body of knowledge on the impacts of climate change comes a strengthened demand for governance systems that are capable to deal with them (Adger & Jordan, 2009). Indeed, governance plays a pivotal role in realizing a transition to not only climate change, but also sustainability as a whole: as humans cannot be separated from the environment they are in, neither can their decision-making processes (Adger & Jordan, 2009).

A pressing question in the governance of sustainability is the how: enacting sustainable development requires deliberation, argumentation and discussion (Adger & Jordan, 2009). In the European Union (EU), a sustainable development strategy was first adopted in 2001 and was later formally adopted as a long-term goal under Article 3(3) of the Treaty of the European Union (EUR-Lex, n.d.-a). In 2019, the European Commission presented the European Green Deal (EGD), the latest EU strategy following Europe 2020. Despite the EU’s longer commitment to sustainable development, the EGD puts sustainability centre-stage for the first time in EU history (Schunz. 2022). Additionally, the EGD promotes EU leadership in the domain of environmental protection and sustainability in general (Eckert & Kovalevska, 2021). In his article, Schunz explains how through the EGD, EU policies are now called upon to serve environmental and climate aims rather than only economic purposes (Schunz, 2022). Schunz thus concludes that with the introduction of the EGD, the EU has undergone a discursive paradigm shift (2022), meaning a shift in the EU’s set of ideal typical ideas, beliefs and principles that guide policy (Daigneault, 2014).

This paradigm shift has also made its way into EU agricultural policy. This is imperative, given that environmental issues such as soil, water and air pollution and degradation are exacerbated by current agricultural systems (OECD, 2019). Simultaneously, climate change negatively impacts agricultural crop production and water scarcity, amongst others (Pörtner et al., 2022), and food security is challenged by unsustainable consumption patterns and a growing population (OECD, 2019). To address these global challenges, the EU has a big role to play: the EU is the world’s largest agri-food exporter, and its agricultural sector is responsible for 10% of the EU’s total greenhouse gas emissions (Crawford et al., 2022). Besides, based on the

outspoken intent of the EU to lead the world's sustainable transitions, the EU seems to be quite eager to take on this role. Following the EGD, EU policymakers have been working on subsequent targets and legislation to improve European agriculture's environmental, social and economic sustainability, such as the Farm to Fork Strategy (European Commission, n.d.-a).

Though the EGD and Farm to Fork strategy are a big departure from previous EU strategies and have potential to support the EU's sustainable development, a change in paradigm can only go so far to actually transform policy. As can be seen in the Common Agricultural Policy's most recent reform, for example, environmental concerns are still represented marginally and trumped by economic considerations, showing a policy more in line with pre-EGD thinking (Brown et al., 2021; Pe'er et al., 2020). In addition to a paradigm shift, to achieve transformative policy change there is need for a motivation, for example a crisis or problem, as well as a motor, i.e. political actors that drive the change (Daigneault, 2014).

In the case of agricultural sustainable development, the motivation for policy change has become increasingly, if not painfully, clear. In terms of the motor, literature describes a specific type of actor that could fill the role description of Daigneault: policy entrepreneurs. *Policy entrepreneur* is a term coined by Kingdon, who defined it as a political actor who is willing to invest resources in the hope of a future return (as cited in Mintrom & Norman, 2009). They attempt to transform policy ideas into policy innovations and consequently disrupt status quo policy arrangements (Petridou & Mintrom, 2021).

Research in the field of policy entrepreneurship has explored their commitment to policy solutions, as well as the strategies they use and their attributes and skills (Petridou & Mintrom, 2021). More on this will be discussed in Chapter 2. Researchers identify opportunities to further explore the contextual factors that influence the emergence and actions of policy entrepreneurs (Petridou & Mintrom, 2021; Schunz, 2022; Green, 2017). This research aims to fill this knowledge gap with the focus on the sustainable development of EU agricultural policy, meaning policies such as the Common Agricultural Policy that directly target agriculture, as well as other policies related to agriculture. This focus allows for an examination of the EU agricultural policy field as well as to what extent it accommodates policy entrepreneurs working towards sustainable development. Sustainability, or sustainable development, is defined here in line with the Brundtland report, a definition that the EU has adopted as well: ''development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'' (WCED, 1987, p. 8).

To achieve the research aim as described above the following research questions have been formulated:

General Research Question: What contextual factors influence policy entrepreneurs who advocate for the sustainable development of EU agricultural policy, and to what extent are these factors represented in the current academic debate?

Sub-question 1: What is known in current literature about the contextual factors that influence policy entrepreneurs?

Sub-question 2: Which contextual factors are perceived by policy entrepreneurs to be of influence in their efforts to advance the sustainable development of EU agricultural policy?

Sub-question 3: How do the perceived contextual factors by policy entrepreneurs in EU agricultural policy compare to the findings from current academic insights?

The findings from this research reveal four categories of contextual factors of influence to policy entrepreneurs: *structural*, *institutional*, *network* and *problem context*. These four categories were perceived to be of influence to sustainability-oriented policy entrepreneurs in EU agriculture, albeit with minor changes due to the specificities of the field. Before discussing these results, however, it matters to explore Kingdon's Multiple Streams Framework, one of the main theories on policy change from which the concept of policy entrepreneurs emerged. This, along with current knowledge on policy entrepreneurs' characteristics and strategies, is discussed in Chapter 2. Following this, Chapter 3 discusses the methodology used to answer the research questions: An initial overview of contextual factors of influence to policy entrepreneurs was created through a systematic literature review (SLR). Following this, a number of sustainability-oriented policy entrepreneurs active in EU agricultural policy were interviewed to see how the findings from the SLR translate to EU agricultural policy. The four categories mentioned above are presented and elaborated on in Chapter 4, and applied to EU agriculture in Chapter 5. Lastly, these empirical findings are discussed in Chapter 6 and concluded upon in Chapter 7.

Ultimately, this research forms a starting ground for future researchers to expand knowledge on contextual factors that influence policy entrepreneurs, be it causal relations or an elaboration of the findings from this research. On a more practical level, by bringing these contextual factors to light, this research can aid sustainability-oriented policy entrepreneurs to become more aware of and shape the context they are in. Additionally, EU officials could use the findings of this

research to identify areas of improvement in terms of their accommodation to sustainability-oriented policy entrepreneurs in the field of agricultural policy.

2. THE STREAMS OF POLICY CHANGE

The concept ‘’policy entrepreneur’’ originates from the Multiple Streams Framework (MSF). Originally developed by Kingdon to analyse the agenda-setting process in the US federal system, through the years it has been adapted to fit different institutional contexts and phases in the policy process (Herweg et al., 2018). Below, the MSF is elaborated on, following Herweg’s adaptation of the MSF to the EU (2017). Following this, section 2.2. dives into the role that policy entrepreneurs play in the MSF, as well as the recent theoretical developments on policy entrepreneurs’ characteristics and strategies.

2.1. Multiple Streams Framework in the European Union

The MSF consists of five structural elements: three independent streams (problem, policy and political), policy windows and policy entrepreneurs. Each of the three streams has its own dynamics and is in that sense independent from the others. Below, each element is briefly explained.

According to Kingdon, problems are conditions that differ from actors’ preferred state. The MSF is built on the assumption that problems are social constructs, and it is in the *problem stream* where actors frame problems and subsequently delineate desired solutions (Herweg et al., 2018). In the EU, these mechanisms of problem recognition can come from both a nation-state as well as a European level (Herweg, 2017). This means that policy entrepreneurs need to frame a nation-state problem in a way that justifies EU action, and that the European Commission plays a big role in this stream, given its close work with indicators and benchmarking reports (Herweg, 2017).

In the *policy stream,* policy alternatives are generated in so-called policy communities, i.e. connections of public actors that are involved in developing alternatives to a policy problem (Herweg et al., 2018). Through a process called ‘’softening up’’, the policy community discusses, modifies and recombines ideas until there is at least one viable policy alternative that meets a number of ‘’criteria of survival’’ (Herweg et al., 2018). The participants in an EU policy community - besides the European Council, Council of ministers, European Commission, and European Parliament - are civil servants, interest groups, academics, researchers and consultants (Herweg, 2017). In an EU policy stream, coupling is easier to achieve than on a domestic level – this is because policy entrepreneurs could select policy alternatives from a list of options that have been tried and legitimated in one of the EU member countries (Herweg, 2017).

In the *political stream*, majorities for policy proposals are sought and found through a process of bargaining and powering (Herweg et al., 2018). The stream has four core elements: European mood, meaning the global line of thinking of a large number of people in the EU; domestic interest groups and European representative bodies, which can increase the chances of an idea being on the agenda based on their power and size; and government and European parliament, whose ideas might match better with one party than with the other (Herweg, 2017). Herweg describes the functional equivalent of government as the European Commission, Council of Ministers and European Council (2017). In practice, there is not a clear European public space which makes it difficult to define the European mood – therefore, Herweg omits this core element in her EU adaptation of the MSF (2017).

As mentioned before, these streams usually operate independently. However, there are moments during which the streams are ready to be ‘’coupled’’, which according to Kingdon, will ultimately lead to agenda change (Herweg et al., 2018). This coupling becomes more likely at the time of a so-called *policy window*. Recent developments in the MSF literature distinguish between two types of windows: first, an agenda window can open in the problem or political stream, and represents an opportunity to get an issue on the agenda. Second, a decision window represents an opportunity to get policies adopted (Herweg et al., 2018). The MSF assumes that the likeliness of policy change increases if: the problem stream, political stream, and policy stream are ripe; a change in the problem or political stream opens a policy window; and a policy entrepreneur succeeds in coupling the streams (Herweg, 2017).

The MSF has not gone without critique. Herweg, Zahariadis and Zohlnhöfer argue that stream independence is not a given (2018). Instead, it is more fruitful to conceptualize the streams as interdependent: in general, each stream has its own dynamics, though a change in one stream can trigger change in the other (Herweg et al. 2018). Another critique is that the concepts of Kingdon are lacking in clarity, and the metaphorical language he uses creates problem in generating hypotheses. It is, for example, difficult to measure criteria of survival for a policy alternative. However, just because Kingdon initially did not hypothesize or defined measurable indicators, does not mean it cannot be, or has not been, done. Herweg’s adaptation of the MSF to the European context, for example, included a number of falsifiable hypotheses (2017).

2.2. Conceptualizing policy entrepreneurs

The fifth structural element of the MSF is the policy entrepreneur. They are initially active in the policy stream, where they push for their proposals and adapt them to find broad support in

the policy community (Herweg et al., 2018). When successful, policy entrepreneurs attempt to couple their project to the other streams (Herweg et al., 2018). Policy entrepreneurs do not aim for rational problem-solving: at times a problem comes up coupled with pre-existing policy that fits, or a political opportunity arises that gets a policy on the agenda that needs to be coupled to a problem (Herweg et al., 2018). Policy entrepreneurs are more than advocates for a preferred solution. They play a key role in the MSF, namely to couple the three streams once a policy window opens (Herweg, 2017).

Policy entrepreneurs are not to be confused with political entrepreneurs. The latter are key policy makers within the political stream who, because of their leadership positions, can help further a policy idea from inside a government system (Herweg et al., 2018). They are not necessarily members of the policy community, nor are they involved in the development of policy proposals, which sets them apart from policy entrepreneurs (Herweg et al., 2018).

2.2.1. Characteristics and strategies of the policy entrepreneur

Literature distinguishes certain characteristics policy entrepreneurs possess and strategies they use. These two aspects of policy entrepreneurship will be discussed here.

An important question to ask in the field of policy entrepreneurship is what sets them apart from others involved in the policy process. Very often, policy entrepreneurs are described as people looking to initiate policy change (Brouwer, 2015; Green, 2017; Kingdon, 2013; Mintrom, 1997; Mintrom, 2019; Mintrom & Norman, 2009). Another generally accepted characteristic of policy entrepreneurs is what Kingdon calls a willingness to invest their resources in pushing their ''pet project'' (2013; Brouwer, 2015; Mintrom, 1997). Though in certain contexts policy entrepreneurs are described as bureaucrats outside of the political arena (Brouwer, 2015), others have pointed out the fact that policy entrepreneurs can be found in or outside of government (Kingdon, 2013; Mintrom, 1997; Timmermans et al., 2014). The key characteristic that sets policy entrepreneurs apart from others is their willingness to take risks (Brouwer, 2015; Green, 2017; Mintrom, 1997). Policy entrepreneurs were also found to be more conscientious than other actors in the policy process (Timmermans et al., 2014)

Furthermore, attributes ascribed to policy entrepreneurs are ambition, credibility, sociability, tenacity, unconventionality, creativity, self-discipline, and persistence (Kingdon, 2013; Mintrom, 2019; Timmermans et al., 2014). Policy entrepreneurs are also described to have good skills related to organization, negotiation, strategic thinking, collecting evidence, making

arguments, engaging multiple audiences, networking, and persuasion (Mintrom, 2019; Timmermans et al., 2014).

As mentioned above, the policy entrepreneur is tasked to couple the three streams when a policy window opens. To achieve this, they must make use of certain strategies. Whereas Kingdon originally described policy entrepreneurs as somewhat passive and having to wait for policy windows to open (2013), others have pointed out how policy entrepreneurs contribute to both opening and exploiting policy windows (Lerum Boasson & Wettestad, 2014; Meijerink & Huitema, 2010).

Mintrom and Norman (2009) grouped strategies used by policy entrepreneurs into four categories: social acuity, defining problems, building teams, and leading by example. *Social acuity* describes the use of policy networks to understand ideas, motives and concerns of those in a policy context and respond effectively to them (Mintrom & Norman, 2009). By *defining problems* in new ways, policy entrepreneurs influence how people relate specific problems to their own interests and in turn influence possible solutions (Mintrom & Norman, 2009). This strategy is called framing by others (Green, 2017; Lerum Boasson & Wettestad, 2014). Furthermore, by *building teams and coalitions*, policy entrepreneurs can build trust and support for their own ideas (Brouwer & Huitema, 2018; Green, 2017; Kingdon, 2013; Meijerink & Huitema, 2010; Mintrom & Norman, 2009). *Leading by example* allows policy entrepreneurs to clearly demonstrate the feasibility of their proposal, and shows their genuine commitment to improve a social outcome (Mintrom & Norman, 2009).

Besides the four strategies defined by Mintrom and Norman (2009), others have identified strategies focused on changing the ‘’rules of the game’’: sometimes called procedural engineering (Lerum Boasson & Wettestad, 2014), other times arena strategies (Brouwer & Huitema, 2018), these strategies consist of venue shopping, lobbying, affecting time pressure, and orchestrating networks to influence institutional settings in the favour of policy entrepreneurs (Meijerink & Huitema, 2010).

2.2.2. Advancing the debate on contextual factors

Besides strategies and characteristics, the literature on policy entrepreneurship seems to agree that policy entrepreneurs do not act in a vacuum, and context matters (Ackrill et al., 2013; Petridou & Mintrom, 2021). However, when it comes to specifying said context, there does not seem to be a consensus. Kingdon poetically alludes to context as the *primeval policy soup*, consisting of national mood, external events, changes in personnel, and the presence of policy

windows (Green, 2017). In line with the general critique on the MSF, these factors lack substance, indicators and clarity, nor does it give an indication of which factors are more relevant in certain situations. Nevertheless, others have made first steps to find out how context plays a role in the MSF. Green (2017) discusses three preliminary dimensions relevant to what Kingdon's policy soup might entail: level of governance, presence or absence of various rules, and other like-minded organizations . Petridou and Mintrom (2021) note the stage of the policy-making process in which policy entrepreneurs are active, the sector in which they wish to change policy, the level of government in which they are active, and how they relate to others in their operating context. Huitema and Meijerink (2010) point out how institutional context creates multiple venues that policy entrepreneurs can recognize, exploit, or manipulate. They also refer to political regime and national environmental situations as contextual variables of influence to policy entrepreneurs (Huitema & Meijerink, 2010).

