

MARINKO BANJAC

GOVERNING GREEN CITIZENSHIP IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

**POLICIES, DISCOURSES AND
THE MAKING OF GREEN CITIZENS**



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Making of Green Citizens
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1

INTRODUCTION

When the first outlines of this book were drafted in the opening months of 2024, the green agenda was firmly at the centre of the European Union's (EU) political landscape. The European Green Deal was framed as a new "growth strategy", with the European Climate Pact as its central mechanism for citizen participation, articulating possibilities for (democratic) involvement in the green transition and inviting citizens to take part in what was presented as a historic civilisational transformation. The language of "transition" and "sustainability" prevailed in political communications, academic debates and public discourse. At that moment, the political horizon of the European project appeared to be shaped primarily by ecological imperatives: the promise of decarbonisation, the achievement of climate neutrality by 2050 and the reconciliation of growth with planetary limits. The sense of urgency surrounding action on environmental issues, together with the EU's ambition to serve as a global example, created an atmosphere in which the "green" emerged as a leading normative axis, rather than one policy among many, around which Europe's future was to be imagined and governed.

Yet much changed dramatically during the writing of this book. Europe's geopolitical landscape was transformed. The reordering of European security priorities, also because of Russia's conflict with Ukraine, redirected the Union's political attention towards militarisation, defence cooperation and "energy security" (European Commission, 2025). Narratives of protection, resilience and strategic

autonomy suddenly, almost overnight, overshadowed the discourse of green transformation. The acceleration of rearmament programmes, the strengthening of border protection and the renewed legitimization of the military-industrial complex, at the level of individual states and especially at EU level, mark the current shift in what is regarded as a central concern of government at the European level. Although environmental and climate objectives formally remain present in EU-level documents and discourses (von der Leyen, 2024), the reduction in their political intensity cannot be overlooked. The green agenda is now increasingly subordinated to security imperatives and geopolitical calculations, or is being rearticulated through them.

It may therefore appear that the writing of this book unfolded at an inopportune moment. These transformative processes undoubtedly affected the tone and scope of the book. We initially approached the study of EU green citizenship in the context of the green transition with the conviction that it formed part of a more enduring EU orientation. Yet the research and writing process demonstrated once again the contingency of political reality and the always already mutable character of political constellations. The book therefore also records the considerable flexibility of the EU political space and its continual exposure to different interests, including those of capital. Viewed in this light, it is constantly transformed through the mutually compatible interpenetration, as well as the conflict, of governmental rationalities. The monograph serves as both a reminder and a trace of a recent moment when “green” government was imagined as the horizon of Europe’s future, and as a critical reflection on how quickly that horizon can be redefined.

At the same time, the analyses undertaken and presented in this book remain entirely relevant precisely because they reveal the conditions under which the green agenda operated when it was most dominant. Even when green narratives virtually disappear from the political foreground and from politicians’ repertoires, the underlying logic and instruments they established continue to structure government at the European level in important ways and consequently exert effects at other levels. The book demonstrates that

hegemonic green policies and solutions have never existed outside the economistic logic of capitalism; they have been, and remain, deeply intertwined with it. They exemplify a hegemonic configuration in which “care for the environment and climate” is governed through the same rationalities that sustain extractive capitalism, rationalities that prioritise capital investment, market stability and economic growth as the ultimate coordinates of social order. In this sense, the study offers a reconstruction of a political moment and a critique of the more enduring forms through which power is exercised, green subjects are formed, and our collective future is articulated and organised.

1.1 THE GLOBAL AND EUROPEAN MANTRA: THE IMPERATIVE OF “GREEN” ACTION

On December the 3rd, governments will meet to address the defining issue of our time: climate change. Decisions will be taken that will affect every life on this planet, and for the first time, you personally are invited to participate, because the United Nations is launching a seat: the People’s Seat. [...] [I]t will be placed at the United Nations Climate Change Conference, COP24, and will allow you, and millions around the world, an opportunity to join virtually and speak directly to the decision-makers at this crucial time. This is our opportunity to collectively make a difference, to have our voices heard. Together, we can send a message to the world’s leaders they can’t ignore.

Sir David Attenborough, United Nations ActNow campaign¹

1 The United Nations ActNow campaign, launched at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP24) in December 2018, is a global initiative intended to encourage individual action to combat climate change and promote sustainability. The campaign was introduced through an appeal by Sir David Attenborough as part of the “People’s Seat” initiative. ActNow focuses on raising awareness and encouraging action to address climate change, while emphasising the importance of small everyday actions, such as reducing food waste, conserving energy and choosing sustainable forms of transport, which are expected to help reduce the human impact on the climate and environment. The campaign was based on the use of digital tools, including a dedicated app and social media platforms (United Nations, 2024a).

The European Climate Pact will bring together everyone who wants to take action for our planet. With the Pact, we want to help everyone in Europe take action in their everyday lives, and give everyone the opportunity to get involved in the green transition and inspire each other. When it comes to tackling climate change, anyone can take action, and everyone can contribute.

Frans Timmermans, European Commission Executive Vice-President
for the European Green Deal²

Although delivered in different contexts, the statements made by Sir David Attenborough in connection with the UN People's Seat campaign, which culminated in his address at COP24 and was followed by the launch of the ActNow campaign, and by Frans Timmermans in relation to the European Climate Pact have much in common. They share two basic premises: that climate change is critical on an unprecedented scale and that environmental issues define our time. The language of urgency establishes environmental problems and those associated with climate change as primary concerns requiring responses at global, regional, national and local levels, as well as from every individual. The statements construct a narrative in which addressing climate change is a fundamental element of contemporary life rather than a matter of policy alone.

In these statements, environmental and climate-related issues are presented as virtually universal problems of humanity and therefore, clearly, of us all. Problematisation is a specific operation within formations of power. It involves more than recognising an objective problem

2 In 2020, the European Commission launched the European Climate Pact, inviting people, communities and organisations to take climate action in order to build a greener Europe. The Pact forms part of the European Green Deal and provides a platform for exchanging information and ideas. Its initial areas of focus were green spaces, mobility, buildings and skills. Through a public call, individuals were invited to become Climate Pact Ambassadors and lead climate initiatives, a mechanism discussed later. The Climate Pact as a framework for strengthening green citizenship among the EU population constitutes one of the central themes of this book (European Commission, 2020a).

or series of problems; it also entails the formation, construction, identification, adaptation and, through practices, materialisation of a particular phenomenon or process (Bacchi, 2009, pp. x–xii) that, until a particular moment, did not exist in the sense of a broader awareness of its “reality”, “actuality” or “seriousness”. The two opening statements therefore form part of a broader constellation that establishes the environmental and climate crisis, and the problems associated with them, as universal. Attenborough thus emphasises that decisions taken at the United Nations Climate Change Conference, COP24, will “affect *every* life on this planet” (United Nations, 2018, emphasis added). Timmermans adopts a similar position, defining climate action as an integral component of Europe’s green transition and thereby incorporating environmental sustainability into a broader narrative of contemporary social progress.

The statements emphasise the all-encompassing character of climate change as a global and regional issue. Attenborough’s message foregrounds the global scale of the problem and invites people throughout the world to participate in dialogue and decision-making processes. Timmermans focuses on Europe and emphasises the role of the European Climate Pact in mobilising action at the individual, micro level. The articulation is that, although climate change constitutes a universal challenge, specific local and individual initiatives and particular measures are crucial to addressing its differing effects in different parts of the world.

As already emphasised, both statements generate a sense of urgency by stressing the need for immediate action against climate change. Attenborough’s call to “collectively make a difference” and “to have our voices heard” at a critical moment highlights the urgency of the issue (United Nations, 2018). Timmermans similarly emphasises that individuals must act in their everyday lives and presents the green transition as requiring immediate action from all of us (European Commission, 2020a).

Furthermore, both statements emphasise the crucial role of broad participation in addressing climate change. Attenborough’s call,

encouragement and appeal to the world's citizens to join the UN Climate Change Conference indicate a declared commitment to an inclusive approach to global decision-making. Timmermans's invitation to everyone in Europe to participate in the green transition likewise reflects the conviction that collective action at every level of society is essential. This participatory ethos is central to both statements, suggesting that the struggle against climate change requires the concerted efforts of everyone.

The introductory reflection on these two statements also establishes the substantive orientation of this book. Against the backdrop of an extraordinary proliferation of discourses, policies, mechanisms, programmes and a wide variety of other responses to the global environmental and climate crisis (Harris, 2012), we seek to analyse and interpret the formulation, emergence, establishment and modes of implementation of environmental and climate policies and measures at the European level. Particular emphasis is placed on how the EU articulates and governs its citizens as key actors in the green transition. The analysis centres on the role of EU citizens as “green citizens”, addressed and encouraged through various mechanisms to participate in decision-making processes and in the implementation of policies designed to combat climate change and secure a sustainable future. The book provides insight into the historical conditions of possibility underlying the establishment and current operation of the various mechanisms through which the EU encourages citizen participation, motivates citizens to make an active contribution and, at least at the declaratory level, empowers them to participate in achieving the objectives set out in the European Green Deal (European Commission, 2019a). The European Green Deal currently constitutes the key framework for environmental and climate policy, sustainable growth and the establishment of new forms of governing (Dutu-Buzura, 2021; Navrátil & Grigelová, 2024), with the European Climate Pact as its principal mechanism for governing citizen participation. Within this framework, the governing of citizens will be examined and interpreted as part of the exercise of power at

the EU level (Haahr & Walters, 2004; Shore, 2011). As noted, our central concern is how the mechanisms of the European Climate Pact articulate ideas about environmental and climate problems, the role of citizens in achieving environmental and climate objectives, and the ways in which citizens are encouraged to participate in the green transition.

1.2 KEY DIMENSIONS OF THE ARCHITECTURE OF EUROPEAN UNION ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE POLICIES AS A BASIS FOR THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The statements presented at the beginning of this introduction illustrate how climate change and environmental problems have become established as central issues that must be addressed and governed. Although environmental protection and action on climate change are often understood primarily as global challenges, they have also become, at the level of the European Union, among the principal issues around which concrete policies are developed and implemented (Dupont & Torney, 2021; Rayner et al., 2023). While, as this book also argues, these issues require considerable historical sensitivity and a highly nuanced understanding of the political responses and solutions advanced in these fields, it is first necessary to recognise that the current overarching framework for addressing environmental problems, combating climate change and promoting sustainable development within the European Union is the European Green Deal (European Commission, 2019a), which constitutes one of the central subjects of this monograph.

In the context of climate change and environmental challenges, the European Commission (2019a) presented the European Green Deal as a comprehensive strategy for transforming the European Union into a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy that is simultaneously climate neutral, a goal it aims to achieve by 2050.

The European green transition is primarily defined as a “package of policy initiatives” and measures requiring:

a holistic and cross-sectoral approach in which all relevant policy areas contribute to the ultimate climate objective. The package includes initiatives covering climate, the environment, energy, transport, industry, agriculture and sustainable finance, all of which are closely interconnected (General Secretariat of the Council, 2025).

The manner in which the Green Deal is to be implemented clearly emphasises its urgency and considerable scope, as reflected, among other things, in the mechanisms envisaged for directing environmental policy in the EU. The Green Deal’s comprehensive approach encompasses various dimensions, including resource efficiency, biodiversity protection and sustainable agriculture, while remaining anchored in a hegemonic political narrative consistent with the EU’s broader geopolitical and economic interests: “The transition to climate neutrality will bring significant opportunities, such as the potential for economic growth, new business models and markets, new jobs and technological development” (European Council, 2025).

In this light, the European Green Deal must also be understood in relation to the global context, within which at least three dimensions can initially be highlighted. Cordella and Sala (2022) observe that the European Green Deal is closely connected to global sustainability objectives and that its aims have been formulated on the basis of prevailing narratives of sustainable development and the objectives associated with them. The implementation of the European green transition also entails geopolitical change. In this respect, Leonard et al. (2021) refer to geopolitical transformations that will affect the countries with which the EU maintains economic relations. A third dimension, as several authors emphasise (Vela Almeida et al., 2023; Biresselioglu et al., 2024), is that in the international sphere the EU may also act as a (neo-imperial) “normative power”, extending its norms concerning environmental protection and climate-change prevention to other, so-called third countries.

As already noted, the Green Deal also provides for an implementation plan comprising specific policy measures and concrete legislation. As an introductory example, we may refer to the then-proposed Green Deal Industrial Plan, which aimed to put “Europe’s net-zero industry in the lead” (European Commission, 2023). When presenting the plan, the Commission set out four pillars: a predictable and simplified regulatory environment, advanced through the Net-Zero Industry Act, the Critical Raw Materials Act and reform of the electricity market design; faster access to funding for clean-technology manufacturing in Europe; the development of green and digital skills; and open trade for resilient supply chains (European Commission, 2023). When presenting the industrial plan, Commission President von der Leyen stated:

We have a once in a generation opportunity to show the way with speed, ambition and a sense of purpose to secure the EU’s industrial lead in the fast-growing net-zero technology sector. Europe is determined to lead the clean tech revolution. For our companies and people, it means turning skills into quality jobs and innovation into mass production, thanks to a simpler and faster framework. Better access to finance will allow our key clean tech industries to scale up quickly (European Commission, 2023).

By referring to this concrete example of measures and legislation within the green transition and citing von der Leyen’s statement, we seek to demonstrate the complexity and multidimensionality of solutions that extend across numerous areas and thereby regulate and direct the conduct of economic actors and individuals. Moreover, the emphasis on innovation and technology within the Green Deal indicates a fundamental orientation towards economic growth and job creation in the green economy. Through investment in renewable energy, sustainable transport, energy-efficient buildings and other areas, the EU seeks to promote economic development while reducing environmental impacts, emphasising the economic opportunities offered by the transition to a sustainable future. It is

already possible to recognise that, by imagining sustainability as an economic opportunity, the Green Deal incorporates green policies into a hegemonic capitalist framework as part of a “new economic paradigm” (Wanner, 2015, p. 27).

A key dimension of the European Green Deal for our analysis is the direction of the “green” conduct of EU citizens, with the European Climate Pact serving as the central mechanism (European Commission, 2020a) and therefore as one of the principal subjects of this study. As Timmermans’s argument has already demonstrated, policies, mechanisms and strategic orientations consist of more than formal legal measures in different fields, particularly the economy. They also encompass discourses and practices directed towards individuals, guiding, motivating and encouraging particular forms of conduct and action. In this way, they contribute to shaping how individuals understand their role in the climate crisis and organise their everyday practices.

In the scholarly literature, EU policies concerning the environment and climate change are frequently examined primarily in terms of their regulatory effects on the economy, including industry and agriculture (Lee-Makiyama, 2021). Academic analyses closely examine the effects of EU environmental regulation and legislation on economic sectors and tend to explain how these policies contribute to aligning industrial practices, agricultural policies and strategies, and the broader economic paradigm with sustainability objectives (Pianta & Lucchese, 2020).

Although, as already indicated, the EU’s principal objectives under the Green Deal are articulated predominantly in economic terms, with emphasis placed on achieving climate neutrality by 2050, promoting green innovation and securing a sustainable economic future, the envisaged mechanisms and measures also contain an important element of encouraging EU citizens to become environmentally aware and sustainability-oriented individuals (European Union, 2024c).

This particular orientation towards strengthening the participation of individuals and communities at different levels of the green transition has received less attention in the scholarly literature (although see, for example, Machin & Tan, 2024), despite the importance that the EU attaches to citizen involvement and to promoting and strengthening environmental citizenship for the successful implementation of green policies (Vihersalo, 2017).

Encouraging EU citizens to become environmentally aware and sustainability-oriented individuals involves a series of strategies intended to cultivate a green mindset and promote proactive participation in environmental and climate action (European Commission, 2020a; European Union, 2024c). This dimension of the Green Deal seeks to involve citizens as active participants in the green transition through various educational initiatives, public awareness campaigns and participatory governance mechanisms.

Reflecting on and addressing the “green” measures, mechanisms and practices that the EU establishes, disseminates, encourages and reinforces among its citizens raises numerous questions. These questions must be considered if we are to understand as comprehensively as possible how the EU articulates and promotes green citizenship, the effectiveness of its strategies for public involvement, and the broader implications for environmental government and democracy, as well as how the EU involves, educates and mobilises its population in the name of sustainability and environmental responsibility. They invite a more detailed investigation of the governmental techniques and strategies through which the EU seeks to shape the conduct and behaviour of its citizens (Lawrence, 2020). What forms of subjectivity are established through these practices? How are citizens interpellated as responsible and sustainability-oriented individuals within EU policies, mechanisms and programmes? These questions also require an examination of the particular technologies of power involved, the historical contexts in which they emerged and their broader effects on the formation of green citizenship. Through sustained critical reflection on these dimensions, we can better understand the

heterogeneous ways in which the EU seeks to constitute its citizens as active subjects in the pursuit of a sustainable future and reveal the underlying dynamics of power and epistemic foundations that constitute, or form part of, these processes.

How did the discourse of the environment and climate as specific problems requiring intervention emerge at the European level? This question directs attention towards the historical specificities and contexts that helped shape, while also determining, the conditions of possibility for European-level intervention in climate and environmental matters. Insight into the historical sociopolitical formations that enabled the emergence and development of environmental discourse and policy at the European level is crucial. The purpose is to illuminate the dynamics of power in their interrelation with forms of knowledge and, consequently, the specific rationalities through which climate change and environmental degradation were constituted as problems requiring comprehensive intervention at the European level. We will examine the prevailing narratives and discursive formations that justify the deployment of extensive regulatory frameworks and governmental mechanisms.

What are the EU's specific environmental and climate policies, and under what conditions were they established? The line of inquiry opened by this question involves examining the particular strategies, configurations and governmental technologies defined, shaped and embodied by the European Green Deal and related policies. By situating these policies within their sociopolitical and economic contexts, we seek to reveal how particular constellations of actors, institutional arrangements and forms of knowledge shaped their form. This also requires examining the interaction between EU policies and global commitments and addressing the role of different EU institutions, Member States and other actors in negotiating and consolidating these policies.

How does the EU constitute its citizens as green or environmental citizens? The key to this question is understanding the governmental practices through which the EU shapes the identities of its citizens

in relation to environmental government, responsibility and activism. The central concern is the technologies and techniques of subjectivation embedded in policy documents, official communications and other discursive practices that delineate, represent and mobilise the particular values and forms of conduct promoted by the EU. This question opens an inquiry into how citizens are constituted as subjects who form an integral part of the transition towards sustainability and are responsible for making informed decisions and participating in collective endeavours. By situating this articulation within broader social norms and relations of power, we will examine how the EU narrative corresponds to existing prevailing understandings of citizenship and environmental responsibility.

How does the EU encourage its citizens to participate in environmental and climate action? Building upon the preceding question, investigating the strategies and instruments employed by the EU to promote citizen participation requires a critical examination of programmes such as the European Climate Pact (European Union, 2024c). We will analyse how these mechanisms mobilise a wide range of actors and produce subjects who internalise and enact environmental norms, values and particular forms of conduct. This question will guide our examination of the techniques through which the EU governs the conduct of its citizens and our consideration of the effectiveness of these strategies of involvement. By focusing on the governmental rationalities underlying these initiatives, we will examine how they seek to cultivate a sense of individual and collective responsibility and promote the idea of sustainable development.

1.3 GOVERNMENTALITY AS AN ANALYTICS OF POWER AT THE EUROPEAN LEVEL

Power and the exercise of power

The governance and implementation of environmental and climate policies at EU level, including initiatives, opportunities, (financial)

incentives and guidance directed towards its citizens, is fundamentally an exercise of power. This involves the formulation, adoption and implementation of legislation and rules, as well as the exercise of power over particular domains of sociopolitical life through heterogeneous strategies, arrangements and practices. In this book, we address the research problems and questions outlined above through a Foucauldian analytical approach grounded in governmentality. This enables reflection on, analysis and interpretation of the heterogeneous dimensions of the exercise of power, one of which concerns acting upon individuals (citizens), their actions and conduct, and their relationships with things and with the social and natural environments in which they act (Bröckling et al., 2010; Walters & Tazzioli, 2023). In this context, it is useful first to outline the dimensions of Foucault's conceptualisation of power (Foucault, 1980, 1982, 2001).

One of Foucault's central premises in understanding power is its reversal, or at least its alternative conceptualisation, through the rejection and deconstruction of traditional views. In Foucault's analysis, power is neither straightforwardly hierarchical nor exclusively prohibitive or coercive. He instead describes power as immanent and ubiquitous, intrinsically woven into the fabric of society. For Foucault, "Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere" (Foucault, 1978, p. 93). This ubiquity is characterised by its productive, relational and strategic nature. Power is not a static force; it is in constant motion, producing and being produced within and through particular relations. It is a networked phenomenon that is always connected with resistance, since wherever power exists, so too does the possibility of resistance and counter-currents (Pickett, 1996). This interplay produces a dynamic relationship in which power continually adapts to new conditions and challenges and is thereby constantly transformed.

Another central feature of Foucault's thought on power is the power/knowledge matrix, which captures the mutual reinforcement of power and knowledge within this relationship (Foucault, 1980): "Power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is

no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations" (Foucault, 1995, p. 27). This means that relations of power are established and maintained through knowledge, while knowledge is itself produced within relations of power. It is in relation to this power/knowledge nexus that Foucault theorises discourse. In this book, discourse is likewise understood as a historically situated system of statements, concepts, categories and practices through which particular objects of knowledge are produced, regimes of truth are established and the positions from which subjects can speak and act are delimited.

Moving beyond a general outline of Foucault's thought on power, we can, with a degree of simplification, distinguish three modalities of power that he analyses: juridico-legal mechanisms, disciplinary mechanisms and mechanisms of security (Foucault, 2007, pp. 19–23). These should not be understood as successive stages in which one form of power completely replaces another. Rather, they coexist, interact and are combined in different configurations, although particular historical periods may be characterised by the predominance of one type of mechanism (Foucault, 1978, 1995, 2009). Each operates through a particular relationship between power and knowledge and constitutes its objects and subjects in specific ways. Sovereign power, often associated with the traditional conception of the ruler's power, operates primarily through law, prohibition and the threat or exercise of coercion. It is embodied in legal frameworks and visible public acts of prohibition, restriction or punishment, including physical violence. This form of power rests on formal-legal codifications and the maintenance of order through juridical authority and direct control (Foucault, 1978, 1995). Disciplinary or anatomico-political power focuses on the individual and the body. It is most clearly articulated and actualised in enclosed spaces or institutions such as prisons, schools, barracks and hospitals (Foucault, 1995). Its aim is to normalise and regulate the conduct of individuals, rendering them "docile" and productive. Disciplinary power operates through

spatial organisation, visibility, observation, calculation, examination, regulation and training (Foucault, 1995).

Mechanisms of security are directed primarily towards populations and the management of circulations, probabilities and processes. Rather than prescribing every action directly, they seek to regulate phenomena within an acceptable range by acting upon the conditions under which individuals and populations conduct themselves. Governmentality is closely connected to, but not identical with, these mechanisms. It refers more broadly to the rationalities, forms of knowledge and techniques through which the conduct of individuals and collectivities is directed and populations are rendered governable (Foucault, 2008, 2009). It is in relation to the population as a living reality that questions of biopower and biopolitics become especially important, to which we now turn.

On governmentality (as a modality of power and an analytical perspective)

In his public lectures at the Collège de France in 1978 and 1979, Foucault began to rethink the term “governmentality”. For Foucault, governmentality denotes a range of forms and modes of action and fields of practice aimed at directing individuals and collectivities in complex ways (Foucault, 2009). The introduction of the concept of governmentality was conceived as a necessary critique of conventional understandings of power (Foucault, 1997, p. 154). Foucault analytically traced the formation of this modality through a genealogy, describing and interpreting it as a highly specific modality whose development began in Europe in the sixteenth century.

In these lectures, Foucault developed a genealogy of the modern state and emphasised the role of rationality in shaping the “art” of governing. He traced the emergence of pastoral power (Foucault, 2009; Ojakangas, 2005), an individualising modality oriented towards the welfare of each member of the flock, which stood apart from the territorial and juridical rationality of sovereignty and was subsequently absorbed into and reworked by the reason of state. He

then turned to the modern rationalities of liberalism and political economy, in which government came to concern itself less with how to govern than with how “not to govern too much” (Foucault, 2008, pp. 295–296).

The concept of governmentality was central to his new theoretical orientation. It introduced a new dimension into his analysis of power, enabling him to examine relations of power from the perspective of the “conduct of conduct” (Foucault, 1982). Power thus concerns activities undertaken by a range of authorities, actors and agencies seeking to shape the conduct of individuals, communities and populations by influencing their desires, interests, aspirations and beliefs (Dean, 2010, p. 18).

This concerns both the ways in which a series or multiplicity of actors, institutions and agencies influence and direct the actions of subjects, and the ways in which individuals act upon and direct themselves, exercising power over themselves. The significance of governmentality in Foucault lies in its mediating function: it connects power and subjectivity and makes it possible to examine how techniques of power or governing are linked to “technologies of the self” (Foucault, 1988b, 1993), and how forms of the exercise of power inherently involve technologies and techniques through which individuals act upon themselves (Foucault, 1993, p. 203).

Although technologies of the self are an important element in the operation of power, Foucault does not conceptualise the exercise of power only at the individual level. The dimension of the population as a whole is equally important: power is directed both at individuals and their conduct and at the population more generally (Foucault, 2009). The population became an object of knowledge and a site for the exercise of power, with power operating as a means of directing the conduct of subjects through the science of political economy, an expanding administrative apparatus, experts and expert practices such as censuses, statistics and reports (Foucault, 2003). The government of the population became possible through technical programmes that emerged from coordination among forms of knowledge, domains of

expertise, decentralised sites of power, apparatuses and technologies. The conditions under which bodies lived, rather than the body in itself, became objects of knowledge and power. This encouraged governmental concern with securing welfare through attention to health, sanitation, births, mortality and related matters (Foucault, 2009, p. 105). In this light, governmentality as the exercise of power within a liberal regime must also be understood as focused on life and on the biological dimensions of populations and individuals. Foucault termed this biopower, which is examined in greater detail in the following subsection.

At the centre of the art of government is “a sort of complex of men and things” (Foucault, 2009, p. 96), in which power must address the relations, connections and complex interdependencies among factors such as wealth, resources, means of subsistence, and territory with its borders, qualities, climate, fertility and so forth (Foucault, 2009, p. 96). In this light, Foucault’s analysis can be understood as foregrounding the relationships among the means, ends, practices and constitutive forms of knowledge of power: political rationalities (forms of knowledge and expertise that render things and people thinkable), techniques of power (including programmes, instruments, tactics, technologies, devices, calculations, apparatuses and documents that actualise mentalities of government) and the consequent constructed modes of subjectivation of individuals or collectivities (Sheenal, 2012, p. 22).

Drawing on Foucault’s insights, the field of governmentality studies developed, shaped significantly by scholars such as Rose (1996), Miller and Rose (2008) and Dean (2010), who established governmentality as a distinct field and analytical perspective, or analytics of power. Governmentality studies investigate mechanisms that direct, encourage, influence and govern the actions and conduct of people, whether individuals or groups. This analytical perspective is primarily grounded in five methodological principles (Bröckling et al., 2010). First, governmentality studies do not operate through dichotomies such as power and subjectivity, state and society, structure

and agency, or ideas and practices. They instead seek systematic connections between forms of rationality and technologies of power, encompassing political programmes, everyday practices and modes of self-formation, as well as the significance of knowledge production and its relationship to mechanisms of power. Second, this perspective follows the principle of an “ascending analysis of power” (Foucault, 2003, p. 30), beginning with local patterns of rationality and governmental practice and focusing on micropractices whose connection, systematisation and homogenisation make it possible to describe macro-phenomena. Third, governmentality studies open an epistemological-political field that Foucault defined as a “politics of truth” (Foucault, 1997). This entails examining the discursive procedures, activities, interventions, speaking positions and institutional mechanisms through which claims to “truth” are produced and shaped, as well as the effects of power associated with these truths (Bröckling et al., 2010). Fourth, this research perspective emphasises the technological dimension of power. Here, technology encompasses technical artefacts, strategies of social engineering and technologies of the self. It refers to arrangements of mechanisms, data networks, recording and visualisation systems, and procedural means through which individuals and collectives shape one another’s conduct or their own (Bröckling et al., 2010). Fifth, governmentality studies focus on an analytics of the political. In contrast to political sociology or political science, which take their objects as given, this perspective examines how the domain of the political is produced. It investigates how divisions and distinctions are established, for example between public interests and the private sphere, how problems are constituted as political (Bacchi, 2009), and how subjects are invoked as autonomous, emancipated and responsible citizens within technologies of government whose effects unfold across the domains of the state, society and economy (Bröckling et al., 2010).