Case-studies of specific contextual factors that influence policy entrepreneurs have been conducted, but a systematic overview of these findings in order to find commonalities is missing (Petridou & Mintrom, 2021). Therefore, in this research literature on contextual factors that influence the work of policy entrepreneurs will be compiled and reviewed. In the following chapter, the *how* will be explained: including data collection and analysis as well as limitations of the research.

3. METHODOLOGY

To answer the questions posed in Chapter 1, a qualitative research approach is used. This requires compiling literature on the contextual factors of influence to policy entrepreneurs into a framework, then testing this framework in the field of EU agricultural policy. The research design therefore follows the steps of Grounded Theory: a research method used to generate theory which is grounded in systematically-collected data (Noble & Mitchell, 2016). Given the fact that this research is exploratory in nature, the results of the research are to be seen as a starting ground for further theorization. In the following sections, the two methods of data collection and analysis used to create and test the framework are explained.

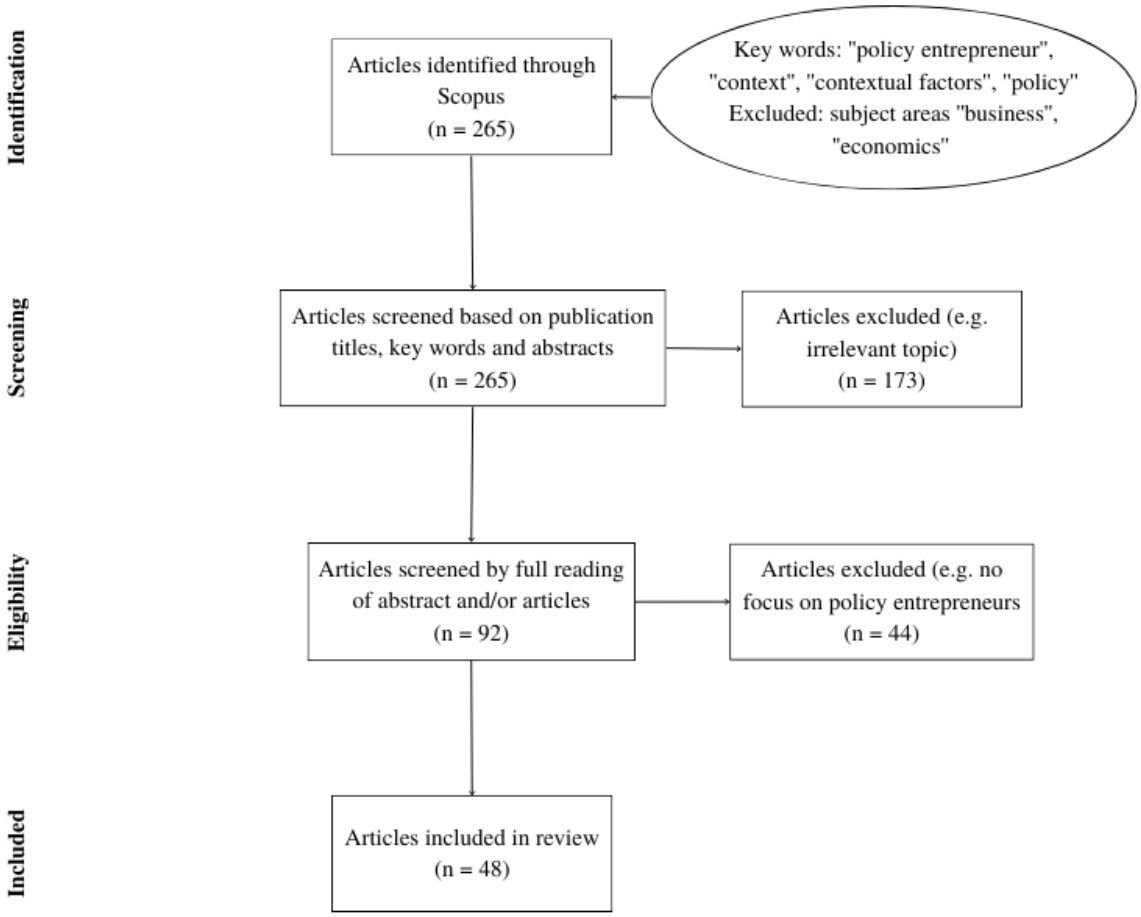
3.1. Creating the framework

Answering the first sub-question of this research - what is known in current literature about the contextual factors that influence policy entrepreneurs? – requires a systematic literature review (SLR). This scientific method enables researchers to make sense of larger bodies of information, to map out uncertainty and to review all evidence on a particular question (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006). Here, a SLR is used in a qualitative manner, to systematically collect data while remaining open and inductive in its analysis (Faling et al., 2019).

The content of the SLR consists of 48 English peer-reviewed scientific studies and was found through the online scientific database *Scopus*. The research was conducted in late 2022 (November-December) and no specific time delineation for the studies was made. Ultimately, the publishing year of the selected articles ranged between 2004 and 2022. Search terms such as ‘’policy entrepreneur’’, ‘’context’’, ‘’contextual factors’’ and ‘’policy’’ were used to find the initial body of literature to select from. Moreover, terms associated with business entrepreneurs were indicative of studies to exclude, since in those articles the term entrepreneur is conceptually different from how it is used in this research.

The process of selection followed that of Faling et al.’s SLR of cross boundary policy entrepreneurship (2019), who follow the PRISMA protocol for systemic reviews. The initial body of literature found following the search strategy as mentioned above was screened on its content. The selected studies all discuss contextual factors that influence policy entrepreneurs: this could be either the main aim of the study or a part of it. Studies included in the initial search that did not cover this were filtered out. Next, the remaining studies were filtered based on the use of primary data – this was done to ensure that the review is based on direct observations rather than theoretical speculation (Faling et al., 2019). The aim of this SLR was to explore the

existing knowledge of contextual factors influencing policy entrepreneurs to answer sub-research question 1. Figure 1 shows a schematic overview of the steps taken in the selection of literature. In Appendix 1, the list of articles used for the SLR can be found.



Inclusion factors	Exclusion factors
Peer-reviewed academic articles	Economic and/or business interpretation of the concept "entrepreneur"
English or Dutch language	Topics out of scope
Empirical research	No mention of policy entrepreneurs' role in the policy process
Discuss contextual factors of influence to policy entrepreneurs	No access to full text

Figure 1. PRISMA protocol: overview of the steps made in the SLR

The ultimate selection of studies was uploaded into ATLAS.ti, a qualitative data analysis software. Using ATLAS.ti, the studies' content was coded: sentences and paragraphs were sorted together. The coding was done following Grounded Theory, which can be seen in Figure 2. First, the articles were coded inductively. Once all articles were coded, the codes were grouped together, first in sub-categories and then in categories. In this research, each category of codes represents a group of related contextual factors that influence policy entrepreneurs in their emergence and/or actions. Following the open coding, through axial coding interactions and relationships between the categories were identified. Lastly, by using selective coding the ''story'' of the categories is explored, resulting in the framework presented in Chapter 4. The analysis of the data was done until saturation was reached, i.e. no new codes or information was found.

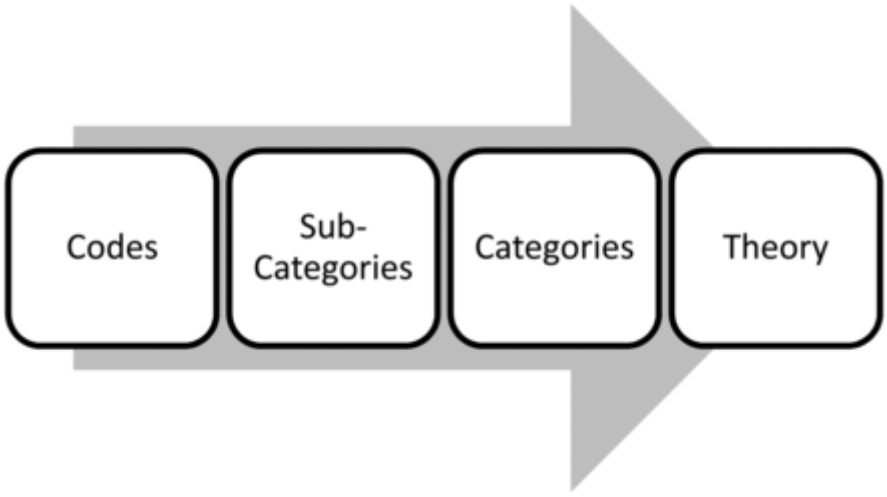


Figure 2. Grounded Theory data analysis (Noble & Mitchell, 2016)

3.2. Testing the framework

To answer the second and third sub-questions a more up-close approach was required. The aim here was to take the findings of the SLR and bring them to policy entrepreneurs active in field of EU agriculture and its sustainable development. Through semi-structured interviews, interviewees were asked about the findings from the SLR, and whether they recognized the contextual factors in their work. The advantage of conducting semi-structured interviews in this study is that it allowed interviewees to stray from the questions and thereby identify contextual factors that might not have been found in the SLR, but were nevertheless relevant in the EU agricultural context.

The guide for the interviews was heavily determined by the outcomes of the SLR. In Appendix 2, the interview guide can be found. This guide formed the starting point of the interview.

However, given the fact that the interviews were semi-structured, in every interview follow-up questions were asked depending on what the interviewees would mention.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, policy entrepreneurs are not tied to a particular position in the policy process. In an EU context that means that policy entrepreneurs could be part of the European Council, Council of Ministers, European Commission, an interest group (both domestic and broader representative groups), academia, or a consultancy firm. The European Parliament was excluded as a possible source of policy entrepreneurs, given the fact that Members of European Parliament are elected officials and therefore better fit the description of a political entrepreneur. An initial selection of actors from these groups that display entrepreneurial characteristics as described in Chapter 2 in EU agricultural policy with a focus on sustainability was contacted to identify policy entrepreneurs in the field of EU agriculture. From this initial contact, policy entrepreneurs were identified and invited for an interview. Following these first interviews, through snowball sampling other sustainability-oriented policy entrepreneurs in EU agricultural policy were identified and contacted. This snowball sampling continued throughout the interviews until no new names were mentioned by the interviewees. This indicated saturation: no new information was found while searching for more. Prior to the interviews, interviewees were properly informed about the research through a consent form, which can be found in Appendix 3. A total of six interviews were conducted. In Appendix 4 an overview of the interviewees is provided, along with the organization they represent and their function.

The interviews were transcribed and analysed in Atlas.TI. The framework created by the SLR analysis (Table 1) was used to code the transcripts. This means that this round of data analysis was more deductive in nature. However, coding remains an iterative process: whenever the transcripts showed contextual factors not yet represented in the SLR framework, the framework would be adapted to include them. To supplement the data from the interviews, secondary data on the EU agricultural policy field was collected from EU resources and literature. This ultimately created a second frameworks adapted to the EU sustainability context following the semi-structured interviews. Similar to 3.1., data was analysed until no new codes or connections were found, reaching saturation. The results of the data analysis is presented in Chapter 5.

After analysing the data from the semi-structured interviews, the findings of Chapters 4 and 5 were compared to find commonalities, differences and other connections. this was done in order to answer the third sub-question – how do the perceived contextual factors by policy entrepreneurs in EU agricultural policy compare to the findings from current academic insights. These insights are discussed in Chapter 6.

3.3. Limitations

This research is qualitative in nature, and its results are open to interpretation. Therefore, researcher bias cannot be fully eliminated in the collection and analysis of data. In both data collection and analysis bias was reduced by reaching for saturation. Moreover, not all identified policy entrepreneurs were available or reachable for an interview. Given the inaccessibility of some of the identified policy entrepreneurs, additional data was sought and found in articles and EU resources about the EU (agricultural) policy process, as well as conversations with researchers active in the field of EU agricultural policy.

4. POLICY ENTREPRENEURS AND CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

This chapter discusses the results from the SLR as described in Chapter 3.1. Following the analysis, four categories of contextual factors can be distinguished: *structural context, institutional context, network context* and *problem context*. Structural context is defined by Bakir and Jarvis as ‘’the broader material and cultural contexts within which actors and institutions are embedded’’ (2017, p.469). Their conceptualization builds upon Gidden’s structuration theory, in which structure is essentially involved in the production of agency (Giddens, 1979). The institutional context refers to the formal and informal rules that guide the behaviour of agents. These rules can vary from behavioural norms to legal rules (Hodgson, 2006). The network context refers to the constellation of actors in the policy field where the policy entrepreneur is active and how these actors relate to and interact with each other. Lastly, the problem context refers to the nature and characteristics of the problem that the policy entrepreneur is aiming to solve with their policy alternative.

In the sections that follow, each category is further elaborated on as their specific contextual factors found in the SLR are discussed. The final section of this chapter discusses the *complementarities* that exist between contextual factors and presents the framework resulting from the results.

4.1. Structural context

The structural context policy entrepreneurs find themselves in is discussed first, since it encapsulates some of the more intangible influences. As mentioned above, structure is a broader type of context in which actors are embedded. The sub-factors that could be distinguished are *discourse, norms and values, political system*, and *culture*, as described in Table 1.

Table 1. Structural context factors	
Factor	**Description**
Discourse	The ideas, concepts and categories through which actors in a system give meaning to phenomena. This includes ideational climate.
Norms and values	The basic ideas and expectations that guide action and behaviour.
Political system	The way in which the political system is shaped, specifically the level of democratization or political insulation in a political system.
Culture	Customary beliefs and traits of a social group. This includes organizational culture.

4.1.1. Discourse

Discourse is defined, following Hajer, as ‘’an ensemble of ideas, concepts, and categories through which meaning is given to phenomena’’ (1993, p. 45; as cited in Gasper & Apthorpe, 1996). In the articles it became clear that certain discourses, specifically ideational climates, in a policy system can work against a policy entrepreneur’s policy proposal (Alimi, 2019; Anderson, 2018; Aukes et al., 2018; Beeson & Stone, 2013; Elgström & Hellstenius, 2010; Huisman & de Jong, 2014; Ki, 2022; Mintrom, 2013; Paris, 2017; Roth, 2011; Safuta, 2021). This happens in cases where the ideational climate is not receptive to innovation at all, or if there are other proposals that align better with the ideational climate. To illustrate, Elgström and Hellstenius found this in the case of introducing history as a core subject in Swedish upper secondary schools (2010). They reported how initially, the ideational climate was strongly in favour of traditional subject knowledge, which history did not fall under (Elgström & Hellstenius, 2010). On the other hand, Alimi discusses how the UN General Assembly Special Session on drugs and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) created a discourse through which a policy entrepreneur could break away from the former strict law enforcement approach to actions against drugs (2019). It therefore seems like the closer a policy alternative is to popular discourse or ideational climate in a policy system, the more support a policy entrepreneur can expect (Alimi, 2019; Anderson, 2018; Bakir & Jarvis, 2017; Beeson & Stone,

2013; Bidegain, 2020; Cino Pagliarello, 2020; Renner & Meijerink, 2018; Vucasovic & Huisman, 2018). This enables a constructive coalition building process for the policy entrepreneur, and a smoother path to getting their proposal approved:

> His frames and citations fit, therefore, with the discursive opportunity structure of the French policy field and were deemed legitimate by Peers like Montalembert and Deputies like Renouard. (Anderson, 2018, p. 196)

4.1.2. Norms and values

Dominant norms and values can heavily influence the amount of support that policy entrepreneurs can expect at the onset of the policy process (Anderson, 2018; Huisman & de Jong, 2014; Mintrom, 2013). This becomes especially relevant when the policy area in which the policy entrepreneur is active is a controversial one. Mintrom (2013) describes this in his article on the governance of embryonic stem cell research:

> First, the Roman Catholic Church – an historically powerful institution in Italian society – has maintained a strong moral stance that accords the human embryo full status as a human being. So morality politics have played against policy entrepreneurs seeking support for human embryonic stem cell research. (p. 452)

Moreover, norms and values present in a policy system might limit the policy entrepreneur's actions. For example, Wicaksono (2020) describes how one of his interviewees, though on paper a powerful actor in Indonesia, cannot fully rely on his authority given the permeation of Javanese values such as humility, conflict avoidance and harmony into the policy sphere. On top of this, policy entrepreneurs' own norms and values also matter in their formulation of policy alternatives:

> Once Garnaut had decided to become an economist, it made a difference that he chose to study at the Australian National University (ANU). The ANU (..) was, and perhaps remains, the bearer of a particular ethos as far as public service is concerned. Such values are not to be underestimated as determinants of worldviews, orientations to public policy and the potential contribution of experts. (Beeson & Stone, 2013, p. 5)

Norms and values thus affect policy entrepreneurs from both inside and out: norms and values that the policy entrepreneur subscribes to themselves motivate their policy alternatives, and external norms and values present in the policy system affect the reception of their alternative.

4.1.3. Political system

The political system that a policy entrepreneur is active in influences their emergence as well as actions. One factor of relevance to policy entrepreneurs in this is the level of democratization in a country. Democratization opens new political spaces in which civil society, as well as independent civic organizations could dissent without having to fear that the State would repress them (Fiori & Kim, 2011). A higher level of democratization could therefore enable the emergence of a more diverse range of policy entrepreneurs in the policy field. Democratization makes political negotiations more dynamic, and introduces an increased necessity to build alliances in support of change (Fiori & Kim, 2011; Huitema et al., 2011; Wicaksono, 2020). The multitude of voices, and consequently opinions, however, challenges the formulation of the policy entrepreneurs' policy alternative and would require the policy entrepreneur to compromise in order to establish coalitions:

> However, contemporary situation of the post-authoritarian era placed the [Academic Administrative Entrepreneurs] as a person without a political base, who must negotiate not only to opposition parties but also to the coalition of governing parties or must seek the balance between more diverse interests. (Wicaksono, 2020, p. 108)

On the other end of the spectrum we find political insulation:

> During the authoritarian period most social groups were excluded from the policymaking process. The power to devise and carry out social policy measures was concentrated in the hands of a small group of elite bureaucrats, directly controlled by the authoritarian regime. This small group of policy-makers was immune to any ''infection'' potentially caused by contact with non-state (or societal) actors. (Fiori & Kim, 2011, p. 62)

A higher level of political insulation makes it extremely difficult for non-state policy entrepreneurs to be successful, or emerge in the first place. However, political insulation does offer opportunities to policy entrepreneurs that manage to enter the ''inner circle''. Given the fact the diversity of ideas in such a circle is low, a policy entrepreneur would only have to convince a small group of elite bureaucrats of their policy alternative and the road to policy change would be quite straightforward (Fiori & Kim, 2011; Huitema et al., 2011; Shi & Frenkiel, 2021; te Boekhorst et al., 2010). That is, though, if the formulated policy alternative aligns with the ideas and convictions of these bureaucrats: Shi and Frenkiel (2021) describe how any attempt at reform could be easily eliminated if it is perceived as a threat to the inner circle's political power.

The higher the level of democratization, the higher the chance for policy entrepreneurs to emerge from outside the political bubble. On the other hand, a higher level of political insulation makes it easier for established entrepreneurs to get their point across, as there are less interests to be balanced. To conclude, democratization creates a more diverse and representative policy field, but makes it difficult to see success and could result in higher levels of fragmentation. Political insulation makes it difficult for policy entrepreneurs to enter a policy field, but if they do manage to get in, they can expect less push-back.

4.1.4. Culture

Closely related to discourse as well as norms and values, culture mainly influences the actions and success of policy entrepreneurs. Renner and Meijerink (2018) describe in a comparison between the Netherlands and Germany how the Dutch organizational culture is more enabling to policy entrepreneurs than the German one, which is more hierarchically organized. This is not to say that hierarchy is bad – in a Thai case described by Chamchong (2020), the strong hierarchical social system in Thai culture enabled collaboration as it was seen as the responsibility of people with higher social status to assist those with lower status, and lower status people are encouraged to ask for help from their ‘’superiors’’. In this sense, policy entrepreneurs from lower ranks are more easily connected to higher ranks.

Also, culture is especially relevant to policy entrepreneurs in international settings: given the centrality of building relationships with others in policy entrepreneurs’ strategies, it is essential for a policy entrepreneur to be aware of cultural differences to establish a fruitful connection (Chamchong, 2020; Mintrom, 2013; Renner & Meijerink, 2018; Wicaksono, 2020).

4.2. Institutional context

The second group of factors is called institutional context. This group was most prevalent throughout the SLR. The factors discussed here are *field architecture, field positioning, available resources, available venues,* and *extant and past trajectories* (Table 2).

Table 2. Institutional context factors

Factor	**Description**
Field architecture	The institutional arrangements in a policy field. Specific focus on the relationship between policy (sub)fields and the extent of overlap between them.

Field position	The position of the policy entrepreneur in or between policy (sub)fields.
Available resources	The (im)material resources such as time, capacity, energy, network, and/or money available to a policy entrepreneur to influence policy.
Available venues	The settings, scenes or places available to a policy entrepreneur to influence policy from.
Extant and past trajectories	Current and past policy processes in other policy (sub)fields that impact the outcome of the policy process a policy entrepreneur is involved in.

4.2.1. Field architecture and field position

The first two contextual factors discussed here are distinct factors, but are highly interconnected and thus discussed under one heading. Both terms were used in Anderson's (2018) article on policy entrepreneurs and child labour reform in Europe, and proved relevant concepts in the remainder of the articles in the SLR.

First, *field architecture* ''refers to the relationships between (sub)fields – specifically, the structure and extent of (sub)field overlap'' (Anderson, 2018, p. 181). When (sub)fields overlap, a so-called structural fold is created. Such folds can take the form of actors' multiple membership in (sub)fields, or a more formal one where one or more (sub)fields are institutionally integrated into another (Anderson, 2018). Field architecture thus describes the extent of institutional integration or fragmentation, but also goes beyond formal institutional boundaries. To illustrate, in a certain policy field, one could find a ''structural fold'' between a government agency and academia. Anderson (2018) describes the policy field as ''a composite field made up of the field of the state (..) as well as other intersecting fields, such as the business field, the intellectual field, and various fields of civil society'' (p. 178). An actor that is situated within a structural fold, for example an academic who is part of a council that advices governments on policy, is called a ''multiple insider'' and likely to display policy entrepreneurial qualities.

Policy entrepreneurs are affected by field architecture in the sense that it influences which type of actors they must approach to build alliances: an alliance with another multiple insider would

increase the policy entrepreneur's reach more than an alliance with someone fully emerged in one sub-field (Anderson, 2018; Beeson & Stone, 2013; Bidegain, 2020; Chamchong, 2020; Chu & Lee, 2019; Corbett et al., 2020; Laing & Walter, 2020; Mukherjee & Giest, 2019). Moreover, the number of structural folds that can be found in a policy field influence the extent to which policy entrepreneurs can unite (sub)fields to achieve desired policy change – especially important when a policy entrepreneur's policy alternative reaches for an increased integration of (sub)fields (Anderson, 2018; Beeson & Stone, 2013; Bidegain, 2020; Chu & Lee, 2019; Corbett et al., 2020; Mukherjee & Giest, 2019). The specific effects of field architecture on a policy entrepreneur, however, also depend on the extent of political insulation or democratization as discussed in the previous section. Mukherjee and Giest (2019) illustrate this in their article on entrepreneurial capacities in the European Emission Trading scheme:

> In France, state bureaucrats and experts typically play a greater role in the production of policy proposals than in the United States, where non-state actors such as think tanks have more clout, in part because of the decentralized and pluralist model of expertise stem. (p. 269)

This shows how in a less centralized field, thus with more structural folds, non-state actors have a better chance of emerging as policy entrepreneurs.

Next, *field position* relates to where the policy entrepreneur is positioned in the field architecture (Anderson, 2018). For instance, in a policy field with many structural folds, policy entrepreneurs are likely to occupy multiple insider positions (Anderson, 2018). On the other hand, in a more centralized field, policy entrepreneurs are likely to be entrenched in the government-field (Anderson, 2018). It seems that in a democratized political system, a policy entrepreneur with a multiple insider position enjoys strategic advantages over others that are outside of a structural fold:

> [Policy formulation] is done at unit or section level guided by the respective [Head of Unit, HoU]. The HoU occupies the pivotal position. as regards content, he used to be the acknowledged expert. At the same time he is an experienced insider who knows the Commission machinery, the informal side of the organizational hierarchy and the crucial policy pundits within the other European institutions, national administrations or relevant lobbies. (Bauer, 2008, p. 694)

An advantageous field position can serve as a mediating factor between the policy entrepreneur and their environment, and provides a policy entrepreneur with necessary resources to reach their goal. Thus, as Bidegain (2020) explains,

> its formal capacity to make decisions or its social capital gives greater ability to impose visions, negotiate or build alliances. Also the involvement in multiple areas (political, academic, professional) can grant a greater legitimacy as an agent. (p. 504)

Furthermore, Chu and Lee explain in their article (2019) how the field positioning of a policy entrepreneur could endow them with easier access to venues through which changing policy was achievable. Another result of a multiple insider position is that a policy entrepreneur's policy alternative can be seen as more credible, given that the policy alternative is based on experience and knowledge from two (sub)fields (Beeson & Stone, 2013; Laing & Walter, 2020; Mackenzie, 2004). Field position thus determines to an extent the amount of power a policy entrepreneur has in a policy field, be it in terms of available resources, social capital, or decision making power (Anderson, 2018; Aukes et al., 2018; Bakir & Jarvis, 2017; Bauer, 2008; Beeson & Stone, 2013; Béland & Cox, 2016; Bidegain, 2020; Brouwer & Huitema, 2018; Chamchong, 2020; Chu & Lee, 2019; Corbett et al., 2020; Doussard & Schrock, 2022; Elgström & Hellstenius, 2010; Fiori & Kim, 2011; Huitema et al., 2011; Mackenzie, 2004; Maurya & Mintrom, 2020; Murphy, 2020; Petridou, 2018; Roth, 2011; Safuta, 2021; Shi & Frenkiel, 2021; Silvestre & Jajamovich, 2022; te Boekhorst et al., 2010; Wicaksono, 2020). However, there seems to be an exception: Corbett also found that in instances where technical knowledge outweighed political clout, key individuals with good subject knowledge had a bigger voice regardless of their field position (2020).

To conclude on field position and field architecture, the two factors affect both the emergence and success of a policy entrepreneur. However, this does not mean a policy entrepreneur has no agency – field position and architecture determine a starting point, from which policy entrepreneurs start working their ‘’magic’’. As Anderson (2018) skilfully summarizes,

> field position and field architecture, as shaped by fundamental government institutions, influence who is empowered to be a policy entrepreneur, but do not guarantee success. (..) [They] largely determine the stages of the policy process during which policy entrepreneurs exert influence; but with skill and creativity, the period of influence can be prolonged. (p. 202-203)

4.2.2. Available resources

Policy entrepreneurs are known to use their resources to influence policy change. In order to do this, however, a policy entrepreneur must have resources available to them. Field architecture and field positioning play a big role in this. In multiple articles, it is described how the resources a policy entrepreneur has available to them is mainly determined by their position (Anderson, 2018; Chamchong, 2020; Chu & Lee, 2019; Cohen, 2012; Laing & Walter, 2020; Mintrom, 2013; Petridou, 2018; Renner & Meijerink, 2018; Ye & Wu, 2022).

The articles show how a lack of willingness from decision makers to spend resources on changing policy presents itself as a barrier to the policy entrepreneur (Beeson & Stone, 2013; Chamchong, 2020; Cino Pagliarello, 2020; Elgström & Hellstenius, 2010; Fiori & Kim, 2011; Murphy, 2020). Moreover, a lack of resources available to the policy entrepreneur prompts the entrepreneur to become more creative in their strategies, with a bigger focus on negotiation, persuasion and compromising (Cohen, 2012; Hu et al., 2020). Available resources also influence the venue shopping of policy entrepreneurs, since it is more likely for them to be successful in an arena with the necessary resources (Doussard & Schrok, 2022; Ye & Wu, 2022).

The likely outcomes of the policy process are also affected by resource availability: simply put, no matter how persistent and committed a policy entrepreneur is, if their preferred policy alternative would require more resources than there are available, nothing will happen (Krcatovich & Reese, 2018; Laing & Walter, 2020; Renner & Meijerink, 2018).

When looking at knowledge as a resource, a lack of it can obstruct the policy entrepreneur in their efforts. On one hand, if a policy entrepreneur does not have knowledge available themselves to underly the policy alternative, convincing others proves difficult (Anderson, 2018; Hu et al., 2020). On the other hand, if the policy field in which the entrepreneur is active has little knowledge on the implementation of the entrepreneur's preferred alternative, decision makers might be hesitant to agree to it (Aukes et al., 2018; Chamchong, 2020). When a policy entrepreneur possesses plenty relevant knowledge, it is easier for them to show the importance of policy change to others (Cino Pagliarello, 2020; Elgström & Hellstenius, 2010)

4.2.3. Available venues

Similar to resources, the number and kinds of venues available to policy entrepreneurs are a prerequisite for them to venue shop, another well-known strategy (Alimi, 2019; Aukes et al., 2018; Corbett, 2020; Doussard & Schrock, 2022; Huitema et al., 2011; Ki, 2022; Mackenzie,

2004). Aukes et al. (2018) discuss how venues may open new pathways for a policy entrepreneur when their policy alternative does not gain traction in another. Corbett (2020) describes the necessity to look at all different venues available in the case of climate governance, given its polycentric nature. Following this rhetoric, when a policy entrepreneur is active in a field where a limited number of venues, or only one venue, are available to them, their chances to succeed are severely limited. This means that policy entrepreneurs often opt for multilevel or polycentric policy processes, as Huitema et al. (2011) discuss:

> Every venue can become a vehicle for driving policy change, but some offer more favorable circumstance than others. Policy entrepreneurs recognize this and find that especially multilevel governance decision processes, such as the ones that exist in the European Union, offer opportunities for moving the debate to a venue that is more suitable from the perspective of their opinions. (Huitema et al., 2011, p. 729)

4.2.4. Extant and past trajectories

Though policy entrepreneurs might focus on specific policies, other policy trajectories influence what is possible in their fields of interest. Such extant trajectories in the form of overarching strategies and other policies in the field can highly determine a policy entrepreneur's latitude: when a policy entrepreneur's policy alternative aligns well with extant trajectories, they can expect less obstructions in getting their alternative approved (Alimi, 2019; Beeson & Stone, 2013; Hu et al., 2020; Huisman & de Jong, 2014; Ki, 2022; Mackenzie, 2004; Ye & Wu, 2022). Similarly, an overarching strategy could even result in a higher demand for policy change in multiple areas:

> The ambition to advance an integrative, indivisible agenda, cements the international community's commitment to greater policy coherence and cross-sectoral interventions grounded in gender and human rights perspectives. Under this overarching vision, progress in one goal is made possible only with simultaneous progress in all other goals. (Alimi, 2019, p. 40)

Conversely, when a policy entrepreneur's preferred policy alternative clashes with existing policies and/or strategies, they can expect a greater push-back from others in the field – most likely those that fought for these extant trajectories (Chamchong, 2020; Cohen, 2012; Corbett, 2020; Paris, 2017; Safuta, 2021; Shi & Frenkiel, 2021). In addition, as Mukherjee and Giest show (2019), the more extant trajectories exist in a policy system, the more complex it becomes

to assess whether an entrepreneur's policy alternative interferes with existing policies in the field, again resulting in a barrier for the alternative to come to fruition.