Biopower and eco-governmentality

As already emphasised, biopower designates the modern organisation of power around life, operating through two interconnected poles: the

disciplining of individual bodies and the regulation of populations (Foucault, 1978, 2003; Genel, 2006). Governmentality and biopower are closely related, but they identify different analytical dimensions. Governmentality concerns the rationalities and techniques through which the conduct of individuals and collectivities is directed, whereas biopower concerns forms of power that take life and its processes as their object. For the purposes of our analysis, biopolitics refers more specifically to the population-oriented and regulatory pole of biopower.

[The] power over life evolved in two basic forms; these forms were not antithetical, however; they constituted rather two poles of development linked together by a whole intermediary cluster of relations. One of these poles [...] centered on the body as a machine: its disciplining, the optimization of its capabilities, the extortion of its forces, the parallel increase of its usefulness and its docility, its integration into systems of efficient and economic controls, all this was ensured by the procedures of power that characterized the disciplines: an anatomo-politics of the human body. The second, formed somewhat later, focused on the species body, the body imbued with the mechanics of life and serving as the basis of the biological processes: propagation, births and mortality, the level of health, life expectancy and longevity, with all the conditions that can cause these to vary. Their supervision was effected through an entire series of interventions and regulatory controls: a biopolitics of the population. The disciplines of the body and the regulations of the population constituted the two poles around which the organization of power over life was deployed (Foucault, 1978, p. 139).

As Muller (2011) observes, this passage from *The History of Sexuality* (Foucault, 1978) is one of the key passages for understanding Foucault's conception of biopower. Central to it is the distinction between two interconnected poles through which power takes hold of life. Anatomo-politics acts upon individual bodies, seeking to discipline, optimise and render them useful and productive. Biopolitics operates at the level of the population by regulating processes such

as propagation, birth, mortality, health, life expectancy and longevity. Biopower therefore concerns both the formation and administration of individual bodies and the regulation of the biological processes of populations. It simultaneously individualises and totalises, linking interventions into individual capacities and conduct with strategies directed towards collective life (Wang, 2015, p. 321).

Foucault thus connects the exercise of power, its foundations and effects with the question of, and concern for, life at the level of both the individual and the population as a whole. In doing so, he establishes, at least indirectly, a connection between power and the natural or biological. This also opens the question of the relationship between society and the natural environment and of the exercise of power within that relationship, meaning that his work engages with these issues. From a historical perspective, Foucault reflected on the reach and domains of power, including “the territory with its borders, qualities, climate, dryness, fertility [...]” (Foucault, 2009, p. 96). For Foucault, the effects and materialisations of power within the human-environment relationship were significant. The crucial question is therefore how power operates in this respect and how it encompasses heterogeneous elements.

It was precisely in relation to this relationship and its political character, at the intersection of governmentality studies and political ecology, that these conceptions underwent significant development (Escobar, 1996; Fletcher, 2010). Leonardi and Pellizzoni (2023) provide an overview of the application of governmentality as an analytical approach, observing that its relevance to environmental questions began to be considered during the 1990s, particularly through the work of Timothy Luke (1995a). Luke introduced the concept of “environmentality” to explain new forms of the exercise of power associated with the government of environmental matters. His central concern was how “discourses of nature, ecology, or the environment, as disciplinary articulations of ‘eco-knowledge’, might be reinterpreted as efforts to generate systems of ‘geo-power’ over, but also within and through, Nature for the governance of modern

economies and societies” (Luke, 1995a, p. 57). Several years later, Luke (1999) developed this argument further and used the term “green governmentality” to articulate a specific modality of the exercise of power oriented towards environmental and climate-related issues. Importantly, he argued that the ecological regime “crystallises”, rather than radically transforms, the relationships among power, population and political economy (Leonardi & Pellizzoni, 2023). Environmental movements and the discourse of sustainability occupy a central position within such a regime, through which the government of nature becomes increasingly evident in the identification of limits to exploitation and the incorporation of human activity into ecological systems. Éric Darier (1996) develops this thesis further by arguing that a governmentality perspective can make an important contribution to the study of environmental policies and their relationship to knowledge. In Foucauldian terms, he maintains that “ecology also spoke a language of truth” (Darier, 1999, p. 4). Another author who has analytically examined the exercise of power through and within environmental and climate-related issues is Paul Rutherford (1994). He identified a close connection between biopolitics and ecology and emphasised that expert and scientifically grounded advice, or “regulatory science”, is crucial to the establishment of “environmental governmentality” (P. Rutherford, 1994). Rutherford regards this as an important articulation of the biopolitical character of contemporary governmental rationality.

Environmental discourses are therefore a central concern for these authors, who demonstrate that contemporary practices of power must also be understood in relation to environmental questions. In doing so, they extend Foucault’s focus on human life and the effects of the (social) sciences upon it to life as a whole (Leonardi & Pellizzoni, 2023). Stephanie Rutherford likewise foregrounds this dimension when she directs attention to “the ways that the truth about the environment is made, and how that truth is governed”, particularly in the context of environmental crises (S. Rutherford, 2007, p. 295).

Sébastien Malette (2009) identifies three domains in which

governmentality as an analytical framework can be extended into “eco-governmentality”, or “green governmentality”. The first, historical in orientation, focuses on the examination of the historical contexts and conditions of possibility (Foucault, 2002) of a new rationality of government or exercise of power, in which environmental concern is closely connected to economic expansion and to other key elements through which sociopolitical systems, societies or populations, and the individuals within them are governed. The second focuses on the historical relationship between environmental concern and the emergence of particular forms of knowledge, such as statistics and other methods for the “mathematisation” of nature, which have significant normative effects on the (self-)perception and conduct of subjectivities within particular societies. From the perspective of our analysis, it is therefore important to recognise that Foucault’s analytics of power illuminates how power produces knowledge and truth, while expert and scientific knowledges enable, encourage and shape the government of the environment in relation to a particular population or populations, including at the European level in our case. The third orientation of eco-governmentality that is important to our analysis concerns identifying and analysing the direction and government of populations and individuals, namely green citizens, in the context of environmental problems. The formations and forms of green citizenship, and the ways in which green citizens are governed, are discussed in the following chapter. At this point, however, it is essential to recognise that green or environmental citizenship, together with other dimensions of environmental and climate issues, is also addressed and governed through policy at the European level. In developing our analytical framework, the crucial question is therefore how governmentality enables us to think about and analytically grasp policies and their formations.

Governmentality as a critical analytics of (green) policy

Conceptually, mainstream political science has traditionally focused policy analysis, and the analysis of the processes through which

policies are formulated, adopted and implemented, on the activities of the state and its associated institutions. From this perspective, the aim is to understand how the state apparatus and political actors interact to produce public action in a particular field (see John, 2012; Fischer et al., 2015). Yet, in light of Foucault's premises concerning the operation of power, this perspective is problematic because it presupposes clear centres of power and a precisely defined process through which policies are constituted (Bacchi, 2009).

The study of policy from a governmentality perspective must necessarily investigate what is conventionally perceived as policy's "external domain", since this "outside" is equally constitutive of policy, while the boundary between inside and outside is itself problematic. Rather than treating policies solely as instruments of power, the ubiquity of power relations requires that they be understood as inherent in a broader context and in specific microsociopolitical contexts, and as connected to a particular mode of government. Policies form part of a liberal technocratic rationality of government in which the state, or other governmental entities such as the EU, manages, regulates and governs problems through policy (Bacchi, 2023). This perspective shifts attention from treating problems as self-evident to examining how they are problematised. An analysis informed by governmentality thus foregrounds problematisations themselves, rather than presumed problems. The issue is not a matter of different interpretations of policy categories such as "the environment", "climate change" or "biodiversity loss". The objects of inquiry are the conceptualisations or problematisations of these matters that appear in governmental programmes and policies and thereby affect the formation of subjectivities and lives. The analytical project becomes one of identifying the "thought" or forms of knowledge that support particular governmental problematisations, tracing their genealogy and considering their political consequences (Bacchi, 2023, p. 56).

Policies are frequently guided and justified by ideas, theories and forms of knowledge originating outside the political sphere. Policy analysis must therefore extend its field of inquiry beyond

traditional political phenomena to encompass other domains, such as expert organisations or complexes of scientific and professional knowledge. Identifying particular styles of problematisation, which may be understood as “networks of intelligibility” or “interpretative networks” (Castel, 1994), provides insight into the operation of government. These styles of problematisation are conceptualised as fluid and changing modes of thought that nevertheless serve as useful indicators of the specific operation, direction, strategic orientation and objectives of power.

An analytics of power in the Foucauldian tradition is concerned with more than presenting emerging forces or institutional structures. It focuses on analysing the specific conditions under which particular entities emerge, exist and change (Dean, 2010, p. 1; Foucault, 1991). The emphasis is placed on the heterogeneity of authorities and actors seeking to regulate conduct; the diversity of strategies, apparatuses and technologies used in regulation; the conflicts among them; and the ways in which such struggles mark the present (Rose, 1999).

Another exceptionally important aspect of the analytics of government is the particular attention it gives to how the exercise of power involves the production of specific forms of subjectivity and identity, including citizenship (Abowitz & Harnish, 2006; Dean, 2010). Bacchi (2023, p. 60) emphasises that diverse techniques of power, originating from different sources, act upon bodies, minds and wills so that individuals, groups and wider collectivities become governable and capable of being directed, while also allowing or even encouraging them to understand themselves as free (Rose, 1999). These techniques, or processes of subjectivation, form diverse communities and individuals in ways that lead them to constitute themselves as self-governing subjects who voluntarily submit to specific rationalities (Lorenzini, 2023). Governmentality therefore explicitly indicates that the production of subjectivities should be understood as enabling and simultaneously restricting possible modes of existence, frameworks of action and so forth, rather than as a repressive strategy or series of practices. In this book, we will

accordingly read EU policies in terms of their orientation towards the production of subjectivities, namely environmental EU or European citizens who are encouraged to adopt particular ideas, values, norms and forms of “appropriate” conduct, while also being constrained and framed in relation to what is permissible, intelligible and acceptable, and what is not.

1.4 METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The methodological orientation of this monograph follows directly from its theoretical framework, which is grounded in Foucault’s analytics of power (Dean, 2010; Deacon, 2002; Hook, 2007) and in the concept of (eco-)governmentality, theoretically framed in the preceding part of the introduction. This theoretical and methodological orientation underpins the research questions and the manner in which they are examined through analysis. At the outset of this methodological section, it is useful to clarify what the study does not seek to do. It does not attempt to identify causal laws or universal patterns, nor does it seek to formulate normative prescriptions concerning environmental policy or citizenship. Its central intention is instead to consider how particular ideas, rationalities and practices have shaped what can be thought and done in the name of environmental protection, sustainability and green citizenship in the EU. It therefore operates within an interpretative, post-positivist and critical epistemological horizon in which knowledge, including its production, and power are understood as inseparable and mutually constitutive.

Another important methodological premise concerns the conceptualisation of power. As demonstrated earlier in this introduction, and in accordance with Foucault, we understand power neither as something that can be possessed nor solely as a structure of domination, but as a relational and productive force. Power operates through the production of truths, subjectivities, institutions and fields of visibility; it creates the reality it seeks to govern. From

this perspective, environmental and climate policies are not neutral responses to objective ecological problems. They are themselves forms of government, specific ways of acting upon life and the population. Historically situated sciences, forms of knowledge and rationalities make this possible. As an analytical perspective, the analytics of power enables us to examine how government is exercised through numerous, more or less deliberate programmatic forms and through materialised discourses embodied in a wide range of practices. Such an analytics enables reflection on how individuals and populations are directed towards acting freely in ways aligned with particular political, economic and moral assumptions and objectives. In the context of environmental government, this involves analysing the techniques through which subjects are encouraged and directed towards particular forms of action and conduct.

The methodological approach employed in this study is an analytics of power grounded in, and composed of, elements of genealogical, discourse and dispositif analysis (Bailey, 2013; Caborn, 2007; Hook, 2007; Saar, 2002, 2008; Schrift, 1994). Genealogy makes it possible to examine how environmental, and later “green”, government emerged and changed from the post-war period to the present. In this genealogical component, we trace historical contingencies and transformations through which environmental issues were constituted as matters of political concern and became objects of interventions of power at the European level, rather than following a linear development alone. Discourse analysis enables the identification of specific rules that make certain statements and narratives about the environment possible, legitimate and authoritative, while excluding others as meaningless, inappropriate, inadequate, untrue and so forth. Finally, dispositif analysis connects the discursive level with material and institutional arrangements, including laws, agencies, programmes, technologies and participatory mechanisms through which environmental government is exercised and produces effects. Together, these three analytical orientations allow the study to encompass both the historical conditions of possibility and the contemporary operation of the green regime in the EU.

Methodologically, the empirical focus of the study is the EU as a political and institutional formation, approached through an understanding of European integration as a framework operating through distinctive forms of knowledge, law and government (Haahr & Walters, 2004; Haas et al., 2022). The corpus consists of publicly accessible policy documents, treaties, communications, speeches and institutional publications, together with an extensive corpus of written profiles of European Climate Pact Ambassadors. These materials are not treated as objective reflections of a particular reality, but as materialisations of discourses and practices through which power is exercised: they define problems, establish fields of visibility, presuppose and encourage forms of conduct, and express prevailing moral positions and ideas of political responsibility.