Besides extant trajectories, the history of the field matters as well: knowledge of the development of a policy field is important for a policy entrepreneur, as it greatly determines what is still possible to achieve. First, a lack of knowledge on earlier struggles regarding the target policy might result in a policy entrepreneur formulating their policy alternative in a way that repeats past mistakes (Huisman & de Jong, 2014). Second, past decisions can create trouble for policy entrepreneurs later on, as Paris describes in her article on the Blue Card Directive (2017):

> Characterised by the predominance of institutional elements over political aspects, the Amsterdam Treaty remained vague as regards the competencies of the European Union – and therefore of the European Commission – in the area of immigration. (p. 1032)

To summarize on extant and past trajectories, policy entrepreneurs can benefit from knowledge on the history of a policy field they wish to influence, as well as on current ongoing policy processes. The former allows them to innovate the policy without repeating past mistakes, while the latter increases the potential success of their actions.

4.3. Network context

The constellation of actors in a policy field is a crucial factor influencing the emergence and work of policy entrepreneurs, given the importance of building coalitions for them to be successful. The factors discussed here are *interest groups and vested interests, political network, key figures, staff turnover, trust,* and *policy audience* (Table 3).

Table 3. Network context factors

Factor	**Description**
Interest groups and vested interests	Interest groups are groups of actors formed on the basis of common interests. Vested interests are underlying reasons for involvement in a policy (sub)field.
Political network	Constellation of actors in Kingdon's *politics stream*.
Key figures	Actors in a leadership role and/or especially powerful decision makers.

Staff turnover	The turnover rate of personnel in a policy (sub)field.
Trust	The amount of trust between actors within and between policy (sub)fields.
Policy audience	Group of actors outside the policy arena and affected by the decisions made in the policy (sub)field.

4.3.1. Interest groups and vested interests

Within a constellation of actors in a policy field, *interest groups* are formed on the basis of common interests. The presence of these different groups in a network and the power balance between them greatly shapes the policy field and actions of policy entrepreneurs (Beeson & Stone, 2013; Bidegain, 2020; Elgström & Hellstenius, 2010; Fiori & Kim, 2011; Haar & Krebs, 2021; Laing & Walter, 2020; Mintrom, 2013; Murphy, 2020). Policy entrepreneurs that are proposing a policy alternative that is opposed by powerful interest groups, for example, might have to adapt their strategies and resource allocation in a way that is detrimental to their ultimate success:

> The balance of power among groups that support or reject the policy entrepreneur's agenda might affect its chances to promote change. When rivals dominate the field, valuable resources are usually spent to reach agreements to break deadlock and the reform's objectives must be negotiated. (Bidegain, 2020, p. 506)

Moreover, in a policy field a policy entrepreneur has to deal with *vested interests*, which are underlying, often personal reasons for involvement in a policy field. Most often vested interests are grounded in the desire to maintain or increase an actor's power or capital. A policy entrepreneur, whose goal is to challenge the status quo with their policy alternative, therefore has a high likelihood of clashing with these vested interests (Beeson & Stone, 2013; Fiori & Kim, 2011; Haar & Krebs, 2021; Laing & Walter, 2020; Wicaksono, 2020). When this happens, similar to interest groups, policy entrepreneurs will often have to put extra time and other resources to move a policy process away from a deadlock and minimize opposition. Being mindful of these interests and approaching the negotiations differently from the get-go is important for a policy entrepreneur's success. Beeson and Stone highlight that this is especially

important in climate change policy, as the beneficiaries of these policies are hard to pinpoint in the short term (2013):

> Through [Australia and the Northeast Asian Ascendancy, ANAA], Garnaut was not only able to 'attach a set of solutions to a problem' but also to frame the problem effectively in ways that accorded with the vested interests of business and the unions in Australia. With climate change, the principal beneficiaries will be the unborn or the unfortunate and unknown outside Australia. Selling that idea in the face of an incredulous media, a hostile political opposition and powerful vested interests will tax the powers of even the most entrepreneurial of idea brokers. (p. 7)

Still, vested interests and interest groups can work in policy entrepreneurs' favour in situations where they align with the policy entrepreneur's policy alternative. In his article, Mintrom describes how entrenched interest groups have assisted policy entrepreneurs working to promote embryonic stem cell research, who were faced with a complex policy field characterized by issues of morality (2013).

4.3.2. Political network

The constellation of actors in the politics stream of the policy process have specific influences on the work of policy entrepreneurs, worthy to be discussed separate from the other network contextual factors. Interest groups and vested interests are aplenty in the politics stream, given the political actors' goals of re-election and influences of lobbying parties. Besides this, the following other influences can be distinguished from the articles.

Firstly, parliamentary backing for a policy alternative is in most political systems necessary for the approval of a policy. The division of groupings, or interest groups, in parliament will determine the amount of negotiation and compromise necessary for an entrepreneur to succeed (Alimi, 2019; Anderson, 2018; Bidegain, 2020; Elgström & Hellstenius, 2010; Hu et al., 2020; Wicaksono, 2020). When one interest group holds a substantial majority, less debate can be expected, giving the entrepreneur less power to sway it in their interest if it initially is not (Beeson & Stone, 2013;). In a more divided parliament, compromise might be necessary, but a policy entrepreneur has a higher chance of influencing the outcome.

Secondly, politically powerful allies provide policy entrepreneurs with resources to pursue their policy alternative (Alimi, 2019; Beeson & Stone, 2013; Cohen, 2012; Mintrom, 2013). Beeson and Stone describe how the power of actors in the politics stream is unmatched by policy entrepreneurs, no matter how powerful they might be in the policy stream (2013). This means

that finding support for their policy alternative from political actors is a must for policy entrepreneurs.

Thirdly, the political interest for a policy field can influence the involvement of political actors (Aukes et al., 2018), leaving the policy entrepreneur more or less free to influence the process: Cohen describes how, when potential veto factors are absent because their eyes are on a different policy field, policy entrepreneurs can avoid a big potential hurdle (2012). On the other hand, this can be a missed opportunity when the policy entrepreneur was counting on support of the political actors. Besides, when political interest is mainly focused on one policy field, it might undermine the possibilities in the entrepreneur's field of interest, as Fiori and Kim describe (2011):

> all national resources were concentrated on developing the economy. For this reason, all other policies – including welfare ones – were considered marginal, if not harmful, to economic development. Social policy became subordinated to the state's economic priorities (p. 65)

Lastly, situations of distress can create political clashes that might halt overall policy progress. This could be the case when there is a lack of cooperation between the opposing parties:

> The failure of LTC reforms was facilitated by the lack of inter-partisan cooperation between PiS and PO, the two political parties dominating the Polish political scene since approximately 15 years. Since PiS won its first legislative elections in October 2005, the polity has been increasingly evolving towards de facto bipartisanship, which comes with a complete lack of cooperation between the two parties. (Safuta, 2021, p. 1106)

Additionally, this type of partisanship can filter down to other areas in the policy field, resulting in the politicization of administrative governance processes, which can again limit the ambition of a policy entrepreneur (Murphy, 2020).

4.3.3. Key figures

Key figures are worth mentioning as a separate contextual factor, given their extraordinary power in the policy process. In the majority of cases described in the articles, a key figure is a leader of a governance system or an especially powerful decision maker. Key figures are almost always to be found in a policy field, though depending on the political system the number of key figures can vary.

Support from key figures creates a number of opportunities for policy entrepreneurs, be it an increase in resource availability, or the reduced necessity to find other allies to support their efforts (Chu & Lee, 2019; te Boekhorst et al., 2010; Ye & Wu, 2022). Conversely, when policy entrepreneurs strive for a policy alternative that opposes the interests or agenda of a key figure, creating impact becomes much harder (Cohen, 2012; Haar & Krebs, 2021).

Key figure involvement also plays a role in the opportunities of policy entrepreneurs. A key figure that is not involved in the policy process at all leaves a successful policy entrepreneur with free rein (Ki, 2022). On the contrary, an overly involved key figure can obstruct the plans of a policy entrepreneur or even remove them from the field. Haar and Krebs showed this in their analysis of Trump's interactions with policy entrepreneurs (2021):

> The pattern was set early on: when the president needed to support his entrepreneurs' policy, he did not, preferring to rely on loyalists outside the official process. Over time, Trump replaced his entrepreneurs with devotees. Kelly was replaced with Mike Mulvaney, who indicated he wanted "to let Trump be Trump," McMaster was replaced by John Bolton, who regularly praised the president on Fox News, and Mattis was replaced by his deputy, Patrick Shanahan, who soon left in disgrace for personal reasons. (p. 460)

4.3.4. Staff turnover

The turnover of personnel, as Cox describes it, ''can disrupt a common understanding of policy challenges that were built by some actors through coordinative discourse'' (2022, p. 524). For a policy entrepreneur, this means that a coalition they spent valuable resources on may dissolve or be challenged as actors may leave or enter the policy at any given moment (Cox, 2022; Haar & Krebs, 2021; Wicaksono, 2020). Policy entrepreneurs can, however, anticipate staff turnover to a certain extent, given the regularity of certain reorganizations such as elections.

The careers of bureaucrats are usually much longer than certain policy cycles in which they are active. When this is the case, already developed lobbying networks and patterns of relations to other actors could undermine the authority of their superior (Wicaksono, 2020). This implies that when a policy entrepreneur is new to a policy field, existing dynamics between staff members might predetermine evident coalition or opposition partners – or, when a policy entrepreneur is a bureaucrat with a longer career history in a policy field, they might be more powerful in practice than their job title suggests.

During a transition period, a vacuum can arise. A change of leadership creates a period in which a governance field might undergo a lot of changes, be it through the formation of coalitions or

assigning new ministers. A policy entrepreneur may use this moment of reform to push for their policy alternative (Murphy, 2020; Fiori & Kim, 2011).

4.3.5. Trust

As has been made clear throughout this section, policy entrepreneur's cannot act without paying mind to the constellation of actors in the policy field. Multiple articles have pointed out how trust between actors is a crucial enabling condition for, firstly, an entrepreneur's success (Chu & Lee, 2019; Fiori & Kim, 2011; Laing & Walter, 2020). Secondly, trust influences the strategies of policy entrepreneurs: in situations where trust is fragile, policy entrepreneurs benefit from using the strategy of demonstrating to build trust in the policy alternative's effectiveness (Brouwer & Huitema, 2018). Thirdly, once a policy entrepreneur increases trust in their relationship with another policy actor, this trust may serve as a factor that facilitates collaborations in the future (Chu & Lee, 2019).

4.3.6. Policy audience

A policy audience can be civil society, but also bigger organisations or businesses that are outside the policy arena and affected by the decisions made in the policy field. The higher the influence of the policy audience in the policy field (for example due to a higher degree of democratization), the more diluted the impact of a policy entrepreneur becomes (Beeson & Stone, 2013). Ultimately, a policy entrepreneur can expect a higher degree of support from the policy audience if the policy alternative benefits the majority of it (Bidegain, 2020; Cohen, 2012; Elgström & Hellstenius, 2010).

Additionally, Ki discusses how policy audiences such as banks, multinational corporations and foreign traders are especially important players influencing the policy fields, as they are able to send direct positive or negative reactions to policy through investment decisions (2022).

4.4. Problem context

Policy change stems from a perceived problem, and a policy entrepreneur formulates a policy alternative based on which solution they find to fit the problem best. However, the nature of the problem matters. In this section three problem characteristics are discussed: *uncertainty*, *contestation*, and *visibility* (Table 4).

Table 4. Problem context factors	
Factor	**Description**
Uncertainty	The extent to which knowledge about the policy problem and preferred policy alternative is lacking.
Contestation	The extent of disagreement and disapproval surrounding the definition of a policy problem.
Visibility	The level of attention a policy problem receives.

4.4.1. Uncertainty

Multiple uncertainties are built into the policy process. One of these uncertainties is whether the policy alternative formulated by the policy entrepreneur is an effective instrument to solve the formulated policy problem. Especially in policy fields such as climate change, where the body of knowledge on the problem as well as on the solutions is still growing and new information is discovered regularly (Mukerjee & Giest, 2019):

> Uncertainty is a characteristic trait of climate change mitigation programmes, because the challenge is to reduce future emissions by setting targets based on present scenarios and predictions. There is further the inherent vagueness of devising appropriate policy today to address possible policy scenarios of tomorrow. (p. 265)

Complexity also increases uncertainty, as Hu et al. describe (2020). When a policy problem is complex, it proves difficult for the policy entrepreneur to delineate exact problem components to base their policy alternative on (Hu et al., 2020). On the other hand, when more knowledge on a policy problem becomes available and uncertainty decreases, policy entrepreneurs can use this to their advantage to gain support for their alternative (Aukes et al., 2018; Cino Pagliarello, 2020; Elgström & Hellstenius, 2010).

4.4.2. Contestation

Even in policy fields where knowledge on a problem is aplenty, one cannot assume that a problem is universally recognized in the first place. As Kingdon already points out in his description of the problem stream, problems are socially constructed. This means that a policy entrepreneur's problem definition is likely not shared by everyone in the policy field. When a

problem is highly contested, it will take more effort for a policy entrepreneur to succeed, as Bidegain points out (2020):

> It is important to identify the diagnostics and solutions in conflict of the policy field. Does the policy entrepreneur face a field where his diagnostic and solutions are dominant or contested by others? If different visions and policy solutions coexist, the policy entrepreneur challenge to succeed will be higher. (Bidegain, 2020, p. 506)

In a similar vein, a policy field high in controversy creates challenges for a policy entrepreneur (Beeson & Stone, 2013; Bidegain, 2020; Krcatovich & Reese, 2018; Laing & Walter, 2020; Murphy, 2020; Vukasovic & Huisman, 2018). The more controversy surrounding a policy problem, the more players are inclined to pitch in, creating a complex policy process decision makers would rather see cancelled than supported (Murphy, 2020). Conflict can even arise between policy entrepreneurs, which could result in a lack of coherent and persistent efforts to get an issue before public decision makers (Krcatovich & Reese, 2018). However, when a policy entrepreneur frames their approach too problem-free, others might not see the urgency and necessity of their proposed alternative (Aukes et al., 2018). Policy entrepreneurs must therefore work towards an intricate balance between low controversy and contestation, and preventing their alternative to be seen as unnecessary.

4.4.3. Visibility

Related to contestation, the visibility of a problem influences the amount of attention a policy entrepreneur can expect for a policy problem and alternative (Cino Pagliarello, 2020; Fiori & Kim, 2011; Ki, 2022; Maurya & Mintrom, 2020; Shi & Frenkiel, 2021). Maurya and Mintrom describe this dynamic in their paper on social health insurance adoption in India (2020):

> Initially, the scheme received little attention from ministers and other politicians even within the Ministry of Labour (Swarup, 2018, 2019). Swarup, a careful policy entrepreneur, felt that limited political visibility of the scheme in the early years would be very helpful as it would prevent opposition and unwelcome political interference. (p. 29)

So, when a problem has low visibility, it means that the policy entrepreneur will likely face less interests to balance, whereas a high visibility problem would attract more attention from a diverse group of actors.