Our analytical and methodological framework is also structured through the concept of problematisation, understood as a critical analytical moment of reflecting on how particular matters came to be understood as problems requiring governing and regulation. Our orientation is therefore not to treat climate change or environmental degradation, for example, as given phenomena. The starting premise is that such political phenomena, constituted as realities, also become domains that must be “regulated” and governed. Each chapter has a particular analytical focus of problematisation and examines how political rationalities were articulated in relation to specific problems, which forms of knowledge support them, which institutional and legal instruments give them effect and make them possible, and which forms of citizenship and citizen participation are simultaneously articulated and constituted. The aim is to demonstrate that prevailing forms of environmental governance and citizenship are historically situated configurations of power/knowledge, rather than inevitable responses to ecological crisis.

The research design follows an interpretative and iterative process of reading, analysing and synthesising a broad range of texts. Methodologically, it is important to emphasise that the analysis did not employ a rigid coding system. Instead, analytical attention was

guided by conceptual sensitivity to the key dimensions of eco-governmentality: problematisations, rationalities, technologies and subjectivities. Within each textual corpus, attention is directed to how problems are defined and delimited, which logic renders them intelligible and governable, which instruments and technologies are mobilised to act upon them, and which subjectivities or subject positions are articulated, whether desired or required, in the process. These dimensions are never isolated; they are understood as interdependent and mutually formative. The analytical process therefore moves between close readings of individual documents and broader synthetic interpretation across time and institutional contexts.

The genealogical component of the study, developed primarily in Chapter 3, traces the historical formation of environmental government in Europe from the post-war period to contemporary contexts. The analysis reconstructs how different problematisations, including industrial pollution, sustainable development and the compatibility of the market and the environment, emerged, stabilised and were subsequently transformed. It identifies the rationalities that guided action within European integration processes during each of the periods identified, from early technocratic regulation and environmental government to neoliberal and innovation-oriented government in the twenty-first century. Our genealogical reconstruction is based on close readings of treaties, Environmental Action Programmes, major strategies such as the Lisbon Strategy and Europe 2020, and key institutional developments such as the establishment of the European Environment Agency. Although we identify certain transformative processes and central “major” moments during the integration process, our aim is not to produce a linear history. It is to reveal the heterogeneous and contingent processes through which the environmental domain became a central site of European eco-governmentality.

The analysis of the European Green Deal in Chapter 4 builds upon the preceding genealogy by examining the contemporary configuration of green government at the European level. The Green

Deal is approached as a *dispositif* comprising a complex assemblage of discourses, legal frameworks, economic instruments, participatory civic practices and mechanisms. The analysis focuses on the discursive and institutional process through which the Green Deal was announced, presented by the Commission, debated in the European Parliament and politically reinforced by the European Council's endorsement of the 2050 climate-neutrality objective. These moments are critically understood as sites at which the rationalities of green growth, innovation, competitiveness and social justice are negotiated and stabilised. The chapter also analyses how this rationality is actualised through objectives, standards, funding instruments and new forms of citizen participation. Attention is given to how the Green Deal defines the role of citizens, both as beneficiaries and as actors who enact the green transition. This also directs attention to the formation of particular technologies of the self and to how these shape political objectives further by translating them into practices capable of materialisation at the individual level.

The final analytical orientation, developed in Chapter 5, concerns the European Climate Pact, which is examined as a participatory technology of power that extends the rationalities of the Green Deal into citizens' everyday practices. Analytically, the Climate Pact is understood as operating through "soft power", as a framework that directs EU citizens towards acting as green subjects through recognition, the encouragement of belonging, networking and moral responsibility. Its most visible element, the network of European Climate Pact Ambassadors, provides a unique empirical insight into how the EU promotes particular forms of green subjectivity. The analysis draws on an extensive collection of 839 ambassador profiles from 27 EU countries. We read these profiles as micro-sites for the formation of subjectivities through which individuals express their identities, motivations and understandings of environmental responsibility. The analytical procedure follows a heuristic approach (Hajer, 2002; Thoma, 2017) organised around four central questions: how each text constructs a particular theme, what explanations it

offers, which categories it employs and what solutions it proposes. This heuristic is supplemented by a Foucauldian interpretation attentive to the rationalities, technologies of the self and moral registers permeating the texts. The analysis identifies recurrent patterns and types of green subjectivity embedded within the broader rationalities of European environmental government.

Throughout the book, analytical rigour is secured by maintaining transparency in data selection, reflexivity in interpretation and consistency between theoretical concepts and empirical analysis. Documents were selected through a careful process based on their institutional relevance, temporal significance and role in shaping the field of “green” government. All materials are publicly accessible. Interpretation was conducted through an iterative and reflexive process: initial readings generated analytical notes that provided the basis for subsequent rounds of interpretation.

1.5 STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

The book is structured as a gradual analytical reconstruction of green discourses and practices concerning citizens within processes of European integration. It combines a genealogical overview of European environmental government with an empirical analysis of two key configurations, the European Green Deal and the European Climate Pact. It seeks to move analytically through a succession of problematisations, structures of knowledge, dispositifs and technologies of power that constitute the figure of the “green European citizen” and the practices associated with it.

Chapter 2 examines the relationship between classical conceptions of citizenship and contemporary formulations required and conditioned by environmental crisis. We identify the central emphases of the liberal and republican traditions, including rights, duties, action grounded in the idea of virtue and the common good, and compare them, at least to some extent, with the specific characteristics of EU citizenship. This is followed by an articulation of the concept of green

citizenship, ranging from normative typologies, including liberal, republican and cosmopolitan approaches, to critical perspectives that problematise depoliticisation, the individualisation of responsibility and economistic reasoning about sustainability. The perspective of eco-governmentality introduced at the end of the chapter shifts these debates from questions of status and participation towards technologies of the (green) self. This entails examining the internalisation of environmental norms, the formation of everyday practices such as consumption, mobility and energy use, and the ways in which institutional architectures, numerous strategies and concrete practices of power direct the self-government of subjects.

Chapter 3 is structured as a genealogical analysis of the development of European environmental government and the origins of policies that gradually made possible the formation of “green European citizenship”. It focuses on how the European Community, and later the Union, constituted the environment as a political and governmental domain through successive historical phases. The chapter traces the movement from early sectoral measures adopted during the 1960s, through the emergence of a Community environmental policy in 1972–1973, to its consolidation during the 1970s and 1980s and the introduction of its first explicit Treaty legal basis in 1987. It also examines how ideas of public awareness, individual responsibility and, gradually, citizen participation began to emerge during this period. It then analyses institutional and discursive continuities and particular shifts associated with the Maastricht and Lisbon Treaties, as well as the role of the Environmental Action Programmes, the White Paper on European Governance and the Europe 2020 strategy. We demonstrate how apparatuses of knowledge, rationalities and governmental mechanisms formed through these processes, transforming and articulating citizens as “green” subjects. These are subjects of the sustainable transition positioned as its bearers, co-creators and responsible participants in the European green project.

Chapter 4 focuses on the European Green Deal as the central contemporary framework for governing environmental and climate

issues in the European Union and as a mechanism for shaping and directing “green citizens”. The central question is how the Green Deal operates as a governmental rationality, and it is therefore examined as a specific mode of thinking, organising and exercising power that connects environmental concern, economic growth and technological development through an economistic logic. The chapter first examines the epistemic and political-economic foundations of the Green Deal, demonstrating how environmental responsibility is situated within broader discourses of competitiveness, innovation and sustainable modernisation. It then presents the process through which the Green Deal was adopted, with particular attention to debates within EU institutions and the roles of leading political actors such as Ursula von der Leyen and Frans Timmermans, who articulated through it a vision of European transformation and active green citizenship. Particular attention is given to the substantive architecture of the Green Deal, including its key fields of action and the legal, financial and institutional mechanisms that enable its implementation. The chapter also examines how these strategic documents construct the citizen as an active and responsible subject who contributes to the transition towards a climate-neutral society by changing everyday practices and consumer choices and by participating in green initiatives.

Chapter 5 analyses the European Climate Pact as a key mechanism for implementing the Green Deal and an instrument for the direct government of green citizenship in the European Union. Its central premise is that the Pact constitutes a particular articulation of knowledge, policies and practices grounded in eco-governmentality as a modality of power, whose purpose is to mobilise individuals, communities and organisations to participate actively in achieving defined environmental and climate objectives. The chapter first traces the emergence and political genealogy of the idea of the Pact, highlighting the role of Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, who publicly presented it as a response to environmental and social challenges and as a means of involving citizens in the “green

transition". This is followed by an analysis of the Commission's official communication on the Climate Pact, which defines its purpose, structure and participatory mechanisms. The second part of the chapter interprets the initial promotional event marking the launch of the Pact, analysing the speeches, symbolic gestures and narratives that reveal how an imaginary of the active, morally responsible and participatory green citizen is formed. Particular attention is given to the role of education, presented within the Pact as a key mechanism for forming environmentally aware subjects, and to the Climate Pact Ambassador mechanism, analysed as a relatively innovative technology of power for mediating European values, disseminating sustainable practices and consolidating a sense of personal responsibility for climate and environmental action.

The concluding chapter synthesises the book's principal findings and situates them within the broader discussion of the relationship between environmental government, citizenship and power in the European Union. Drawing on the genealogical reconstruction of European environmental policy and the analyses of the European Green Deal and European Climate Pact, we demonstrate how green citizenship has taken shape as a specific formation of power that simultaneously includes, empowers and directs citizens. Particular attention is given to the ways in which environmental responsibility is translated into individual practices, participatory mechanisms and technologies of the self through which environmentally responsible subjects are formed. The conclusion therefore interprets green citizenship as one of the central forms of contemporary governing at the European level, operating through the interplay of knowledge, participation, self-regulation and normalisation, and raising important questions about the limits of political autonomy, democratic participation and environmental action in the EU.

2

THE CONCEPT OF GREEN CITIZENSHIP

Since our central focus is the analysis and reflection on the establishment and operation of political mechanisms, strategies, practices and discourses through which green citizens are governed in the context and name of the EU environmental and climate agenda, it is appropriate to examine the semantic dimensions of this concept in greater depth. A thorough understanding of the contemporary dynamics, discourses, practices, modes of government and effects of green citizenship requires engagement with its conceptual foundations and with the different meanings associated with the idea. Green citizenship did not emerge *ex nihilo*, nor does it exist in isolation. It is rooted in, and takes shape through, a complex interweaving of pre-existing concepts and practices that have developed over time.

The purpose of this chapter is to reflect on these semantic dimensions and to consider how they contribute to the articulations and practices of evolving environmental and climate government at the EU level, as well as at other levels. To establish a comprehensive conceptual framework, the chapter examines several of the most important classical conceptualisations of citizenship, together with EU citizenship, which developed from these classical foundations. This is crucial for tracing the development of environmental or green government at the European level and, concurrently, the perceptions

and practices of green citizenship, since it allows us to understand its specific characteristics in relation to broader conceptions of citizens' rights and duties. On this basis, we subsequently draw on the reflections of various authors to demonstrate how environmental or green citizenship may be understood. At the end of the chapter, we situate the concept of green citizenship within our theoretical framework of eco-governmentality, thereby adding a further element to the analytical apparatus employed in the study.

As numerous authors observe (Isin, 2002; see, for example, Young, 1989), citizenship is an exceptionally heterogeneous concept that cannot be captured by a single definitive definition. It is a point of multiplicity, a term imbued with a rich structure of meanings and interpretations that change and are modified according to the social, political and historical context in which it is articulated. The contents of citizenship are not fixed. They are repeatedly contingent, produced through the dynamic interplay of sociopolitical formations, norms, values, power relations and discourses, which makes citizenship the subject of continuing academic debate.

Genealogies of citizenship (Heater, 2004; Isin, 2002) reveal a complex history that cannot be charted in linear terms. The concept of citizenship has undergone continuous transformations from the ancient Greek polis³ to the modern nation-state and the age of globalisation. This already indicates the variability of human societies, their political arrangements and systematisations, and the resulting rearticulations of citizenship. In the contemporary period, marked by processes of globalisation (Held & McGrew, 2000), new conceptualisations of citizenship have emerged that extend beyond the traditional conceptual limitations of states and territorial boundaries (Delanty, 2000). Concepts such as cosmopolitan citizenship

3 Other historical contexts, both geographically and temporally, can and must also be understood as possible "starting points" when considering the question of "origins".

(Linklater, 1998) and global citizenship (Tully, 2014) have become established primarily at the level of knowledge. Through them, the interconnectedness and interdependence of the world are frequently emphasised as defining elements in the rearticulation of collective and individual forms of belonging. These concepts therefore challenge the conventional paradigm of the nation-state and the citizenship associated with it, while articulating a more inclusive and expansive understanding of civic belonging.

Of central importance to our analysis is the fact that growing awareness of the limits to economic growth, the problems associated with the unrestrained exploitation of natural resources, and the harmful effects of human activities on the climate and environment has encouraged the emergence of the concept of green citizenship. This concept brings the environmental dimension to the fore and, as we demonstrate below, represents a contemporary reconceptualisation of citizenship that encompasses care for the environment, action against climate change and sustainable conduct.

2.1 THE CLASSICAL CONCEPTIONS OF CITIZENSHIP

In reconsidering classical or traditional theories of citizenship, it must be emphasised that such an undertaking is almost indispensable if we are to examine how existing forms of knowledge about citizenship are articulated and which practices are associated with them. Existing conceptions and the production of knowledge about citizenship are intertwined with concrete practices and modes of its enactment. They therefore require critical reflection that enables us to examine how citizenship is imagined, the conditions of possibility for its establishment, and its limits, boundaries, rules and political formations. As a point of departure, we may follow Foucault (1988a, pp. 154–155), who states:

A critique is not a matter of saying that things are not right as they are. It is a matter of pointing out on what kinds of assumptions, what

kinds of familiar, unchallenged, unconsidered modes of thought the practices that we accept rest [...] Criticism is a matter of flushing out that thought and trying to change it: to show that things are not as self-evident as one believed, to see that what is accepted as self-evident will no longer be accepted as such.

For Foucault, critique is directed towards addressing, recognising and exposing the invisible forms of power that affect people's lives. It involves revealing and moving beyond the forms of relationship within which we are caught as we act and think. In this sense, critique aspires to a certain liberation from historically determined forms of acting, thinking, relating to ourselves and communities, and organising relations among collectivities. These determinations produce limitations that have become integral to how people understand and experience their lives. Such systems of determination are not perceived as constraints, but as the very structure of normal and natural human conduct. Foucault emphasised the necessity of continuous critique, which is always linked to the possibility of thinking beyond limitations. Continuous or permanent critique therefore permits the reconsideration, possible subversion and rearticulation of what we already know and of what is understood as part of ordinary structures or modes of thought and action. At the same time, permanent critique does not seek an objective understanding of the order of things or phenomena, nor does it promise absolute emancipation or enlightenment. It seeks to expose existing forms of limitation at the levels of both knowledge and concrete practice and, ultimately, to make their transgression possible.

Citizenship can be understood and defined in two ways: as a set of potentially diverse practices, including political, cultural and economic practices, and as a body of rights and duties through which an individual is defined and articulated as a member of a particular political community. Both aspects must be recognised. The formal-legal dimension, in which citizenship operates as a body of rights

and duties, is characteristic of modern ways of governing political communities. It must also be emphasised that the formal-legal framework of citizenship, as the formation and partial stabilisation of a particular way of governing a population within specific contexts, emerged from practices. Citizenship must therefore be approached through the duality of its legal and political dimensions, both of which are essential to securing individuals' membership in a particular population. Citizenship is also exclusionary at both levels, since those who do not enjoy the civil, political and social rights through which they would belong to the population of citizens are excluded from the outset from becoming, or being recognised as, a constitutive part of a particular political environment.

Since at least the late eighteenth century, the nation-state has undoubtedly become the principal political context or form of political association and the one most closely connected with citizenship as a legal-political duality. Every nation-state has a set of criteria through which individuals are identified as members or non-members of the community. States also employ practices of identification, including birth certificates, passports and identity cards, through which it is determined and demonstrated who is and is not a member of a particular community of citizens, and who possesses particular rights. Each state also determines how a person who is not a citizen may become one. Procedures, rules, substantive provisions and regulations are crucial here, since they determine whether a particular individual is permitted to acquire citizenship. States also closely regulate access to their territory, which became one of the defining elements of the state during its historical development. This regulation ranges from complete denial of entry to temporary permission, for example for tourists, and permanent permission to reside in the state (Dehm, 2017). As Isin and Wood (1999, p. 5) argue, citizenship in both its dimensions, the formal-legal dimension and the level of practice, has become an institution with validity virtually throughout the world, regardless of the prevailing form of power or constitutional order, whether democratic or dictatorial. Citizenship has become

an institutional mechanism for governing populations, although the composition of and relationships among political and social rights and the spheres of cultural, symbolic and economic practice differ between states (Janoski, 1998).

Although, as we have observed, citizenship is no longer confined to the West, the belief that it nevertheless emerged and became established in that part of the world remains widespread. This calls for at least a brief introductory consideration of its origins and history.

In this context, Heater (2004), for example, observes that the history of citizenship depends on its initial theoretical assumptions and, consequently, on particular models of that history. He nevertheless traces the concept through decisive historical periods, including ancient Greece and Rome, the Middle Ages and the early modern period. In brief, Heater (2004) presents a “typical” historical survey of Western civilisation within which he situates the formation and transformation of citizenship as a concept and as a set of practices. Isin and Wood (1999) argue that this perspective and the claims arising from it are problematic and ethnocentric. It neglects the fact that, throughout their development, “non-Western” civilisations established and formed different modes of political belonging, statuses and social arrangements, and therefore different ways of imagining and practising citizenship. Isin and Wood (1999) argue that this problem directs attention to two issues that must be addressed: naturalism and historicism. It is important to recognise that the status and practices of citizenship are established in a specific political context as responses to particular struggles and conflicts that have arisen historically. Citizenship may therefore be read in relation to a problematic, understood as a particular question or problem that arises in the exercise of power at a specific historical moment. Citizenship as a concept may constitute a response to this problem and be formed as a practice that addresses the question of the exercise of power in a particular manner. Citizenship is therefore always a contingent field that permits or facilitates the mediation of conflicts, the redistribution of wealth and the recognition of rights for

different groups and individuals. There is nothing natural about the development of citizenship into a dominant form of regulating and governing populations. It is the consequence of contingent political development, which is neither linear nor straightforward, and which is visible in the changing form and operation of citizenship, its understanding and acceptance, its functions in different societies and states, and its modes of inclusion and exclusion. As Isin and Wood (1999, p. 5) state: "Even in recent memory citizenship rights have been suspended or radically altered by groups who have established their hegemony and imposed their view of the world on other groups".

A further assumption that strongly frames and determines understandings and practices of citizenship is historicism. Modern Western law constitutes individuals as sovereign subjects possessing inalienable rights and freedoms, including freedom of speech and the right to private property. The latter, for example, was established as a natural right through the formation of liberalism as a specific ideology. By contrast, in ancient Greece the prevailing idea was that an individual's political existence depended on political association and on being situated within the polis. Citizenship in its modern form can therefore hardly be said to derive from ancient Greece. Such a claim, which the previously discussed Heater appears to advance, is an example of historicism. As we have already shown, citizenship is fundamentally a modern concept, although its beginnings are frequently sought in antiquity and, among other periods, the Renaissance. Such attempts readily produce presentism, namely the use of contemporary or modern concepts to explain the past. Historically, the rise of modern citizenship is commonly situated in the period of the French Revolution, when broader processes of urbanisation, social change and secularisation, together with the emergence of a public sphere and the growth and bureaucratisation of state administrations, contributed to the emergence of citizenship. At that time, citizenship signified active participation in the republic or nation-state, whose identity became increasingly connected to nationalism. Citizenship was articulated as a form of secular solidarity

and, in the context of nationalism, increasingly replaced religious solidarity and symbolism (Turner, 1993). Walzer (1989) similarly argues that the rise of citizenship in its modern sense may be situated in the Jacobin phase of the French Revolution, when the universal designation *citoyen* began to replace religious forms of belonging. In this formation, citizenship was closely associated with virtue and public spirit, which together constituted a rigorous commitment to political and military activity in the name of the republican political community, which was increasingly identified with the nation. For Walzer (1989), activity was decisive: individual engagement constituted the central positive connotation of citizenship and one of the citizen's principal virtues. Roche (1992), meanwhile, identifies the broader context of the rise of the capitalist mode of production and the development of states as political entities in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as conditions for the emergence of citizenship.

Reflections on the emergence and developmental trajectories of citizenship must also address theoretical approaches that define and justify its functions or roles in different ways, particularly in relation to its origins and associated meanings. Theories of the social contract, or contractualism, are particularly important in this respect. Contractualist theories are not uniform, and important differences can be identified among the formulations developed by Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau, as well as within later liberal contractarianism. Communitarian and republican traditions should be distinguished from contractualism: communitarianism largely developed as a critique of liberal contractarianism, while republicanism has a distinct historical genealogy, although Rousseau's thought connects contractualist and republican themes. The central concern of contractualist theories is the relationship between political authority and individuals, including the rights and duties arising from that relationship. All the "classical" contractualist political thinkers addressed this relationship more or less explicitly, including Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Hobbes and Locke, both writing in the seventeenth century, already differed

in their accounts of the relationship between the individual or citizen and the state. Locke articulated what is now described as traditional liberalism, providing the philosophical foundation upon which classical liberal economists and utilitarians based the idea of the minimal state, private property as a natural right, and the protection of the individual. Hobbes developed reflections that underpin the idea of an extensive and powerful state that provides security for individuals as citizens while operating as an absolute sovereign. Jean-Jacques Rousseau is understood as a thinker who conceived citizenship in direct relation to the sovereign general will of the people and, accordingly, called for the resolution of inequalities within societies. He thereby contributed to the republican tradition within contractualist thought. What, then, are the principal emphases or elements of the different traditions of conceptualising citizenship, and how do they understand citizenship in the relationship between individuals and the state and, within that relationship, the rights and duties that characterise modern understandings of citizenship?

The liberal (and communitarian) traditions of citizenship

When citizenship is approached through liberalism as political thought or theory, the point of departure is the individual. Understanding the individual and their role in society is crucial to understanding citizenship within the liberal tradition and its relationship with the state. Although the individual constitutes the starting point of the liberal conception of citizenship, liberalism contains varied arguments concerning what the individual is, their relationship to the world and society, the character of their rationality, action and conduct, the causal connections among these elements, and their effects (Schuck, 2002, p. 132). Despite this lack of uniformity, liberalism predominantly understands the individual as the bearer of rights and of particular preferences and interests. This was also how the early proponents of liberal theory, John Locke and John Stuart Mill, conceived the individual.

Locke considered the individual within the contractualist assumption that human beings are naturally endowed with reason, which

enables them to act according to natural law. Individuals are equally endowed with reason from birth, providing the basis for their decision to “leave” the state of nature, enter a social and political environment, and begin to act as members of a community. Locke essentially argues that the individual in the state of nature is less conflictual than Thomas Hobbes suggests. Natural law, together with the reason that enables individuals to comprehend it, allows them to consider the interests of others as well as their own. Irrational acts may nevertheless occur in the state of nature and lead to violations of natural law, which is one of the principal reasons why Locke considers the social contract necessary. Through it, individuals establish a government that guarantees the absence of external constraints and life within predictable, non-arbitrary rules or laws recognised and agreed upon by all members of society (Held, 2006). For Locke, government must be understood as an instrument for protecting life, liberty and private property. This is the *raison d'être* of government: the protection of individual rights as established by law (Held, 2006). For Locke and the liberal theorists who followed him, private property is both a crucial condition of individual freedom and a central objective whose protection must be secured. Locke's theory of property is particularly important to the liberal notion of citizenship because individuals are understood as the creators of property, while the protection of property from public and private encroachment constitutes the most important function of formal-legal codifications and government. At the same time, guaranteeing the right to private property legitimately produces inequalities that are not regarded as injustices. In other words, Locke argued that the introduction of money, accepted by tacit consent, made unequal holdings possible and could legitimate certain inequalities arising within the system of property he described. These elements constitute what may be termed possessive individualism. Within this theory, individuals define themselves and act in society primarily through the institutions of private property, contract and the market, which facilitate the creation and accumulation of wealth and thereby legitimately produce inequality. Individuals as citizens perform a crucial legitimating role in Locke's theory: through the

social contract, they have expressed their agreement with this formation of society. Political activity is therefore instrumental for Locke. It establishes the framework or conditions for freedom within which individual rights, private interests and objectives may be enabled and realised in the wider society (Held, 2006). The formation of a political community or government is a burden that individuals must bear if they wish to pursue their private aims freely and securely. According to Locke, membership in a political community therefore places upon the individual responsibilities and rights, duties and powers, restrictions and freedoms (Held, 2006).

Liberalism was further developed at the theoretical level by John Stuart Mill, who is regarded as a canonical and classical liberal thinker. In the mid-nineteenth century, he offered a more systematic theory of liberty, seeking to define its essence, foundations and pertinent practices (Schuck, 2002). Perhaps even more explicitly than Locke's theory, Mill's account treats individuality and self-interest as two principal sources of both individual and wider social well-being and progress. Mill initially emphasised that individual liberties guarantee social development and consequently regarded government, at least in certain respects, as something that could potentially constrain and inhibit the individual. He therefore defended a strong presumption against unnecessary state interference, while acknowledging that governmental action could be justified where it promoted welfare, education or the effective exercise of individual freedom. Mill's account of the relationship between individual freedom and the state may be described as at least partly oppositional, since individual freedom and state intervention stand in tension with one another. He nevertheless assumed that, in certain circumstances, the state could contribute to extending and securing the freedom of citizens. In any event, Mill's central idea is that individuals realise their personal freedom through free choice.

With some necessary simplification, Locke's and Mill's accounts of the relationship between the individual and the state allow us to conclude that the liberal conception of citizenship rests on the

fundamental conviction that individualism and rational individual conduct occupy the foreground. Through such conduct, individuals weigh costs and benefits and secure their own advancement, thereby contributing to the advancement of society as a whole. This assumption constitutes one of the principal targets of critiques of liberalism, which focus on its image of an individual who enters social interactions in order to secure personal well-being. Liberalism consequently treats the social and collective character of human conduct as secondary, a position fundamentally opposed to the communitarian perspective.

Whereas liberal thinkers place the individual at the centre and particularly emphasise competitive relations among individuals, the communitarian approach is largely centred on the community. Within this framework, the individual is first and foremost a member of a community. Communitarians argue that citizenship is culturally conditioned through the community rather than initially determined by the individual, as liberals maintain. In the social sciences, the concept of community emerged primarily from debates about the relationship between community and society, with community understood through its role and function. This distinction was famously conceptualised in *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (Tönnies, 1887/1979), in which Ferdinand Tönnies argued that community is the organic and cohesive whole of the traditional world, whereas society refers to the fragmented world of modernity, characterised by rationalised and individualised structures. For Tönnies (1887/1979), community is therefore more primordial and contains direct, virtually organic bonds, while society rests on ties of association. Community constitutes a more organic whole than society, which merely connects fragmented parts (Delanty, 2002, pp. 160–161). In a moralising tone, Tönnies lamented the decline of community, a world in which people were closely and organically connected at the level of, for example, the village or rural environment. Because of its fragmentation, the advent of the world of society offers less moral support and fewer resources capable of providing a connective tissue among people (Cahnman, 1973). A similar functionalist understanding of community appears

in Durkheim's sociological writings, in which society is fundamentally a community based on particular cultural values. For Durkheim, modernity represents a movement from mechanical to organic forms of integration, characterised by contractual relationships requiring cooperation among individuals and groups. In this respect, he was critical of Tönnies and rejected his nostalgia for the "lost" world of community as a "good" totality. He nevertheless defended the idea that community is a necessary determinant of citizenship in modern societies. This thesis has often led Durkheim to be described as a classical theorist of communitarianism (Delanty, 2002, p. 161). He also followed the idea that democratic political culture provides an appropriate framework for forming a community capable of reflecting and responding to the demands of the modern age. This suggests a certain movement from a cultural towards a moral understanding of community, particularly in the transition from traditional to modern society. Durkheim thus reflected on the social order as possessing clearly defined functions and on community as both an ontological and primordial reality and a symbolic order.