The visibility of a problem increases when momentum is caused by an external shock. This could be emerging evidence, or the onset of a crisis, for example (Cino Pagliarello, 2020; Ki,

2022; Shi & Frenkiel, 2021). Such momentum in turn generates more media attention and increases the involvement of others. Momentum can work in favor of a policy entrepreneur, if they are able to frame the external shock in their favor and use the momentum as fuel to their strategies. However, it is to be expected that the policy entrepreneur is not the only actor to try this, and the policy entrepreneur can expect to face interest groups with opposing views trying to leverage the momentum as much as they are.

4.5. Contextual complementarities

During the analysis of contextual factors of influence to policy entrepreneurs, it became clear that though conceptually distinguishable, the factors are highly interconnected. For example, the political system a policy entrepreneur is in very much determines the field architecture, field position, interest groups, political networks, and many more contextual factors. Bakir points this out in his work, calling it the *complementarities* of contextual factors (2022):

> Structural and institutional complementarities refer to the interdependence of structural and institutional influences on agential actions. They *motivate* agential action through incentives that *reinforce* one another and/or incentives that *compensate* for the deficiencies of one another. (p. 419)

Though Bakir keeps his explanation to the institutional and structural context, the complementarities he describes can exist just as much between all four context categories described in this chapter. To illustrate, a low-contested policy issue can create a more constructive interaction between interest groups (or vice versa). Bakir concludes how the existence of complementarities result in enabling conditions which assist the agential actions of a policy entrepreneur (2022).

Given the existence of complementarities, it is imperative to view the contextual factors discussed in this chapter as interconnected and -dependent. Figure 3 shows an overview of the policy entrepreneur (PE) and the context they are in. The context consists of four categories: structural, institutional, network and problem context – each category in turn consists of multiple factors as discussed in the previous sections. The policy entrepreneur, their emergence and their strategies are influenced by the context they are in, and vice versa the policy entrepreneur and their strategies influence how the context takes shape. The contextual categories are interdependent and interact with each other, creating contextual complementarities. The complementarities provide enabling conditions for the policy entrepreneur. This interplay between these elements ultimately shapes the policy outcome.

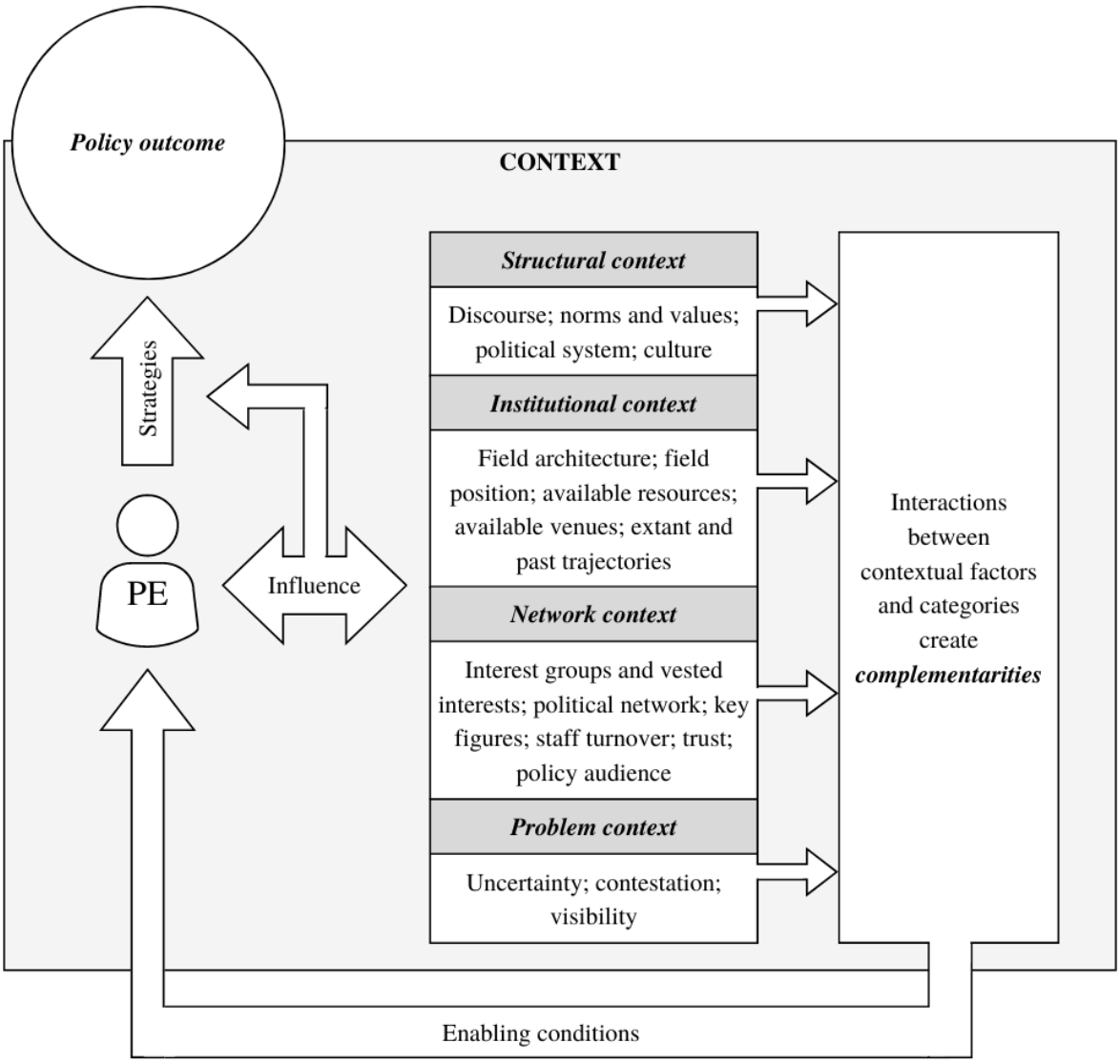


Figure 3. Visual representation of the policy entrepreneur (PE) and the context they are in

The framework in Figure 3 represents an overview of the factors that may influence policy entrepreneurs in multiple ways. To see the specific manifestation of these contextual factors and whether they are beneficial to a policy entrepreneur or not, the framework must be applied to a specific situation. To illustrate this, the next chapter applies the framework to the field of EU agricultural policy.

5. THE EU AGRICULTURAL POLICY CONTEXT

The SLR discussed in Chapter 4 revealed four groups of contextual factors of influence to policy entrepreneurs: structural, institutional, network and problem context based on articles that represented a variety of cases. In this chapter, the framework of Chapter 4 is tested in the context of EU agriculture, using the results from interviews with policy entrepreneur active in this field and complementary secondary data. The policy entrepreneurs interviewed represented multiple sides of the EU agricultural policy field, from within the European Commission (EC), to NGOs, and permanent representations of Member States. This sample reveals the diversity of roles and sectors involved in EU policy making. In Appendix 4, a more detailed overview of the interviewees and their job positions is presented.

Before looking into specific contextual factors that influenced the policy entrepreneurs in their efforts to advance the sustainable development of EU agricultural policy, the policy process is elaborated on. Lastly, comparisons between the results in this chapter and Chapter 4 are discussed.

5.1. EU agricultural policy process

In the field of EU agriculture, the biggest policy is Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). However, besides the CAP, EU agricultural policies also include policies about funding and support schemes, agricultural products, genetically modified organisms (GMOs), and pesticide and fertilizer use (EUR-Lex, n.d.-b).

EU agriculture policy follows the same process as all other policies in the EU. The process starts when the EC performs an impact assessment that analyses the advantages and disadvantages of multiple policy options. This impact assessment is led by the responsible Directorate-General (DG), but through interservice consultations all DGs are involved (Davila Diaz, personal communication (PC), 2023). Once all DGs are on board and the EC thereby completes the impact assessment, it is reviewed by an independent group of actors called the Scrutiny Board, who evaluate whether all impacts have been considered (Davila Diaz, PC, 2023). If this is not the case, the EC must go back to the drawing board to ensure the missing impacts are discussed (Davila Diaz, PC, 2023).

Gregorio Davila Diaz, deputy Head of Unit of environmental sustainability at DG AGRI, pointed out how in this first phase of policymaking, the EC is quite isolated:

> During more or less two years we are quite alone. You don't see much influence from outside, to be honest. And then, when the Commission proposal is published and the Council and Parliament start discussing, I think that is when more pressure from the world comes in. (Davila Diaz, PC, 2023)

The following phase of policy making is where the policy is discussed within the Council of the European Union and the European Parliament (EU, n.d.). these two EU bodies can propose amendments to the policy, following which the EC, the Council and Parliament meet to negotiate about the policy proposal (EU, n.d.). In general, during this time of decision-making, the three EU bodies aim for compromise. However, each institution has a way to leverage the policy outcome if it goes against their wishes: if the EC does not agree with any suggested amendments, the Council can overrule this objection by unanimous decision: if the EC believes that with the amendments made to the proposal it strays too far from its purpose, it can withdraw the proposal; if the Parliament cannot agree with the Council, it has the right to block the proposal (EU, n.d.). If a final text is not reached, there will be a second reading after which the process will repeat. If need be, a conciliation committee is set up with the aim to resolve issues and progress the policy (EU, n.d.). Once a joint text is agreed on by all three institutions, a proposal is adopted into law (EU, n.d.).

In 2013, the EC changed the mechanism of stakeholder consultation to that of Civil Dialogue Groups (CDGs) with the aim to create more transparency and increase the balance of interests in EU agricultural policy (AFC Consulting et al., 2020). The CDGs consist of NGOs active on an EU level – including representative organizations, socio-economic interest groups, civil society organizations and trade unions – that are registered in the EU Transparency Register (AFC Consulting et al., 2020). In late 2022, new members of the CDGs were selected. This is done based on criteria such as the relevance of the organizations' mission to the CDG topic, the organizations' activities on EU level and the content of the organizations' submitted requests (Davila Diaz, PC, 2023). The CDGs discuss different proposals related to the CAP and other agricultural policies, though not at the moment of policy making or reform – CDGs are a platform for the members to discuss, exchange ideas and point out topics of interest to the EC, rather than a direct consultation mechanism during the drafting of a policy proposal (Davila Diaz, PC, 2023).

Lastly, individuals, businesses and other organizations not suited for the CDGs can still provide feedback through the so-called ''have your say portal'', an online resource where the EC publishes policy proposals for people to comment on (EU, n.d.). Interest groups that are

registered in the EU Transparency Register may interact with the European Parliament through lobbying activities (European Parliament, n.d.).

The CAP shapes the EU agricultural sector, and its history and sustainable development therefore serves as an indicator for the overall progress made in the field of EU agriculture in terms of sustainability (Pe'er et al., 2020). At conception in the 1950s, the CAP mainly focused on economic concerns, and aimed at ensuring the self-sufficiency of the agricultural sector and security for European farmers (Balaceanu, 2013). As time passed, social and environmental challenges in agriculture received more attention, and in recent CAP reforms policy makers have started to integrate these dimensions of sustainability more (Balaceanu, 2013). These include the green direct payments and cross-compliance rules , amongst other things (European Commission, n.d.-b). Also, the European Green Deal and Farm to Fork strategy offer important opportunities for the EU to create a future-proof CAP (Pe'er et al., 2020).

However, the sustainable development of the CAP, and EU agriculture as a whole, has been critiqued. The current CAP spending exacerbates income inequality within agriculture, while there is a lack of funding that supports climate-friendly and biodiverse farming regions (Scown et al., 2020). Moreover, aided by CAP subsidies, agricultural operations have increasingly scaled up throughout the EU, as well as the use of fertilizers and other agrochemical inputs (Pe'er et al., 2014). This, together with peatland drainage and other land-use changes have led to a decline in biodiversity of EU farmland (Pe'er et al., 2014). In terms of alignment with the SDGs, the CAP indicators fall short: only SDG 2 is addressed and supported in the CAP, while other indicators are not, with even the complete omission of SDGs 3, 5, 14 and 16 (Scown & Nicholas, 2020).

These, as well as other environmental and social shortcomings in the CAP and EU agriculture as a whole can be considered a result of policy post-exceptionalism. In the past, the agricultural policy field was regarded as an extreme case of compartmentalized policy making, also called policy exceptionalism (Daugbjerg & Feindt, 2017). Policy exceptionalism is defined as ''the special treatment of a sector by governments and international organizations and the belief system that provides cognitive justification and political legitimation'' (Daugbjerg & Feindt, 2017, p. 1567). This exceptionalism in the field of agriculture, Daugbjerg and Feindt point out, has been increasingly challenged with the rise of neo-liberalism in the 1980s and the emergence of sustainability in the policy debate in the 1990s (2017). Following this, they introduce the term policy *post*-exceptionalism to conceptualize the partial transformation of a policy field, in which the policy arena is less compartmentalized and opened up to new actors, though the

policy ideas that claim that a policy sector is special are still supported by updated arguments that relate to the problems that have arisen from an evolving policy agenda (2017). Greer (2017) examined the 2013 CAP reform to research post-exceptionalism in EU agriculture. He concluded that at the time, the post-exceptionalism visible in EU agriculture is ‘’shallow’’, meaning that while some novel ideas were included, this was mainly done to legitimize special treatment under new circumstances (2017). Additionally, new actors were given access to the negotiations and new policy instruments were adopted, but the ideational framework, policy, and institutional core were not significantly affected to shift the policy away from benefiting mainly the farm sector (Greer, 2017).

The agricultural post-exceptionalism in the EU makes it an interesting case to study policy entrepreneurs that are striving to sustainably develop EU agricultural policy. The policy entrepreneurs active here might face contextual factors that others active in a less exceptionalist policy field are not. In turn, it can contribute to a better understanding of how to support them in a system whose special treatment stifles sustainable development. Simultaneously, the results discussed here might also provide future research some insight in the current state of EU Agriculture’s post-exceptionalist treatment – given the increased action with the Green Deal and Farm to Fork strategy since Greer’s article, the situation might have changed since 2017.

5.2. Contextual factors

In this section, the contextual factors perceived by policy entrepreneurs active in the sustainable development of EU agriculture policy are discussed. Overall, the contextual factors found in the SLR and discussed in Chapter 4 were all perceived by the interviewees, be it in varying degrees. In the sections that follow, the perceived contextual factors will be explored in greater detail.

5.2.1. Structural context

The structural context is intangible yet impactful to policy entrepreneurs. One interviewee mentioned how important it is to read between the lines, because changes in structure are not directly noticeable. In terms of discourse and ideational climate, multiple interviewees pointed out how in recent years the EU has committed to taking a leading role in sustainable development, using the Sustainable Development Goals as an umbrella to create impactful and meaningful sustainability policy. On the other hand, Nelli Hajdu, secretary general of CELCAA, mentioned how she feels the EU agriculture field is too reactive, meaning that the EU’s overall sustainability agenda has overrun everybody. She also mentioned how the agri-

food industry sees itself as sustainably operating already, and does therefore not feel called to dramatically change their practices. So, within the EU, this change in ideational climate created a ‘’new political reality’’ (Sas, PC, 2023) and shifted attention to sustainable development and gave a platform to the policy entrepreneurs. However, the discourse outside the EU institutions is not as supportive yet.

The interviewees did not comment much on the influence of an ‘’EU culture’’ on their efforts, but did mention certain norms and values that persist in EU policy making. Davila Diaz explained that within the EC, it is not accepted to only pursue your personal inclinations:

> When you have a very clear vision on where you want to go, and you go with only that, you may find that there are many other realities that you have not considered. Because of that, at the end you lose credibility – you end up with a proposal that is rejected by many and is ultimately counterproductive. (PC, 2023)

Pérel, policy officer at CEJA, seconds this by saying how there are certain policy alternatives that wouldn’t be accepted, especially if these alternatives strongly favours one group of stakeholders over others without reason.

The EU political system is highly complex with a high level of democratization, influencing policy entrepreneurs in different ways. First, the sheer amount of interests that need to be balanced in EU policy making requires policy entrepreneurs to compromise more than usual. Second, there are a lot of steps in the policy process. This bureaucracy makes the policy process predictable, though it also creates a big administrative burden for policy entrepreneurs outside the EU institutions. Third, when working from within the EU, the political system does not facilitate creative thinking, as the focus lies more on balancing existing interests rather than policy innovation. The level of democratization thus comes with its challenges to policy entrepreneurs, though it does allow for the emergence of a diverse range of policy entrepreneurs, similar to what was found in Chapter 4.

Overall, the structural context in EU agriculture shows how the ideational climate and discourse coming from within the EU institutions is quite enabling for policy entrepreneurs working on the sustainable development of EU agriculture. On the other hand, the focus and expectation of balancing interests and high levels of democratization mean that policy entrepreneurs are bound to compromise in order to see their policy alternative through.

5.2.2. Institutional context

The perceived institutional context by the interviewed policy entrepreneurs, though complex, can be characterized as stable, given the predictability of the EU policy process as described above. In terms of *field architecture*, the EU policy field consists of many structural folds, put into place through the legally required stakeholder participation as well as the required involvement of all DGs in the drafting of the policy proposal and lobby opportunities (as mentioned in section 5.1.). These structural folds are thus quite strong as they are institutionalized in the EU system. The policy entrepreneurs commented on this as well, saying in general the EU agriculture field architecture creates an enabling environment in which policy entrepreneurs can emerge from different (sub)fields and the folds between them.

An interesting thing that is happening in the architecture of the EU agriculture field is that the policy making process is becoming more horizontal. Whereas before agriculture was quite isolated as a policy field, in recent years the EU has increasingly integrated agricultural policies into other policy domains, and vice versa, especially with sustainability policy. In other words, new structural folds are created in the field architecture between the sustainability and agricultural policy fields. Within the EC this can be seen through the required consultation of all DG's prior to publishing a proposal. In the Council, the presidency decides where a file is handled, and may decide that a policy file is to be discussed in the environmental committee rather than the agricultural one, even though the policy proposal very much affects agriculture:

> [Sustainability policies] do not only affect agriculture, they are also very much an environmental issue. So, they are not being dealt with in the responsible committees for agriculture, but more on the environmental side of the Council. (..) It does affect the discussion to place the file in a certain committee. (..) I am not saying it is a good thing not to take agriculture into account, but because these layers are as horizontal as they are, I think it is good the policies are being dealt with by the environmental colleagues. (Neumann, PC, 2023)

This means that policy entrepreneurs working from the agricultural field on its sustainable development are experiencing an increased amount of access to and support from their colleagues in the environmental field. It is thus important for policy entrepreneurs to be able to coordinate action spanning across multiple policy fields. Policy entrepreneurs from outside the EU institutions will have to pay close attention to multiple ongoing policy processes to see where they must go and who they must connect with in order to influence policy.

Depending on the *field position* of the policy entrepreneurs, they enjoy more or less freedom to do as they please. Anne-Margreet Sas, agriculture attaché for the Dutch Permanent Representation in Brussels, pointed out how on paper the person writing the text has more power than the person amending it. In this sense, policy entrepreneurs within the EC have the most powerful field position, given the EC's right to initiative. However, Davila Diaz commented on the flipside of this field position: he described how it is easy to feel as a single piece in the machinery, and entrepreneurship does not come naturally because there are so many layers of bureaucracy. This, along with the task of balancing interests, leaves policy entrepreneurs within the EC limited to use their resources for their personal preferred policy alternative.

So, this would mean policy entrepreneurs outside the EU institutions enjoy more freedom in formulating their policy alternatives, especially if they are part of a representative organization. The issue here, however, is that these policy entrepreneurs have a less powerful field position, and creating impact proves more difficult. All interviewees from outside the EU circle mentioned this as a limiting factor: their field position does not give them direct power to change policy, only indirect through consultations, the CDGs or lobbying activities.

This brings us to the *availability of venues* and *resources*. The literature discussed in Chapter 4 highlighted how policy entrepreneurs with more venues and resources accessible to them are more likely to be successful. The case of EU agriculture is no exception. Katharina Neumann, food and agriculture attaché for the German Permanent Representation in Brussels, explained how the COVID-19 crisis showed how crucial the availability of physical venues are in their work:

> The COVID pandemic really showed the importance of actually being in Brussels and having the possibility to easily get to know representatives of other Member States. All of us know it, it is something else if you meet a person online or in person. It is a different atmosphere. When it comes to venues, having regular meetings and getting into that work mode, and having it be a regular thing to work together, it really helps to push things forward. (Neumann, PC, 2023)

The interviewees all agreed that in general, the EU policy field provides policy entrepreneurs with proper venues through which they can act. These formal venues are institutionalized in the EU policy field, as was mentioned before regarding structural folds in the policy field. This also means that these venues are not very flexible. However, Sas mentioned that the negotiations

also happen in the corridors of the EU, meaning there are more informal venues available. The informal lobbying creates more leeway, especially for non-EU policy entrepreneurs, who might not have been able to access certain EU decision makers through the formal venues available to them.

Second, resource availability was mentioned often by interviewees as being of influence to their work. First, policy entrepreneurs working for bigger organizations are able to achieve more than those working with smaller organizations, because they are able to mobilize more people within their team for their cause. This enables the policy entrepreneurs to act quickly and build bigger networks. Smaller organizations struggle because of their limited capacity, making them thinly spread over multiple policy areas. For them, knowledge as a resource is highly important to convince the EU to listen to them. Hajdu commented on how resource allocation to the work of policy entrepreneurs focusing on sustainable development is limited when the home organization or constituencies do not prioritize sustainability in their agendas.

Given the scale and complexity of the EU policy field as a whole, there are multiple ways in which *extant* and *past trajectories* affect policy entrepreneurs in the agriculture field. As mentioned in section 5.2.1., international commitments such as the SDGs have trickled down into more concrete EU policies. The good news, as some of the interviewees explained, is that on an overarching EU scale policies are put in place in favour of sustainable development. The Green Deal, for instance, paved the way for the Farm to Fork and Biodiversity strategies, which inspired concrete action plans on domains such as pesticides, circular economy, soil and so on. These action plans then lead to actual policies, so all these layers of EU policy influence what is ultimately written down. In the current EU policy field, the extant trajectories are lined up for sustainable action, and the policy entrepreneurs notice this:

> If you take the sustainability file and you look at the promotion, at Farm to Fork and such, you see there are a high expectation within the institution to create meaningful and impactful sustainability policy. (Hajdu, PC, 2023)

An added contextual factor that the policy entrepreneurs pointed out was the *timing* of policy change. The sheer number of ongoing policy processes in the EU create discrepancies in timing. For example, the latest CAP reform is just being implemented as of January 2023, however the EC already has started their impact assessment necessary for the next reform. Moreover, the duration of the mandates from the EC presidency and Parliament do not always align with the policies that come out of these mandates. When the members of the EC presidency and

Parliament change, so do their priorities, and policy entrepreneurs working on a specific policy goal might have to find new alliances or deal with changing overarching strategies:

> In the end, you are proposing things that will affect the new Parliament (..) I do not know if the policy making should be faster, to respond to the current situation, or if the mandates should be longer, but it is true that now they are not aligned very well. (Davila Diaz, PC, 2023)

To conclude on the institutional factors discussed, the institutionalization of stakeholder participation and venues available to policy entrepreneurs create a stable and predictable institutional context for policy entrepreneurs to work in. To add to this, through the multiple layers of EU policy making, sustainability has been given increased priority over the years, which supports the policy entrepreneurs in their work. However, the increased integration of policy fields in the EU will require policy entrepreneurs to spread their attention and resources over multiple policy fields. Moreover, similar to the structural context, policy entrepreneurs have to accept that within the EU institutional context they must be willing to compromise on their policy alternative in order to be successful, be it because their field position requires it of them, or because they lack resources to create policy change on their own.

5.2.3. Network context

The necessity for compromise and an institutional and structural context that prioritize the balancing of interests make the network context a crucial part of policy entrepreneurship in EU agriculture. In the interviews, network factors were always mentioned as one of the first the policy entrepreneurs could think of. This makes sense, given that the network in a policy field is the most visible facet that policy entrepreneurs interact with and the variety of actors working in the field of EU agriculture.

The balance and composition of *interest groups* in the field of EU agriculture change based on the specific topic of discussion. However, in general a divide between agricultural interests and environmental interests can be seen, often resulting in a constant discussion of ‘’food security versus sustainability’’ (Neumann, PC, 2023). This also relates to the (post-)exceptionalism explained in section 5.1. Farmer interest groups are among the most powerful interest groups relative to others, for example trade unions, consumer organizations or even environmental groups. Alan Matthews, emeritus professor in European agricultural policy, explained that this could be due to the fact that farmers have very similar interests and they congregate together as they live in rural areas. Environmental or sustainability groups, on the other hand, will represent

a multitude of interests that are not as easily presented as one, and are therefore more divided into smaller groups. Policy entrepreneurs note that it is key to have dialogue and discussion to bring together interest groups to find common ground. However, at times a sustainability proposal is hijacked by a relatively small interest group because of very specific issues. Two interviewees mentioned that Member States in the Council tend to do this often. Hajdu, who works from outside the EU, noted that the EU officials are at times less willing to cooperate and share information when they expect NGOs or other representative organizations to oppose their ideas.

Next, *vested interests* have been perceived as obstructing the policy process under the guise of not having enough information. This was specifically the case in the recent pesticide proposal, to which a number of Member States required the EC to go back to impact assessment to gather more data on the effects of the proposal. Opposing interest groups and vested interests in the EU agriculture policy field thus mainly end up slowing down policy progress. This causes the policy entrepreneur to be creative in their strategies to achieve what they have in mind and keep moving the policy process along. However, with the increased integration of policy fields in the EU, the formerly closed off policy community consisting of the Ministers of agriculture, farm unions and the food industry is now slowly opening up for additional voices representing environmental concerns. This change in interest group composition in the field of EU agriculture can benefit the work of policy entrepreneurs working towards sustainable development:

> Breaking the very closed policy community is, I think, one of the ways in which we begin to see new objectives set for agricultural policy. (..) If we are to succeed in the green transition, then we need to strengthen these additional voices, which represent a much broader social interest than simply the sectoral interest of farming alone. If we only concentrate on the sectoral interest we simply will not have a transition full stop. (Matthews, PC, 2023)

The way that these balances of interest groups and vested interests play out mainly comes from the *political network*. The interviewees agreed that the EU agriculture field is highly political. In the EU political sphere, it is common to compromise in one policy field for concessions in another. This means that policy entrepreneurs might encounter sudden changes in support or opposition that are not easily explained. Hajdu mentioned that the agricultural lobby, though very influential, is not very proactive when it comes to sustainability policy. There, policy entrepreneurs working for the sustainable development of EU agriculture are missing a

powerful ally. Also, Neumann mentioned how the war in Ukraine has significantly impacted EU agriculture and strengthened the sustainability versus food security debate. Before, the policy entrepreneur perceived that the EU agriculture field was more on track on the implementation of the Green Deal. However, the Russian aggression and the ensuing energy crisis and inflation had a major impact on the policy discussions: it put the question back on the table of how to actually achieve the goals set out in the Green Deal in a dramatically changed political climate. Lastly, in terms of voting power, there is a bias in favour of rural constituencies, Matthews pointed out: in rural constituencies with many farmers, a Member of Parliament is elected with fewer voters than in an urban constituency. This provides those representing farmers' interests with more political support.

The *key figures* that were mentioned by interviewees were Janusz Wojciechowski (Commissioner for Agriculture in the EU), Ursula Vonderleyen (President of the European Commission), and Frans Timmermans (First Vice-President of the European Commission). Though not mentioned by name, other Commissioners were also mentioned to be influential in the field of EU agriculture. These key figures influence policy entrepreneurs in the sense that whenever these figures make a public appearance, their statements can greatly determine or change the policy process. A key figure putting more focus on sustainability, for example, could create momentum for a policy entrepreneur with a sustainable policy alternative. On the other hand, when sustainability is not mentioned in a speech a policy entrepreneur might lose support as the focus is being shifted to another topic. This influence can be unpredictable – even a policy entrepreneur from within the Commission that helps preparing the speeches might see certain parts being left out or different parts being emphasized more than what they originally thought the focus would be.

Due to the issue of timing in the EU policy process, as discussed in section 5.2.2., staff turnover is a recurring issue for policy entrepreneurs. First, in moments of personnel change, the policy process is put on hold, for example during new Parliamentary elections. After this election period, the new players will have to get acquainted to what is going on in the policy field. This can be a positive moment for policy entrepreneurs hoping to get new alliances out of it. However, for other policy entrepreneurs this moment might mean alliances are dissolved as the composition of actors is rearranged. Second, within the EC but also outside the EU institutions employees tend to move often between jobs or fields, and this type of turnover is less predictable than turnover after regular elections. It is therefore difficult for policy entrepreneurs to

anticipate changes in the network and again might destabilize an alliance when a partner changes fields and becomes unreachable for the policy entrepreneur.

Davila Diaz mentioned the importance of a balanced network in terms of newcomers and veterans. He describes the delicacy of maintaining this balance:

> The people that have been here for many years have seen, heard and written many things, and they are really helpful in order to understand the context and feasibility of policy proposals. But at the same time, they are the ones that are probably dragging their feet most when it comes to change. But if you put people that just come with fresh ideas, fresh minds, out-of-the-box, it is very likely that (..) they do not consider what went wrong in the past, why, and they repeat the same mistakes. It is a sensitive issue here. (Davila Diaz, PC, 2023)

The *trust* between actors in the EU policy field was identified as an important factor. The policy entrepreneurs identified that this was deeply connected with the level of transparency in the EU policy process. Policy entrepreneurs within the EU institutions were relatively positive about the level of transparency and trust between actors, however the policy entrepreneurs from outside the EU commented on how they believe EU officials could improve their transparency, in the sense that it is sometimes hard to know what happens with the input that policy entrepreneurs provide.

The *policy audience* was perceived to be of influence to policy entrepreneurs, however more closely related to the problem context, which will be discussed in the next section. This can be explained by the fact that input from the policy audience in the policy process is not as direct in the EU, as it is organized through representative organizations or the election of Members of European Parliament. The latter does imply that the political network is partial to what is happening at the level of civil society and might change their positions based on that. This change in the political network can then affect policy entrepreneurs, meaning the impact of the policy audience is indirect and hard to perceive by policy entrepreneurs themselves:

> There is pressure coming society, even from outside the EU, and this pressure can definitely yield results. However, I cannot say one-on-one that because a certain group of people or stakeholders sent an email at a certain time, the outcome of a policy changed. (Sas, PC, 2023)

A new contextual factor that came up in the interviewees was the *home organization* of the policy entrepreneur. In the EU, preference is given to representative organizations, in order to ensure many interests are efficiently represented in the policy field. Almost all interviewees

were representatives in some way or shape, representing national governments or international NGOs. When the home organization or constituencies of a policy entrepreneur are ambitious in the field of sustainable development, this creates an enabling environment for the policy entrepreneur to work in. However, ultimately the entrepreneurs, though their position as representatives gives them a beneficial field position, were limited in the extent to which they could freely express their personal preferred policy alternative. Sas explained how her agency is limited:

> When working as a civil servant for the Dutch government, what matters is what the Netherlands thinks about certain topics, rather than what you yourself think about them. (..) I have come to realize that when I personally identify or connect with the topic and lines to take, it is easier to put my all into it. Having said that, if our lines to take would be entirely different than my personal convictions, it is still my job and expected of me to work just as hard to achieve the desired outcome. (Sas, PC, 2023).