Social-scientific understandings of community and subsequent debates were also strongly shaped by the analyses and research of early anthropologists. They described so-called primitive societies as cultures or tribes because, consciously or otherwise, they "reserved" the concept of society for modern social formations. Anthropologists also influenced social-scientific debate through the idea that cultural values and social practices are closely intertwined and mutually conditioning, and that this relationship rests on symbolic structures that ultimately define the boundaries of a particular group. In this context, community was understood in relation to primitive cultures and to small, traditionally organised groups that were usually more or less territorially bounded (Delanty, 2002, p. 161).

Positions concerning community and its role were developed not only within so-called conservative functionalism, but also in certain liberal and Marxist interpretations of modernity. The search for community in the form of a utopian socialist or communist

society was particularly characteristic of Marxism. Delanty (2002, pp. 161–162) also shows that communitarianism significantly influenced subsequent liberal debate, particularly through its criticism of John Rawls's *A Theory of Justice* (1971). Later liberal theory, including Rawls's subsequent work, responded to some of these challenges. Communitarianism thereby transformed the liberal understanding of society to some degree, while contemporary forms of liberalism also rearticulated communitarian positions. For communitarians, liberal conceptions of group membership, particularly those centred on rights, are excessively formalistic and generally neglect the broader substantive dimensions of identity and participation that bind members into a community. In debate with liberal thinkers and ideas, communitarians rejected moral individualism and defended group-based conceptions of citizenship. At the level of the individual, they reject asocial conceptions of the self, one of the central elements of "pure classical" liberalism. They maintain that every self is constructed within and through a particular community and within a particular cultural context. For communitarians, citizenship is consequently associated with participation and active engagement in the political community, while also enabling individual and group identity. Charles Taylor (1994) is one of the central authors in this debate and understood citizenship primarily in the context of recognising cultural differences. For Taylor, a central problem is the integration of the self with the other. In his view, social life is profoundly shaped by the dialogical relationship between self and other, which is embedded in a shared language in which the discourse of recognition is crucial (Delanty, 2002, pp. 163–164). Such recognition may be articulated through heterogeneous concepts and practices, including equality, respect and regard for rights.

Within communitarianism, community is frequently understood as the community of a dominant culture recognised by a particular state. Because the political community associated with a specific citizenship rests on an *a priori* political community, minorities and other smaller communities must adapt their activities and demands

to the central political community (Delanty, 2002). A further central feature of communitarianism is the foundational character attributed to communities. Since they are grounded in culture, communities are understood to possess relative durability regardless of a possible “absence” of a sense of belonging among particular members. Citizens are perceived as an integral part of the political system, while participation within the state is crucial to maintaining active citizenship and to securing the benefits provided by the collective community that citizenship is intended to strengthen. O’Byrne (2004) argues that several aspects of the communitarian perspective may be critically addressed as problematic. Among them is the idea that consensus can be achieved within a community, either as a starting point or through a politics of difference, since this overlooks the possible space of conflict. Communitarianism treats community as something given,⁴ while placing considerably greater emphasis on the duties of individuals. It thereby moves beyond straightforward liberal ideas about the individualistic nature of human beings and, consequently, the foundations of the social.

The republican tradition of citizenship

At its foundation, the republican tradition of citizenship rests on the assumption that power is a public matter, *res publica*, and that it is, in principle, held by the people, or that the people govern themselves in one form or another. The initial question is therefore how the public and the self-government of the people are to be understood. According to Dagger (2002, p. 145), the answer depends strongly on the historical and sociopolitical context, since understandings of power and of the role of the population, or citizens, have changed and been continuously rearticulated over time. Contemporary republicans understand the public and citizenship broadly, as encompassing numerous groups and individuals, and define them partly through

4 Communitarianism also contains reflections and understandings of community and citizenship that extend beyond a straightforward conception of community as given. See, among others, Nancy (1991).

their distinction from liberal conceptions of citizenship. Writers such as Sandel (1998) and Pettit (2010), for example, argue that liberalism focuses excessively on privacy and individual rights and pays insufficient attention to the public sphere and civic virtues that orient people towards fulfilling the duties they hold as citizens.

Although liberal and republican conceptions of citizenship both pursue the ideas of public power and self-government, republican conceptions place substantially greater emphasis on citizens' public action. Importantly, the public is not merely a particular part of the population. It is a dimension or sphere of life that entails particular duties and forms of individual action. As Dagger (2002, p. 147) observes, the republican assumption is that something is public when it involves people as members of a political community united by a shared interest in regulating common affairs. Public life is fundamentally marked by the idea of association. Through public action, people create a community that may be permeated by solidarity as well as conflict.

In this context, republicanism also emphasises the rule of law as a framework for protection and the prevention of conflict, together with civic virtues that are closely associated with the at least partial renunciation of private interests, in contrast to liberalism, as a means of pursuing common public affairs. These affairs are governed and coordinated through public debate and collective public decision-making. This, in turn, necessarily requires regularity in the form of precisely defined rules and procedures that restrict possible corruption or the exceeding of established powers. Decisions must be adopted in accordance with predetermined rules and regulations governing the action and conduct of community members. As already emphasised, the republican idea of citizenship is closely connected with self-government, namely the idea that power derives from and is exercised for the people. Self-government as a republican principle is itself understood as a form of liberty. For republicans, self-government must be connected with an effective rule of law as a framework for exercising power, presupposing a particular legislative

and formal-legal framework. According to Pettit (2010), republican thought associates this framework more closely with freedom from domination than with freedom from interference. Within republican thought, the legal framework secures citizens' freedom only when the republic is sufficiently secure and stable for the law to be effective. Maintaining freedom under the rule of law requires active and public participation by citizens in matters affecting their lives, as well as an appropriate form of government or power. In republican thought, this is a balanced government that combines elements of different forms of rule (Dagger, 2002). If mixed government is characteristic of the republic, civic virtue is the substance desired within this arrangement. Republicans thereby emphasise that such an arrangement has little meaning without citizens prepared to defend the republic against external threats and actively participate in the exercise of power. The republic must therefore undertake what Sandel (1998, p. 6) calls "formative politics [...], that cultivates in citizens the qualities of character self-government requires".

As a contemporary representative of republican thought, David Miller (2000) advocates a model of republican citizenship grounded in the ethical resources of the national community. In his view, civic identity is primarily anchored in an individual's national belonging. Miller argues that republican citizenship is better equipped than the liberal model to respond to cultural pluralism. His arguments rest on a model of democratic decision-making, specifically deliberative democracy (D. Miller, 2000, pp. 10–11). A community of citizens can achieve relatively broad consensus on a specific common problem or issue by discussing it openly and thereby forming a common will. A deliberative system assumes that groups holding diverse views can participate in a shared and open discussion characterised by a strong willingness to listen to opposing arguments, perspectives and interests, on the basis of which each side must be prepared to modify its arguments or views. For Miller, this provides a means of finding compromise solutions to political problems that must subsequently be accepted collectively. Republicanism, as Miller

understands it (2000, pp. 42–43), can incorporate pluralism, but only when group identities are legitimate, a status they acquire through public recognition. As legitimate actors in political processes, groups gain access to policymaking and decision-making and may use this position to represent their own interests, perspectives and demands. Their demands must nevertheless be expressed in accordance with the general principles existing in society and recognised, in principle, by all citizens. They must therefore be grounded in established legitimate assumptions. The republican model thus assumes that groups or communities may advance highly diverse demands with few apparent restrictions, although this does not mean that such demands are legitimate in advance or that, even when legitimate, they will be accepted by society as a whole.

Miller (2000, p. 83) identifies four central components of republican citizenship, two of which are closely related to the liberal conception and two of which are more characteristically republican. The equality of rights and duties among all individuals constitutes the first two components. The third is an active orientation towards matters of common interest and a willingness to defend the rights of all members of the political community. The fourth component, which Miller also regards as characteristic of republican citizenship, is broad support for and participation in formal and informal frameworks of political cooperation.

Miller's conception or vision of republican citizenship is, of course, not the only one. Michael Walzer (1989), best known as a theorist of justice, argues that republican citizenship is associated with a doctrine concerned with meeting and securing the needs of small, homogeneous communities. Bellamy (2000), who is likewise recognised as an advocate of neo-republicanism, challenges Walzer's claim and argues that such an understanding rests on the mistaken interpretation of republicanism as civic humanism. According to Bellamy (2000), classical republicanism treats participation in civil society as a condition for maintaining personal liberties. Citizens are therefore free only insofar as they participate in collective

decision-making processes. Political duties lie at the core of such conceptions of citizenship and enable citizens to enter political debate and decision-making as equals. Duties also provide the basis on which people may articulate and formulate claims that may or may not subsequently be translated into concrete policies. In this sense, duties are more tangible and concrete than the concept of human rights, since they do not reflect the kind of transcendent norms characteristic of human rights. Duties are socially determined, meaning that they are defined by the specific sociopolitical circumstances in which they arise. Bellamy (2000) thus rejects, to a certain extent, the liberal idea that rights possess a privileged status and guarantee the protection of individual liberties. He regards rights-based forms of citizenship, including liberal conceptions, as passive and anti-political because they do not orient individuals towards an active stance, participation, the formation of shared interests, or the construction of a political space and processes through which they can engage with matters affecting society as a whole. Bellamy (2000, pp. 188–190) therefore ultimately envisages or advocates a movement away from citizenship shaped by the nation-state model and towards a politics operating within a plurality of interconnected political units.

2.2 EU CITIZENSHIP: CONCEPTUAL DIMENSIONS

Liberal and republican conceptions of citizenship are historically rooted in the nation-state as the primary framework of political belonging. The emergence of EU citizenship represents a novelty articulated in a particular manner through the relationship between the national and the supranational. Liberal citizenship emphasises individual rights and the protection of personal liberties within a bounded political community, while republican citizenship stresses active participation and civic virtue within a shared public sphere. EU citizenship introduces a new, post-national form of belonging that operates simultaneously across several political levels (Bellamy, 2008). It must be recognised from the outset that EU citizenship, as a form

of supranational citizenship, is not a replica of national citizenship at a higher level. It is a process, already extending over several decades, through which a particular form of belonging has been constructed. To some extent, this challenges an order founded on the territorial boundaries of the democratic community, the relationship between rights and identity, and the possibility of citizenship beyond the nation-state (Habermas, 2012). The conceptual architecture and practical dimensions of EU citizenship indicate that political theory must also reconsider the fundamental assumptions underlying the liberal and republican traditions.

The establishment of EU citizenship is usually situated within the Maastricht Treaty, signed in 1992 and entering into force in 1993, which marked a crucial moment in the development of European integration. From a formal-legal perspective, the Treaty is undoubtedly exceptionally important, although the elements involved in forming citizenship at the European level extend much further back in history. The original Treaty of Rome of 1957 did not mention citizenship and instead focused on establishing a common market, one important element of which was the free movement of labour (Maas, 2007). Workers from Member States were granted specific mobility rights, reflecting the primarily functionalist logic upon which early European integration was based (Wiener, 1998). This economistic conception of individual mobility within the Community was subsequently and gradually transformed into the freedom now recognised as one of the principal rights of EU citizens, namely the free movement of persons.

From the late 1960s onwards, secondary legislation and judgments of the Court of Justice of the European Communities gradually broadened mobility-related rights beyond economically active workers. Regulation 1612/68 established important rights for migrant workers and their families. The Court's 1985 judgment in *Gravier* prohibited discrimination on grounds of nationality in access to vocational training, while residence rights for students and jobseekers were developed more fully through legislation and case law around 1990 and 1991 (Kostakopoulou, 2008).

Another political moment that may be cited as contributing to the conditions of possibility for the emergence of EU citizenship was the introduction of direct elections to the European Parliament in 1979. This further signalled a movement towards political integration and followed a growing recognition at the European level that strengthening economic cooperation also required broader social legitimacy for the project (Costa, 2016).

Despite these earlier developments, as already emphasised, it was the Maastricht Treaty that formally institutionalised the concept of citizenship of the Union. Article 8, now Article 20 TFEU, stipulated that “Every person holding the nationality of a Member State shall be a citizen of the Union”. This new status conferred a range of rights, including the right to move and reside freely within the Member States; the right to vote and stand in European Parliament and municipal elections in the Member State of residence under the same conditions as that state’s nationals; diplomatic and consular protection in a third country where the citizen’s own Member State is not represented; the right to petition the European Parliament; and the right to apply to the European Ombudsman (Shaw, 1997). Even in its original form, Union citizenship was derived from and dependent upon citizenship of a Member State, a structure Clossa (1995) describes as “dual citizenship”. The Treaty of Amsterdam (1997) subsequently made this relationship explicit, specifying that citizenship of the Union complements rather than replaces national citizenship.

Subsequent treaty reforms progressively developed the framework of Union citizenship and strengthened provisions concerning non-discrimination and free movement. The Charter of Fundamental Rights was proclaimed in 2000, while the Treaty of Lisbon, signed in 2007 and entering into force in 2009, gave it the same legal value as the Treaties and introduced the European Citizens’ Initiative. Through several of its judgments, the Court of Justice of the European Union also contributed to the gradual establishment of EU citizenship as the “fundamental status” of nationals of the Member States, capable of generating rights.

At the fundamental conceptual level, EU citizenship may be understood as what Kostakopoulou (2008) describes as a ‘disaggregated’ or “unbundled” form of citizenship, in which the traditional relationship among citizenship, territory, rights and identity is fragmented and transformed. Classical citizenship, or at least its prevailing interpretations, presupposes correspondence among the boundaries of a political community, legal jurisdiction and affective belonging within the nation-state. EU citizenship, by contrast, operates across several dimensions and institutional levels, creating overlapping spheres of rights and obligations that cannot be reduced to a single sovereign authority (Soysal, 2012). In this respect, its multidimensional character challenges a “fundamental premise” of traditional citizenship theory, namely that citizenship must be organised hierarchically within separate and mutually exclusive political units.

The derivative nature of EU citizenship, meaning its dependence on the prior acquisition of the nationality of a Member State, also raises relevant questions about its ontological status and normative foundations. National citizenship usually functions as the primary legal bond between the individual and the state. EU citizenship, by contrast, operates as a “second-order” or “nested” citizenship that depends parasitically on national citizenship for its existence. This derivative character produces a particular asymmetry. Member States retain primary competence to determine who qualifies as their national, but they must exercise that competence with due regard to EU law where Union citizenship is affected. Supranational rights are therefore grounded from the outset at another, national level (Kochenov, 2009). A declaration on nationality annexed to the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 explicitly confirmed that questions of nationality fall within the exclusive competence of the Member States, thereby consolidating this hierarchical relationship at its foundation.