Policy entrepreneurs working for an NGO experience a similar interaction with their constituencies. Pérel explained how the people he represents at CEJA are crucial in their formulation of policy alternatives, especially given the EU's preference for representative organizations:

> Dialogue is the basis of our organization. If we want a fight to be successful, the first step is to hear from our members because they are the ones we represent. Our legitimacy depends on it. (Pérel, PC, 2023)

However, policy entrepreneurs have more agency here than those representing Member States. Hajdu noted that the constituencies also look at the policy entrepreneur's NGO for input and guidance. It is, in that sense, a two-way street:

> It is also our task to explain to our members how important it is we go down the sustainability road. (..) You could create anything you want for your constituencies, and if you have a bit of imagination and ideas, you can introduce ideas and concepts on sustainable policy and shape the policy process. (..) We have, indeed, a creator position. (Hajdu, PC, 2023)

All in all, the network context that policy entrepreneurs work in can be quite an unpredictable field to navigate. The sudden changes in the political network, interest group composition, staff turnover and key leader involvement, as well as the intangibility of vested interests and societal input can take a policy entrepreneur by surprise. These changes can be anticipated to a certain

extent, though it requires constant involvement that some policy entrepreneurs might not have the resources to uphold. Lastly, the home organization or constituencies of the policy entrepreneur is quite influential in the policy alternative the entrepreneurs can formulate.

5.2.4. Problem context

The interviewees agreed that the sustainable development of EU agriculture policy is a complex issue. Impact assessments are a central part of the policy process, and they form the knowledge base that policy entrepreneurs can use for their preferred policy alternative. However, the timing of policy trajectories in the EU, as discussed in section 5.2.2., adds a layer of *uncertainty* to the problem context: Davila Diaz described how in the EC, they are already preparing for the impact assessment for the next CAP reform, even though the current reform has barely been implemented. The lack of policy evaluation that has been conducted on the latest reform makes it difficult to know for policy entrepreneurs which (parts of) the policy must be changed. Uncertainty is also used as a political argument, the interviewees mention: opposing parties might undermine policy entrepreneurs with the argument that there is not enough information on the proposed policy alternative and whether it will solve the identified problems.

In terms of *contestation*, interviewees mentioned how the problem definition they use is not shared in situations, especially when it concerns sustainability. The interviewees attribute this to the complexity of agricultural sustainability and its mix of environmental, social and economic dimensions. This complexity means that people in the policy field will put emphasis on different dimensions, and a policy entrepreneur must be able to present a policy alternative that touches upon all of them. The contestation in the field of EU agriculture also comes from (post-)exceptionalism: economic and farmers' interests and the concept of food security have historically been the number one priority in the policy field. Now that environmental and social elements of sustainability are increasingly integrated into the policies, those representing the exceptionalist values heavily object, interviewees point out.

Agricultural policy is connected to people's livelihoods. This means that agricultural policy is very personal to its policy audience, especially farmers, who will be directly affected by the policy outcomes. As a result, farmers feel their way of life is being threatened by environmentalists, while the environmentalists feel that unless farmers change the way they farm, the environment is under threat. This contestation results in an us-and-them rhetoric.

> People are getting a livelihood, workers are earning their living from this, and suddenly you are saying, ''well, we're no longer going to permit that activity''. (..) The issue is simply

> that you have a very strong lobby who, you know, for quite rational reasons defend their economic interests and it is up to politicians to try to find a way forward. (..) Farmers want perspective: ‘’OK, you are telling us we cannot keep livestock, but what can we do? What is the alternative perspective?’’, and that is a perfectly reasonable question for anybody to ask. (Matthews, PC, 2023)

Throughout the policy process, the problem *visibility* fluctuates. As mentioned in section 5.1., in the first two years of policy making the EC is quite isolated. In this period, they are relatively free to design a policy as they see fit. When the policy proposal is published and the Council and Parliament start discussing more pressure from the outside world comes in. The interviewees agreed that there is a lot of attention paid to the development of agricultural policy in the EU. They noticed an increased demand from civil society to create sustainable policy, which enabled them to be more ambitious in their policy alternatives. Simultaneously, the increased attention also prompts the policy entrepreneurs to watch their steps carefully:

> When policy files are put under a magnifying glass, you are more aware of the steps you are taking and the choices made in the policy process. In the deforestation proposal, for example, there was a lot of engagement from civil society during the ‘’have your say’’ period. During the negotiation process a lot of lobby organizations wanted to talk to me about the proposal, as well as the press. (..) All this momentum and attention really underscored the urgency to create an impactful proposal. (Sas, PC, 2023)

The political network also picks up on what is happening in civil society and how the policy audience reacts to proposals, and may use this for their own political gain as discussed in section 5.2.3.

The problem context in the field of EU agricultural policy is thus a contested one. Policy entrepreneurs working towards sustainable development experience a significant amount of pushback from powerful vested interests such as farmers organizations, who see their interests threatened by the increased integration of environmental and social sustainability in agricultural policy. The contestation in the policy field creates increases the visibility of the problems discussed, which puts pressure on policy entrepreneurs to create impactful policy change. Lastly. The timing of CAP reforms creates extra uncertainty for policy entrepreneurs, as data on the success of the latest reform is not yet available.

5.3. Complementarities amongst EU agriculture context factors

To summarize the results discussed in section 5.2., policy entrepreneurs working on the sustainable development of EU agricultural policy are affected by the structural, institutional, network and problem context they find themselves in. The structural and institutional context are quite enabling for these policy entrepreneurs, though it requires compromise and spread of attention and resources due to the increased integration of policy fields and high levels of democratization in the EU. The reliability of the institutional context, however, is counteracted by the unpredictability of the network context. This is mainly due to the powerful farmer interest groups, an erratic political network and constraints by home organization. The problem context of EU agricultural policy is contested, visible and characterized by high levels of uncertainty (specifically in the CAP), putting pressure on the policy entrepreneurs and obstructing their success.

Amongst the contextual factors perceived by the interviewed policy entrepreneurs, multiple complementarities can be found. A number of complementarities created enabling conditions for the interviewees, however other complementarities were found that created disabling conditions. These complementarities can be found in Table 5.

Table 5. Overview of complementarities found amongst the perceived contextual factors

Enabling complementarities	**Disabling complementarities**
The ideational climate in favour of sustainable development (**structural**) creates extant trajectories (**institutional**) such as the Green Deal and Farm to Fork. This makes it easier for sustainability-oriented policy entrepreneurs to find support.	The timing of the policy trajectories in EU agricultural (sub)fields (**institutional**) increases problem uncertainty (**problem**).
The norms and values of interest balancing and the high level of democratization (**structural**), combined with the institutionalization of stakeholder dialogue and resulting available venues (**institutional**) increases the access to the policy (sub)fields for non-EU policy entrepreneurs.	(post-)Exceptionalism in the EU agriculture field creates powerful interest groups (**network**) who contest the problem definition of sustainability-oriented policy entrepreneurs (**problem**).
The attention of the policy audience and thus problem visibility (**problem**) combined with the ideational climate in favour of sustainable development (**structural**) creates momentum for policy entrepreneurs to make use of	Policy entrepreneurs who hold strong field positions and have access to resources (**institutional**) are often held responsible for balancing the interests of various stakeholders due to the extent of democratization in the EU and norms and values regarding interest balancing (**structural**), limiting the extent to which they can act. Conversely, those with fewer resources may be less able to impose change, but also have less responsibility to consider the interests of other parties. Ultimately, any policy entrepreneur wanting to see sustained change must be prepared to compromise.

6. COMPARING THEORY AND PRACTICE

The aim of this research was to fill the knowledge gap on the contextual factors of influence to the emergence and actions of policy entrepreneurs, with a specific focus on those striving towards the sustainable development of EU agricultural policy. The SLR results discussed in Chapter 4 show four categories of contextual factors of influence to policy entrepreneurs: structural, institutional, network and problem context. Among the contextual factors exist complementarities – the interdependence of contextual influences on agential action. In literature, these complementarities are explained to enable policy entrepreneurship through the reinforcement of one another or the compensation for deficiencies of one another.

Following interviews with policy entrepreneurs working on the sustainable development of EU agricultural policy, the results of which are discussed in Chapter 5, the identified contextual factors from Chapter 4 are generally perceived as influential by the policy entrepreneurs. Two contextual factors were added: *home organization and constituencies* (network context), and *timing* (institutional context). The structural and institutional context are overall quite enabling for these policy entrepreneurs, both in their emergence and actions. However, the network and problem context are less reliable influences due to powerful interest groups and the contestation surrounding EU agricultural policy.

By applying the framework from Chapter 4 to the case of EU agricultural policy, the functioning of the framework can be seen. The SLR consisted of a mix of cases with different backgrounds and settings in which policy entrepreneurs were working. The resulting framework thus represents an overview of the contextual factors that *could* influence policy entrepreneurs. It is during the application of the framework to a specific situation, however, where the magic happens: as the application to the EU agricultural policy field showed, the ways in which the contextual factors take shape, the complementarities that arise, and how these specifically influence policy entrepreneurs, become apparent through research into specific policy fields. In Figure 4, the adapted framework to the field of EU agricultural policy is depicted.

Most results in Chapter 4 are reflected in Chapter 5, albeit in specific manifestations. One similarity worth noting is that both chapters discussed how the level of democratization in a political system and the necessity of balancing interests that comes with it seem to create a less optimal environment for policy innovation. Democratic systems are thus challenged with the question as to how innovation and ambition can be fostered, especially in fields such as sustainability, where the necessity of impactful change becomes more apparent by the day. In

contrast, the results in Chapter 5 show that *organisational culture* (structure) and *policy audience* (network) are not perceived as much as the literature in Chapter 4 describes. The former could be due to the fact that the international nature of the EU does not create a strong culture, or the fact that culture is hard to perceive in general. The latter was perceived by the interviewees, but more so in relation to the problem context, because of the limited and indirect access of the policy audience to the policy arena.

In Chapter 4, complementarities were discussed and their importance in enabling agential action. In his explanation Bakir (2022) focuses on the positive effects of complementarities on the agency of policy entrepreneurs. However, besides the enabling complementarities, the results of Chapter 5 also show how complementarities between contextual factors can create disabling conditions for policy entrepreneurs. This is especially apparent when looking at complementarities between structural and institutional factors: on one hand, a supportive ideational climate and extant trajectories prioritizing sustainable development improves the field position of sustainable policy entrepreneurs. On the other hand, the democratic EU system and institutionalization of stakeholder dialogues and balancing of interests leaves less freedom for policy entrepreneurs to *use* their field position and pursue their preferred policy alternative.

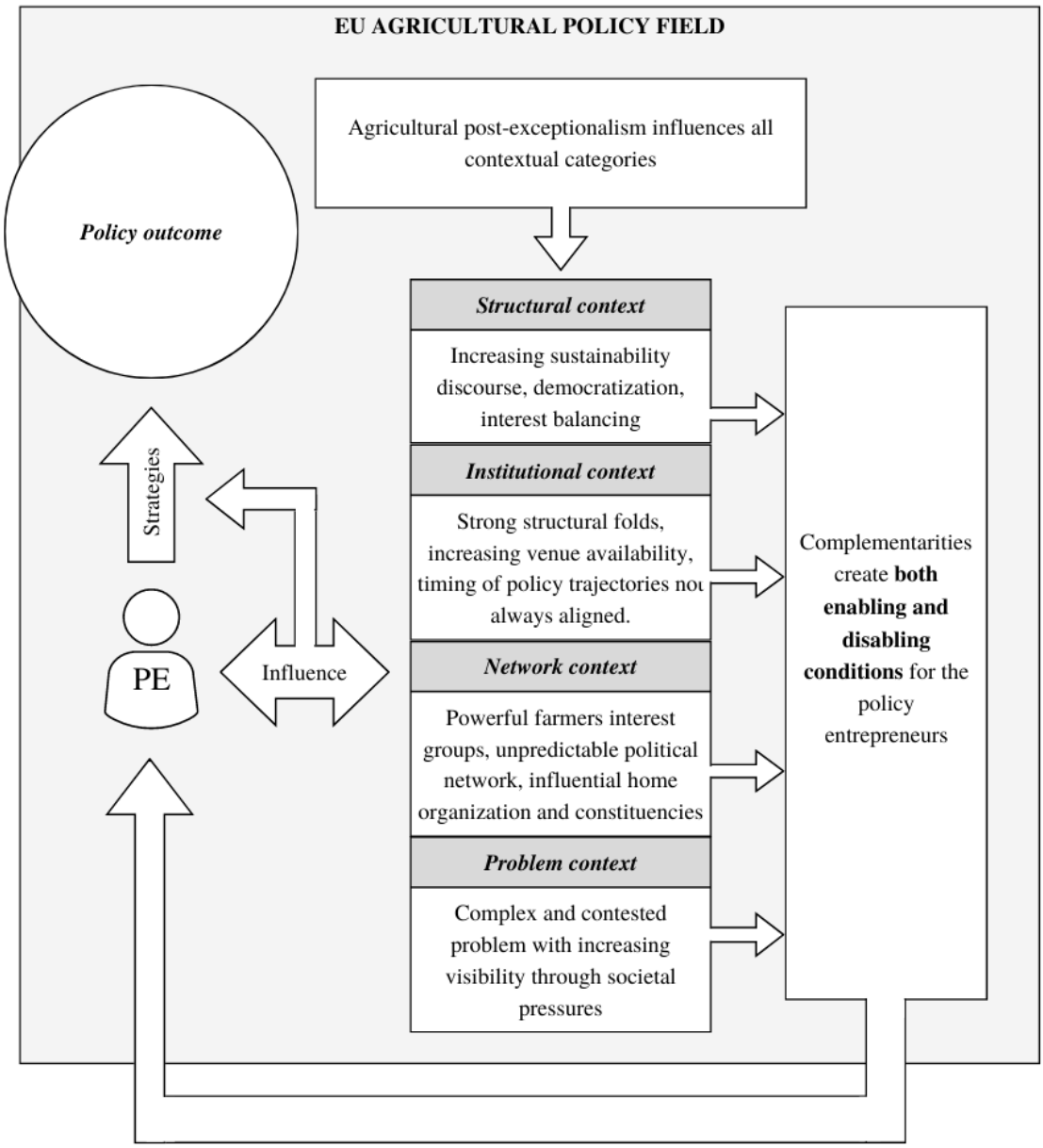


Figure 4. Visual representation of the policy entrepreneur in EU agricultural policy

6.1. Interpretation and implications of results

The categorization of contextual factors into the four categories was done through multiple stages of coding as described in Chapter 3. The categories in part align with Bakir and Jarvis' (2017) conceptualization of context influencing policy entrepreneurs. They distinguished three levels of contextual factors: structural, institutional and agential (Bakir & Jarvis, 2017). Though the structural and institutional categories that Bakir and Jarvis described were quite fitting to the findings from Chapter 4, the framework from this research did depart from their conceptualization for a number of reasons. First, the agential context that Bakir and Jarvis describe were mainly focused on the agency of policy entrepreneurs, rather than the contextual

factors influencing them. Therefore, this category of context was omitted in the framework of Figures 3 and 4. Second, within their three categories, Bakir and Jarvis included network and problem contextual factors. However, given the distinct features and influences of these two context groups that were found in Chapter 4, in this research network and problem context were presented as free-standing categories.

In Chapter 2, an initial number of theories on the contextual factors that influence policy entrepreneurs were discussed. These included the level of governance, presence of rules and other like-minded organizations (Green, 2017), the stage of policy-making in which the entrepreneurs are active, the sector in which they are active, how they relate to others (Petridou & Mintrom, 2021), venue availability, political regime, and national environmental situations (Huitema & Meijerink, 2010). All of these factors are reflected to a certain extent in the results of this research, in contextual factors such as field architecture, field position, interest groups, political system and extant trajectories. Kingdon's description of the context in which policy entrepreneurs work consists of national mood, external events, changes in personnel, and the presence of policy windows (2013). These contextual factors align with the factors presented in Chapter 4: the national mood can be related in a more intangible manifestation to discourse (structure) as well as in a more concrete manifestation to policy audience (network); external events can mean extant trajectories or an increased visibility that results in momentum; changes in personnel translate to staff turnover; the presence of policy windows can result from problem visibility, or manifest as enabling conditions as a result of contextual complementarities. When applying these concepts to the situation in EU agricultural policy these interpretations still stand, with the exception of national mood: Herweg (section 2.1.) as well as the interviewees describe a lack of a universal European ''mood''.

Based on the results in Chapter 5, some speculation regarding the phase of post-exceptionalism in EU agricultural policy can be made. Since the introduction of the Green Deal and increased integration of sustainability in EU policy, sustainability-oriented policy entrepreneurs have perceived to be more supported in their work. This could mean a new phase or advancement in the transition to policy post-exceptionalism. The ''exceptionalist'' network, however, is still quite strong in the form of strong farmer representatives or status-quo representatives and are a main driver of contestation that limits policy entrepreneurs. So, the tension is still there, though from the perspective of the institutional and structural context maybe not as much as Greer observed in the 2013 CAP reform (2017).

6.2. Moving forward

In this research, a SLR as well as semi-structured interviews were used to answer the research questions posed in Chapter 1. The value and limitations of these methodologies are discussed in Chapter 3. The internal validity of the research's results differ between the two methodologies. The selection of SLR articles was done following the PRISMA protocol, a recognized tool for reliable research. This, in addition to the fact that Scopus, one of the biggest databases of academic articles, was used to find and select articles means that the chance that relevant articles were overlooked is minimal. However, only English articles were part of the ultimate analysis, because of the lack of non-English articles in the Scopus database. This means that relevant articles might have been excluded based on their language. Future research may minimize this limitation by using other search engines that include other languages.

The identification and selection of interviewees proved to be more challenging. First, following the snowball sampling as described in Chapter 3, multiple sustainability-oriented policy entrepreneurs were identified. However, not all of them could be reached to schedule an interview. Second, given the number of actors active in the field of EU agriculture, there is a chance that there are policy entrepreneurs active that were not identified – though given the knowledge that policy entrepreneurs are quite public figures, this might not be a major gap. Third, by having a two-way identification of policy entrepreneurs – meaning identification by someone else *and* the policy entrepreneur recognizing themselves in this role – bias from the interviewees was minimized. However, it was still noticeable that some policy entrepreneurs felt uncomfortable calling themselves this, despite displaying entrepreneurial qualities. This could be due to the value put on balancing interests in the EU, making it difficult for people to see the fruits of their individual efforts. This means that future research would be necessary in order to identify and reach more sustainability-oriented policy entrepreneurs in EU agriculture to confirm or nuance the findings presented in this research, such as the added factors *timing* and *home organization*/*constituencies*. This could be done through surveying all sustainability-oriented policy entrepreneurs in the field of EU agriculture (census), following the strategy of Brouwer and Huitema in their research on policy entrepreneurs in Dutch water management (2018).

Chapter 4 presents a SLR of 48 studies from a variety of policy arenas, ranging from EU to municipal levels, and from US to Indonesia. The framework does not dictate the contextual factors influencing all policy entrepreneurs universally; rather, it investigates the potential factors which could be of influence. To see how these contextual factors shape and interact with

policy entrepreneurs, the framework must be applied to a particular case. The results from Chapter 5, consequently, are very much case-specific. The case of EU agricultural policy is an especially unique one, given the observed policy post-exceptionalism. These results therefore cannot be generalized to policy entrepreneurs universally. However, studies that focused on policy entrepreneurship in the EU more broadly have found similar contextual influences as discussed in this research (Béland & Cox, 2016; Bocquillon, 2018; Cox, 2022; Gebhardt & Güntner, 2021; Mukherjee & Giest, 2019; Paris, 2017; Roth, 2011). More research is needed in order to see whether the results from the case of EU agricultural policy and its post-exceptionalist nature can be applied to other (post-)exceptionalist policy areas, inside or outside the EU.

7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As the sustainability challenges that the world is facing are becoming increasingly clear, so does the need for governance systems able to deal with them. Policy change, however, does not just happen, but is driven by policy actors. Policy entrepreneurs as defined by Kingdon are one type of such actors that fill this role description. Their commitment to policy solutions, their strategies as well as their characteristics have been thoroughly studied, and researchers agree that they operate in certain contexts rather than in isolation. However, when it comes to defining what this context actually entails, no consensus has been reached. This research therefore set out to dissect Kingdon's ''primeval policy soup'' – explore the contextual factors that are of influence to the emergence and actions of sustainability-oriented policy entrepreneurs in the field of EU agricultural policy. In light of this, the following research questions were formulated:

General Research Question: What contextual factors influence policy entrepreneurs who advocate for the sustainable development of EU agricultural policy, and to what extent are these factors represented in the current academic debate?

Sub-question 1: What is known in current literature about the contextual factors that influence policy entrepreneurs?

Sub-question 2: Which contextual factors are perceived by policy entrepreneurs to be of influence in their efforts to advance the sustainable development of EU agricultural policy?

Sub-question 3: How do the perceived contextual factors by policy entrepreneurs in EU agricultural policy compare to the findings from current academic insights?

To answer these questions, a SLR along with six semi-structured interviews were conducted. The SLR revealed four categories of contextual factors of influence to policy entrepreneurs: 1) *Structural context*, referring to the broader material and cultural context in which policy entrepreneurs and institutions are embedded; 2) *institutional context*, referring to the formal and informal rules that guide the behaviour of agents; 3) *network context*, referring to the constellation of actors in the policy field where the policy entrepreneur is active and the relationships and interactions between them; 4) *problem context*, referring to the nature and characteristics of the problem that the policy entrepreneur is trying to solve. Besides the influence of these individual contextual factors, literature describes the occurrence of *complementarities*, the interdependence of contextual factors on agential action. Though

conceptually distinguishable, in practice contextual factors are highly interconnected, and the interaction between multiple factors may assist the agential actions of a policy entrepreneur. The interplay between these different aspects is shown in Figure 3 (p. 39).

The interviews with policy entrepreneurs revealed their perceived influences of contextual factors on their work to advance the sustainable development of EU agricultural policy. They perceived to be affected by the structural, institutional, network and problem context as found in literature, with the added contextual factors of *timing* (institutional) and *home organization and constituencies* (network), and less focus on *culture* than described in literature. The structural and institutional context are quite enabling, though it requires compromise and spread of attention and resources due to the increased integration of policy fields and high levels of democratization in the EU. The reliability of the institutional and structural context, however, is counteracted by the unpredictability of the network context due to the powerful farmer interest groups, an erratic political network and constraints by home organization. The problem context of EU agricultural policy, additionally, is contested, visible and characterized by high levels of uncertainty, putting pressure on the policy entrepreneurs and obstructing their success. In the case of EU agricultural policy, complementarities were found that created both enabling and disabling conditions for the policy entrepreneurs – thus elaborating on the findings from Chapter 4 which mainly focused on presence of enabling conditions.

Applying the framework from Chapter 4 to EU agricultural policy (Chapter 5) showcases the way in which the framework adapts to the case it is applied to (Figure 4, p. 59). Chapter 5 reflects many results from Chapter 4, including the challenge of fostering innovation and ambition in democratic systems. EU agricultural policy is a relatively unique case because of the policy post-exceptionalism that has been observed in the field, which permeates through all context categories. However, with the implementation of the EU Green Deal and Farm to Fork strategy, the structural and institutional context seem to be slowly opening up to sustainability-oriented policy entrepreneurs.

Based on the findings of this research as discussed above, a number of recommendations can be made. Over the course of the research, multiple topics of interest for future research became apparent. First, a deeper examination of complementarities between contextual factors and how these influence policy entrepreneurs might prove useful to further understand the interactions between contextual factors and the agency of policy entrepreneurs. Second, this research served as an exploration of perceived contextual factors in EU agricultural policy of influence to policy entrepreneurs – future research could thus expand on the findings presented here by

interviewing more policy entrepreneurs in the field. Moreover, the connection between policy entrepreneurship and policy (post-)exceptionalism is one worth exploring further. Third, through more case-specific research, the framework presented in Chapter 4 could be tested and nuanced: this could be in other EU policy fields, but also in different regions or levels of governance. This includes investigating whether the added factors of timing and home organization and constituencies are specific to the EU agricultural policy case or worth including in the general framework. Finally, the results of this research hint towards a connection between the level of democratization and innovation in a governance system: this connection could be worth exploring to learn how democracies can foster (sustainable) development.

In addition to these theoretical recommendations, some practical recommendations can be made. First and foremost: context matters. Policy entrepreneurs are affected by the context they are in, and conversely can use and shape this context to their advantage. This might not come as a surprise to policy entrepreneurs, but the results from this research might enable them to move around the policy field more intentionally whereas before this knowledge might have been more tacit. In the field of EU agricultural policy, the results from the research show that EU agricultural policy making is becoming increasingly interconnected through the implementation of the European Green Deal and Farm to Fork strategy. Policy entrepreneurs can use this integration of policy fields to their advantage, and find alliances with sustainability-oriented stakeholders in policy fields that before were not connected to EU agriculture. Moreover, there is an increased interest from civil society in sustainability issue which consequently increases the visibility of the problem policy entrepreneurs are targeting. This momentum can be used by sustainability-oriented entrepreneurs to push for more ambitious proposals, again complemented by the EU's overarching sustainability agenda. Lastly, the field of EU agriculture could benefit from the creation of spaces for collaboration and exchange between interest groups from both the sustainability and food-security side of the debate. The policy post-exceptionalism in EU agriculture creates a particularly contested field, no stranger to an us-and-them rhetoric. The creation of a space where stakeholders from both sides of the debate, especially representative organizations and other actors outside the EU institutions, can meet and deliberate could help break this polarizing rhetoric. Policy entrepreneurs could make use of such a venue to build broader coalitions.

The EU agricultural field has a significant impact on global sustainable development. Therefore, if the EU is intent on following up on their claim to take on a leading role in the

world's necessary sustainable transitions, its agricultural policy must change. As this research has shown, there is a number of policy entrepreneurs willing to spearhead this change. By understanding the context in which they work (Figure 4), policy entrepreneurs may use this context to their advantage to enhance their chances of success and contribute to the EU's sustainable development as promised in both Farm to Fork strategy and European Green Deal.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. List of articles used for SLR

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Appendix 2. Interview guide

1. Introductory questions

1.1. Can you tell me about yourself and your position at [organization]?

1.2. How are you/is your work related to the EU agricultural policy?

[Explanation of policy entrepreneurship]

1.3. Is this explanation clear to you?

1.4. Do you identify with this description?

[Explanation of interview structure and contextual factors]

1.5. Is this explanation clear to you?

2. Open questions

2.1. Can you tell me about the activities you have undertaken to include elements of sustainability in EU agricultural policy?

2.2. What is the main external factor that influenced these activities?

[if unclear] Was there anything that hindered or facilitated your activities?

2.3. Are there other factors you can think of?

3. SLR

[Depending on the contextual factors discussed in questions 2.2. and 2.3., in this part of the interviews the remaining contextual factor groups were discussed. If one category was already mentioned, can be skipped here]

3.1. Structural contextual factors are factors that shape the EU as a system. This relates to the political system of the EU, the EU's ideational climate and dominant discourses, as well as the organizational culture and norms and values of the EU.

Can you think of a time when structural context factors influenced your work? In what way did they influence your work?

[if unclear: go over separate context factors]

3.2. Institutional contextual factors refer to the laws, regulations, general ideas that create the ''rules of the game'' in the EU agricultural policy field, or decide what behaviour is

appropriate or possible. The institutional context also influences ‘’where’’ an actor is in the field, and what resources they have available.

> **Can you think of a time when institutional context factors influenced your work? In what way did they influence your work?**
>
> [if unclear: go over separate context factors]

3.3. Network contextual factors refer to the constellation of actors working with EU agricultural policy. It is about both the composition of different groups of actors, as well as the relationships between and within these groups.

> **Can you think of a time when network context factors influenced your work? In what way did they influence your work?**
>
> [if unclear: go over separate context factors]

3.4. Problem contextual factors relate to the nature and characteristics of the problem you are trying to solve.

> **Can you think of a time when problem context factors influenced your work? In what way did they influence your work?**
>
> [if unclear: go over separate context factors]

3.5. Out of all the factors we have discussed, which one(s) do you perceive as the most influential?

3.6. And which one(s) as less influential?

4. Final questions

4.1. Do you know policy entrepreneurs that were/are active in the sustainable development of the CAP that I could reach out to for an interview?

4.2. Do you have any questions for me? Anything that we have not yet discussed but you find important?

[Wrap up]

Appendix 3. Consent form

Consent form MSc Thesis

Dissecting the primeval policy soup – an exploration of contextual factors in EU agricultural policy of influence to policy entrepreneurs.

- Prior to the interview, I have been informed on the nature and purpose of this MSc Thesis. I was able to ask questions, which have been answered to my satisfaction.
- I know that participation is voluntary. I know that I may decide at any point not to participate anymore. During the interview, I may refuse to answer any questions without any consequences.
- I give permission for the recording, transcribing and use of the interview to answer the research questions in this MSc Thesis. I understand that recordings of the interview will be deleted upon completion of the MSc Thesis.
- I understand that extracts from the interview may be used as quotes in the MSc Thesis. The researcher will send these quotes through email for approval.
- I understand that upon completion, this MSc Thesis may be published in the Wageningen University thesis library.
- I understand that upon my request, the researcher will not disclose my name and/or organization in the MSc Thesis.
- I may contact the researcher at any point to seek further clarification and/or information.

I have read and understood the information provided above, and hereby consent to participate in the MSc Thesis research.

Name of participant:

Signature: Date:

I certify that I have honestly and fully informed the participant about the MSc Thesis.

Name of researcher: Justine van den Bergh

Signature: Date:

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Appendix 4. Interviewee information

Name	**Organisation**	**Job title**	**Interviewed on**
Davila Diaz, G.	European Commission, DG Agriculture and Rural Development (AGRI)	Deputy Head of Unit Environmental Sustainability	January 24th 2023
Hajdu, N.	European Liaison Committee for the Agricultural and Agri-food trade (CELCAA)	Secretary General	January 23rd 2023
Matthews, A.*	Trinity College Dublin	Professor Emeritus of European Agricultural Policy	February 21st 2023
Neumann, K.	Permanent representation of the Federal Republic of Germany to the European Union	Food and Agriculture attaché	February 24th 2023
Pérel, S.	European Council of Young Farmers (CEJA)	Policy officer	January 17th 2023
Sas, A.	Permanent representation of the Netherlands to the European Union	Agriculture attaché	January 24th 2023

* Not a policy entrepreneur – the aim of the interview was to reflect and build upon the findings in Chapter 4 and 5, based on Matthews' expertise on EU agricultural policy field.