This structural characteristic creates the problem of a rigid division between EU citizenship “insiders and outsiders” EU citizens enjoy

extensive rights to mobility and non-discrimination throughout the Member States, while the same rights are generally unavailable to third-country nationals legally resident in the EU, regardless of the duration or depth of their territorial connection with European communities. EU residents who are not nationals of any Member State are therefore always already incompletely included. From the outset, this is incompatible with republican ideals of civic inclusion based on the participation of all members of the political community.

From a philosophical perspective, EU citizenship embodies what Habermas (2012) conceptualises as “constitutional patriotism”, a form of political identity grounded in a shared commitment to democratic principles and fundamental rights rather than ethnocultural homogeneity. Habermas argues that post-national citizenship can generate legitimate political authority through procedures and principles rather than through “pre-political” cultural unity, provided that broad and robust public spheres facilitate communicative action across national borders. From this perspective, EU citizenship represents an experiment in “post-national” democracy in which shared legal and political values replace the strong cultural solidarity traditionally associated with national communities. The EU’s constitutional framework, particularly its commitment to human dignity, democracy and the rule of law as enshrined in Article 2 TEU, provides the normative foundation for a civic rather than ethnic form of transnational belonging.

Critics nevertheless ask whether Habermas’s argument or conceptualisation underestimates the importance of so-called pre-political cultural ties and a shared political identity as preconditions of democratic legitimacy (Grimm, 1995). The “no demos” thesis defended by scholars such as Grimm begins from the idea that the absence of a European demos, understood as a collective identity founded on a shared language, culture and historical memory, makes the pursuit of democratic citizenship at the EU level fundamentally problematic. Critics argue that, without the affective ties and mutual trust characteristic of national communities, EU citizenship remains

a weak and instrumental status incapable of generating the solidarity required to sustain redistributive policies or legitimate the exercise of political power. From this perspective, EU citizenship may be understood through Weiler's (1995) diagnosis of its affective crisis. It is formally established as a legal status conferring rights and freedoms, but remains politically and existentially relatively empty because it fosters only limited belonging, civic virtue and active democratic participation.

The question of democratic legitimacy leads directly to consideration of political participation and representation within the EU's institutional architecture. Although EU citizens may exercise the right to vote in direct elections to the European Parliament, the general structure of EU governance is marked by a "democratic deficit" (Hix, 2013). One basic element of this deficit is the concentration of executive power in the Commission and the Council, while mechanisms of accountability to the people remain weak. Despite successive treaty reforms that strengthened its powers, the European Parliament continues to face difficulties associated with low electoral turnout. This indicates that EU citizenship is not yet inherently connected with specific forms of democratic participation (Follesdal & Hix, 2006).

Moreover, the rights arising from EU citizenship privilege individual mobility and economic freedom over collective self-determination and social solidarity. EU citizenship embodies a more liberal than republican ethos, in some respects prioritising 'negative' freedoms and individual choice over collective forms of deliberation and participation in political processes. The emphasis on free movement rights, probably the most highly valued and practically significant dimension of EU citizenship, as indicated at the beginning of this section, reinforces what Streeck (2012) describes as a "market" form of citizenship. Within this formation, membership in the community is defined primarily through access to economic opportunities rather than participation in collective self-government. The economic premise of EU citizenship is incompatible with republican ideals

of active citizenship oriented towards the common good (see also Lacroix, 2002). Indeed, it strongly encourages individualism and competition.

A further conceptual dimension is the social aspect of EU citizenship. The social dimension remains relatively underdeveloped, largely because the EU has prioritised market integration over the harmonisation of social policies during previous decades. Although Articles 34 and 35 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights recognise rights to social security and healthcare, these provisions are subject to significant limitations and do not establish enforceable rights to social protection at the EU level (Ferrera, 2017). The principle of free movement, combined with the coordination rather than harmonisation of social security systems, creates complex questions concerning entitlement to social security and social citizenship for mobile EU citizens.

At the end of this brief reflection, it may be emphasised that, from a normative perspective, EU citizenship raises fundamental questions about the appropriate boundaries and foundations of political community in an age of globalisation and transnational mobility. Does citizenship require cultural homogeneity and a shared national identity, or can it be sustained through a procedural constitutional order and commitment to universal rights? Can citizenship distributed across several territorial levels generate the solidarity and democratic engagement required for legitimate government, or does it inevitably produce weak and instrumental forms of membership? These questions are also central to our subsequent discussion of the practices through which specific forms of conduct among EU citizens are established and directed as “green”.

As we have demonstrated, EU citizenship can theoretically be understood through the prism of “multilevel citizenship”, in which individuals simultaneously belong to several political communities, including local, regional, national and supranational communities, each conferring distinct yet overlapping rights and identities. This multilevel configuration moves beyond the binary distinction

between insiders and outsiders characteristic of national citizenship and produces complex patterns of partial inclusion and exclusion across different territorial levels. At the same time, the EU, as a framework for cooperation among states and for producing new normative configurations of civic action, is sufficiently pervasive and powerful to exert a profound influence on how the EU population understands itself and acts. This does not mean that the EU can completely determine and prescribe how people should act through its policies and mechanisms, as later chapters will also demonstrate. Nevertheless, continuous attempts to direct green civic practices can be observed. EU citizenship must therefore also be understood as a field or framework for the exercise of power in the name of the green transition. It is crucial to recognise that environmental and climate dimensions can be attached to EU citizenship because green citizenship has become intelligible in the contemporary period as a consequence of the specific historical and conceptual constellations examined below.

2.3 CONCEPTIONS OF GREEN CITIZENSHIP: FROM CLASSICAL TO CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES

Thus far, the discussion has focused primarily on classical conceptions of citizenship, which have undoubtedly shaped our understanding and practice of this fundamental social category. These classical perspectives, which are significantly determined by reflections on civil, political and social rights, provide an important basis for thinking about and practising citizenship. However, as noted in the introduction to this chapter, citizenship is not a static entity. In the contemporary world, marked by rapid social, political and environmental change, citizenship is continually redefined and rearticulated as it encounters new realities and contexts.

Environmental and climate issues constitute a particularly important field influencing the development of citizenship. Dean (2001) identifies three key formative sociopolitical frameworks that

contributed to this new articulation, thereby also demonstrating how environmental issues reshape our understanding of what it means to be a citizen.

The first relevant framework is the emergence of modern environmentalism, which significantly influenced the development of green citizenship by challenging and expanding the traditional framework of rights. Even a brief historical overview reveals how the incorporation of environmental considerations, including specific rights, into reflections on and material practices of citizenship reflects broader shifts in the government of society and the exercise of power. Victorian concerns with public health and efforts to preserve heritage served as early mechanisms for improving quality of life and as forms of social control that incorporated environmental considerations into public policy as a means of regulating and disciplining the population (H. Dean, 2001, p. 492). The emerging legal foundations and codifications embodied in mid-nineteenth-century public health legislation and, for example, the legal regulation of urban planning from a sanitary perspective were not merely benevolent measures. They were strategic responses intended to manage the risks associated with urbanisation and industrialisation. The redefinition of public health in terms of environmental protection at the end of the twentieth century represents a discursive shift that reshaped the relationship between the state and the individual and placed regulatory frameworks before individual autonomy (H. Dean, 2001).

Furthermore, the interweaving of environmentalism with discourses of social justice can be understood as a framework that opened dilemmas concerning hegemonic articulations of formations of power and ideas of continuous growth and virtually unlimited economic advancement. Critical voices within environmentalism produced at least a partial recognition of the limits to growth, which implicitly required a reconfiguration of individual and collective rights that emphasised environmental sustainability. This reconsideration of social rights in an environmental context reflects a shift in governmental rationality from the promotion of economic growth towards

the management of scarcity and risk, thereby extending state control over the environment and the population.

Dean (2001, p. 491) further observes that heightened global awareness of shared environmental problems, at least from the 1960s and 1970s onwards, strongly influenced the development of green citizenship by emphasising the interconnectedness of environmental sustainability and global citizenship. The ecological imperative formulated by Falk (1972) places environmental concerns at the centre of the concept of global citizenship and interweaves them with long-standing aspirations for world peace and justice and with the consequences of economic globalisation. This perspective proceeds from the view that global consciousness entails an awareness of “the delicate interdependence of natural processes at all levels of life activity” (Falk, 1972, p. 162), and that humanity’s survival therefore requires a reconfiguration of political decisions and choices grounded in environmental realities, which in turn demands the transformation of established forms of political conduct and action. Such a transformation requires citizenship to be understood as more than a status conferred by the state. It must also be understood as a set of practices involving global responsibilities and local actions. This duality is also illustrated by the hegemonically established and widely disseminated green slogan “think globally, act locally”, which encourages individuals to behave in ways that contribute to global environmental health while strengthening their connection to the local environment.

In addition, global environmental awareness encouraged new rearticulations of citizenship that placed greater emphasis on citizens’ involvement in the public sphere (H. Dean, 2001, p. 493), as well as their engagement in the private sphere. Clarke’s (1996) concept of “deep citizenship” raises questions about the relationship between individuals and the global dimension of participation in political processes concerning matters that affect both the individual and the wider world, including environmental issues. This perspective calls for a renegotiation of the relationship between the individual

as citizen and as human being and proposes that citizenship should be redefined to include multiple identities and collectivities that reflect and mobilise around diverse environmental problems and bear social responsibilities. The globalisation of human rights further contributes to this debate by abstracting rights from national contexts and linking them to universal rights, which can sometimes sever their connection with local identities and self-regulation (H. Dean, 2001). The development of green citizenship therefore involves navigating the tension between global ecological demands and local practices. It is crucial that principles of sustainability be incorporated into the conceptualisation and practices of citizenship at several levels simultaneously. This shift can be understood as a form of multilevel citizenship substantively linked to ecological issues and global interdependencies.

The third important framework that Dean (2001, p. 494) identifies as central to the development of the concept and practices of green citizenship consists of discourses of responsibility, which assumed a hegemonic position particularly from the 1970s and 1980s onwards, including in the context of the ascendancy of neoliberalism. Following the crisis of the welfare state in the 1970s, a dominant paradigm emerged that questioned the primacy of social rights and instead placed greater emphasis on individuals' responsibilities towards themselves, those close to them and wider society. Environmental movements significantly influenced this shift by introducing a conception of responsibility that extended beyond human interactions to include obligations towards other species, the environment and future generations (H. Dean, 2001). Roche's (1992) call to reconsider the moral and ideological determinants and demands associated with personal, parental, ecological, entrepreneurial and intergenerational responsibilities reflects this paradigmatic shift. The incorporation of responsibility into the broader discourse of citizenship also became a basis for reconsidering what it means to be a citizen, with duties towards environmental sustainability assuming central importance. It must be emphasised, however, that this development was not

confined to ideas and conceptual debates, since these discourses of responsibility were also implemented in practice. As Dean (2001, p. 494) observes, this perspective anticipated and provided a basis for ideological rearticulations within the British Labour Party in the mid-1990s, which altered its programme in the direction of an intensified neoliberal discourse of individual responsibility, according to which individuals were expected to contribute to sustainable development.

Theorisations of green citizenship

Numerous theorisations of green citizenship are closely connected to the principal conceptions of citizenship already discussed. These classical frameworks provide the foundations upon which contemporary interpretations of green citizenship are built. As Cao (2015) explains, understandings and practices of green citizenship do not develop in isolation, but are deeply rooted in these established traditions. Liberal theory, with its emphasis on individual rights and freedoms, and republican conceptualisations, which stress civic duty and collective responsibility, offer essential insights into the evolving conception of green citizenship.

The discussion will now examine how green citizenship intersects with and develops these traditional frameworks. It will consider how liberal theory's focus on individual autonomy and rights is extended to environmental concern and sustainable living. It will also illuminate and interpret how the republican emphasis on communal obligations and civic engagement shapes practices of environmental responsibility and activism. By presenting these connections, we seek to demonstrate that green citizenship is a dynamic and integrative concept that draws upon historical antecedents while addressing contemporary environmental challenges.

Liberal and communitarian traditions of citizenship

The integration of environmental considerations into the liberal conception of citizenship poses a particular challenge, primarily because liberalism is fundamentally anthropocentric and individualistic

(Vincent, 1998, p. 450). Traditional liberal citizenship emphasises individual rights and freedoms, with a strong focus on legal protection and personal autonomy. This model prioritises individual interests and the pluralism of values, enabling individuals to pursue their own conception of the good life, provided that they do not harm others. From the perspective of the environmental crisis, however, this framework must be reconsidered in relation to environmental sustainability and ecological problems. Liberal theorists such as Derek Bell (2005) and Marcel Wissenburg (2013) have sought to reconcile liberal principles with the urgent need for environmental government and have proposed formulations of green citizenship intended to remain consistent with liberal ideas and ideals while incorporating the ecological responsibilities of collectivities and individuals (Cao, 2015, pp. 73–74).

Marcel Wissenburg's work (2013, pp. 2–3) highlights the inherent tension between liberalism, green thought and concern for the environment. In this context, he argues that although liberals recognise the importance of sustainability, they do not prescribe particular routes towards its attainment, instead leaving such decisions to individual choice. From this perspective, the liberal commitment to personal freedom and the rule of law is emphasised, ensuring that any environmental policies adopted do not violate fundamental liberal principles (Cao, 2015). Environmental protection and action against climate change are understood as values, but individuals bear responsibility for defining and implementing their own practices in relation to them. Such an approach retains the liberal emphasis on individual rights and autonomy while acknowledging the need to incorporate ecological considerations into citizenship.

Derek Bell (2005) likewise seeks to formulate a liberal conception of environmental citizenship. He criticises the liberal view of nature as property and instead advocates a perspective that understands the environment as essential to human survival:

A conception of the environment merely as property is (at best) incomplete because it fails to acknowledge the essential role of the

physical environment in supplying our most basic needs. In other words, liberals [...] must be committed to a principle of environmental sustainability, which is grounded in a conception of the environment as 'provider of basic needs' (Bell, 2005, p. 183).

The argument is that a liberal commitment to environmental care could potentially displace the idea of nature as property, redirecting liberal principles in a manner that accommodates ecological imperatives. Bell (2005) identifies rights consistent with this redefined citizenship, including substantive rights, such as access to clean air and water, procedural rights, such as participation in environmental decision-making, and personal rights, including the freedom to make environmentally responsible choices. At the same time, he emphasises that environmental demands placed upon citizens must be reasonable and should not constitute an unnecessary burden that would jeopardise personal freedom (Cao, 2015).

Bruce Pardy (2005), by contrast, develops a libertarian approach to environmental citizenship that emphasises the rule of law and the protection of personal freedoms. He argues that freedom involves respecting rules that protect individuals from the interventions of others, including through the protection of ecosystems. This perspective is entirely consistent with the liberal principle that individuals should act within the limits of their ecosystem and respect the rights of others to a clean and sustainably governed environment (Cao, 2015, pp. 75–76). Pardy's position reinforces the idea that environmental responsibilities can be legally prescribed and grounded within a libertarian framework, thereby protecting individual freedoms while promoting ecological sustainability and the protection of natural ecosystems.

Cao (2015, pp. 76–77) notes that liberal interpretations of environmental or green citizenship, and attempts to develop them, have attracted numerous criticisms. These primarily emphasise that liberal environmental citizenship cannot fully capture or address the gravity of the environmental crisis. Reliance on individual choice

and voluntarism does not generate the necessary sense of urgency or commitment required to address global environmental challenges. Critics of the liberal version of environmental citizenship therefore point to the absence of the collective action and systemic changes required to mitigate environmental degradation and secure sustainability for future generations.

Republican green citizenship

As Cao (2015, p. 77) observes, the emergence of new theorisations of citizenship grounded in republican thought can be situated within the growing recognition of environmental problems as central concerns for societies. At least at a surface level, republican values appear compatible with the demands associated with the idea of environmental sustainability. In contrast to liberalism, which emphasises individual rights, republican citizenship is founded on the concepts of duty and the common good. This conceptual framework prioritises active participation in the political life of the community and the cultivation and encouragement of civic virtues. Advocates of the republican approach therefore regard it as particularly suited to addressing the shared challenges posed by environmental issues. The revival of republican citizenship stresses the need for a collectively oriented approach, foregrounding responsibilities and public service in the pursuit of environmental sustainability.

John Barry's (2006) conception of republican green citizenship has been particularly influential in this context. Barry argues that traditional republican virtues, such as duty, obligation and public service, are essential to promoting environmental citizenship: "[A] green republican perspective is undertaken not just because it represents one of the most robust and long-standing political traditions in which active citizenship is central but also because of its openness to virtue-based moral/political perspectives" (Barry, 2006, p. 22). This form of citizenship addresses immediate environmental problems while also seeking to confront their underlying causes through structural change and adaptations to each individual's

personal lifestyle. Barry's model requires a profound commitment to environmental action and participation, with green citizenship proceeding from and being defined by "duties and obligations" (Barry, 2006, p. 33). This "politics of duty" requires citizens to engage actively in environmental government, indicating a comprehensive approach to green citizenship that connects individual conduct with broader social reforms:

It would seem that republican conceptions/practices of environmental citizenship require, among other things, less inequality in society and a greener state. [...] Civil-society based practices of environmental citizenship focus on notions of the common good/sustainable development, and action for sustainability requires criticism and transformation of state structures and policies (Barry, 2006, p. 33).

Barry's emphasis on developing and strengthening civic virtues is central to promoting green citizenship. He advocates intellectual virtues, such as ecological literacy, as well as moral virtues, including self-reliance, self-restraint and prudence (Cao, 2015). Another essential element of Barry's conception of green citizenship is associated with the civil society critique already mentioned, namely the role of "resistance". In his view, citizenship, including green citizenship, must be learned and actively practised. He is critical of passive or voluntaristic conceptions of environmental responsibility and argues that virtues must be cultivated through participation in decision-making processes and collective ecological government. Barry's concept of "resistance citizenship" positions sustainable citizenship as a form of opposition to unsustainable practices, requiring both maintenance activities and corrective action to address the systemic causes of environmental degradation: "Some of the virtues associated with 'republican' citizenship can be seen to typify various forms of 'green political activism'", including discipline, self-restraint, loyalty, courage, perseverance and commitment, as well as compassion, care, tolerance, knowledge and moderation (Barry, 2006, p. 35).

James Connelly (2006) further develops this virtue-based approach to green citizenship, arguing that virtues, when understood and

adopted as consistent and reliable dispositions, are central to green citizenship. Like Barry, he maintains that virtues must be learned through participation in practices that reveal their inherent goods and purposes. This perspective therefore emphasises the interaction between individual action and institutional support in cultivating, encouraging and transmitting the virtues essential to green citizenship (Connelly, 2006).

Some republican theorists, including Patrick Curry (2000), adopt a more explicitly ecological approach to republican citizenship. Curry argues that the common good includes the natural environment and that its protection requires active citizenship and a commitment to practices that support the public good rather than private interests. He extends the republican community to nature and proposes an “ecological republicanism” in which the natural world provides the context for human political, social and ethical reflection and action: “It is an effectively unlimited network of communities, irreducibly complex, inherently contingent and ultimately mysterious. It is vital that the common human good must give way to that of all life, including human life but no longer confined to it” (Curry, 2000, p. 1070). This approach quite clearly challenges the traditional boundaries of republican citizenship by incorporating ecological considerations into the very core of civic responsibility (Gabrielson, 2008). Republican green citizenship fundamentally emphasises the primacy and guiding importance of the common good, extending duties and obligations to future citizens and, in some cases, to nature itself. This model incorporates environmental virtues and duties into the traditional republican framework and emphasises the necessity of active participation in political life and environmental care (Cao, 2015; Gabrielson, 2008).

Cosmopolitan/global conceptions of green citizenship

Cao (2015, p. 82) also identifies cosmopolitan conceptions of citizenship as relevant. As already noted, one of the central contextual frameworks, or conditions of possibility, for the emergence of green

citizenship was the development of a “global consciousness” of environmental problems. Cosmopolitanism is intrinsically connected to this global dimension or sociopolitical level. Cosmopolitan conceptions consequently became important because environmental problems were recognised as global problems that must be addressed as such. As Gilbert and Phillips (2003, p. 318) argue, “a framework of citizenship based on an evolution of rights (civil to political to social) within a national context provides a categorization and typology that are too limited for contemporary realities”.

Elizabeth Jelin (2000) adopts a similar starting point in redefining traditional concepts of citizenship by situating them within a global context. Her work emphasises the global character of environmental issues and proposes that addressing these challenges requires a paradigmatic shift in the conceptualisation of citizenship. She argues that the traditional framework of citizenship grounded in the modern nation-state is inadequate at this level. This perspective encourages a reconsideration of citizenship beyond national borders and highlights the interconnectedness of environmental challenges and the need for collective global action. Jelin’s approach does not prescribe a specific set of environmental rights and duties but emphasises the dynamic and evolving nature of citizenship. “From an analytical perspective the concept of citizenship refers to a conflictive practice related to power, which reflects the struggles about who can say what in the process of defining what is to be considered as the common problem” (Jelin, 2000, p. 53). She therefore advocates the “right to have rights” (Jelin, 2000, p. 53) as a driving force of historical change, emphasising the importance of continuing debate, dialogue and struggle in defining these rights and duties. This open and participatory process allows for a more flexible and adaptable framework capable of responding to the diverse and changing needs of global citizenship. Jelin’s vision of global green citizenship thus emphasises inclusion and the continuous negotiation of rights and duties rather than a fixed programme (Jelin, 2000).

The conception of cosmopolitan green citizenship centres on the ideals of eliminating suffering and oppression, promoting solidarity

and responsibility towards others, and securing quality of life and sustainability (Cao, 2015, p. 83). These broadly formulated ideals serve as guiding principles of global environmental citizenship and reflect a commitment to social justice and ecological well-being at the global level. In this connection, one of the central questions of global green citizenship for Jelin concerns the relationship with nature and the environment: “to conceptualise nature as part of the goods that concern groups and world movements that go beyond self-interest [...], and that necessarily require action beyond the marketplace, an approach that implies, as mentioned above, a human-centered view of environmental issues” (Jelin, 2000, p. 60). By emphasising these ideals, she foregrounds the moral and ethical dimensions of green citizenship and reflects upon the need to encourage individuals and communities to act in ways that support the common good and protect the environment for future generations.

Other relevant perspectives on green citizenship

Dobson’s model of ecological citizenship

One distinctive model of environmental citizenship that is compatible with a global perspective because of its supranational character is Andrew Dobson’s (2003) model. His approach offers a comprehensive reconsideration of traditional frameworks of citizenship in response to global environmental challenges. In contrast to conventional models that bind citizenship to state borders, Dobson’s concept transcends these boundaries by recognising that environmental impacts are not determined by geopolitical borders. Ecological citizenship, as formulated by Dobson, requires recognition of our duties towards “others” and future generations whose lives are affected by our ecological footprints. This post-national and intergenerational perspective broadens the scope of political communities and emphasises a shared responsibility for preserving the planet and its resources for all humanity, irrespective of temporal or spatial separation.

The anthropocentric character of Dobson’s ecological citizenship means that duties are imposed exclusively upon human beings. This

focus on justice and human relations does not extend civic duties to non-human entities, despite their importance within environmental systems (Cao, 2015, p. 91). Ecological citizenship instead focuses on relationships formed through the shared use of environmental space, measured through the ecological footprint. By defining political communities on the basis of ecological impact rather than geographical location, Dobson relocates the foundation of citizenship to environmental justice: “the community of justice is, for me, a human community, so if the community of ecological citizens is primarily a community of justice, the community must be a human one” (Dobson, 2003, p. 113). Within this relational approach, those who exploit ecological resources disproportionately have a moral duty to reduce their consumption and repair the harm caused to those affected, thereby ensuring equitable access to resources for present and future generations.

By extending citizenship from the public into the private sphere, Dobson emphasises the comprehensive character of ecological responsibilities. As with post-cosmopolitan citizenship, the private sphere is also essential to environmental citizenship in Dobson’s account: “This is so for two reasons. First, private actions can have public implications in ways that can be connected with the category of citizenship. Second, certain virtues, particularly care and compassion, are characteristic of ideal-typical versions of relationships in the private sphere because of their unconditional and non-reciprocal nature” (Dobson, 2003, p. 135).

In this context, civic activity is not confined to voting or political activism but also encompasses everyday actions, such as decisions concerning consumption and production. The incorporation of private conduct into the model of citizenship acknowledges that individual decisions significantly affect the ecological footprint. Ecological citizenship therefore promotes a comprehensive approach to sustainable living in which every aspect of life contributes to the objective of environmental government.

The ecofeminist perspective

Ecofeminism constitutes a broad and internally heterogeneous framework that interweaves environmentalism and feminism. It is grounded in the understanding that women and the environment are subjected to interconnected systems of domination and exploitation. This theoretical perspective emphasises that the subordination of women and environmental degradation are mutually reinforcing processes driven by broader systems of power, including patriarchy, capitalism and colonialism. By examining these intersections, ecofeminism reveals the pervasive character of oppression and calls for a comprehensive approach to dismantling these structures (Rosendo & Kuhnen, 2021). One of its central premises is that women's emancipation is inseparably connected to environmental justice, from which it follows that genuine emancipation cannot be achieved without confronting the interconnectedness of all forms of domination.

According to Cuomo (2002), one of ecofeminism's central arguments proceeds from the belief that human and ecological realities are deeply intertwined. This perspective emphasises the physical and conceptual connections between human beings and the natural environment, suggesting that environmental degradation cannot be separated from social injustice. Advocates of ecofeminism, which encompasses numerous traditions, including Marxist and poststructuralist approaches, argue that the global environmental crisis is a direct consequence of intersecting systems of oppression, including racism, sexism, ableism, classism and speciesism (Rosendo & Kuhnen, 2021). By recognising these interdependencies, ecofeminism reveals how different forms of discrimination reinforce one another and therefore demand an integrated approach to social and environmental activism.

Ecofeminism also extends the traditional feminist focus on human relations by incorporating into theoretical reflection and social movement practices the need to address and oppose unjust hierarchies affecting non-human entities. Warren (2000, p. 1) understands

ecofeminism as a convergence of feminist and environmental thought committed to eliminating all systems of domination. This broader scope enables ecofeminism to address the subordination of women alongside the exploitation of animals, plants and ecosystems, while it “takes as its starting point an analysis of gender” (Warren, 2000, p. 2), which makes it possible to examine the relationships among women, human beings and Natural Others.

A debate on the understanding of citizenship has also developed within ecofeminism, with MacGregor (2010, 2011, 2014) offering the most comprehensive treatment of the subject. An ecofeminist perspective on citizenship initially challenges traditional conceptions by incorporating an ethic of care that emphasises women’s distinctive experiences and contributions. Historically, ecofeminists such as Carolyn Merchant developed the concept of “earthcare”, which stresses an ethical responsibility to nurture and protect the planet (Cao, 2015, p. 92). The concept of citizenship was often excluded from this perspective, and some ecofeminists rejected it as an exclusionary construct shaped by an elite masculine mentality. MacGregor criticises this position, arguing that associating environmental care exclusively with women’s roles, such as motherhood, neglects the essential political dimensions of citizenship. She calls for a shift from care work alone towards active civic participation, thereby incorporating feminist ecological insights into broader social structures: “An ecofeminist approach to citizenship, [...] ought to recognize care as a form of work and a moral orientation that has been feminized and privatized in Western societies and that must be distributed fairly within and between societies if gender equality and sustainability are to be realised” (MacGregor, 2010, p. 22).

MacGregor also criticises the emerging discourse of environmental citizenship, which she argues neglects the significant effects of gender relations. Through an analysis of the politics of time and the public-private divide, she reveals how green lifestyle practices that require substantial individual investments place a disproportionate burden upon women. In many societies, women continue to bear the

principal burden of household responsibilities, and the addition of green tasks and obligations further intensifies their time constraints and restricts their capacity to participate in public and political life. This imbalance reinforces traditional gender roles and obstructs the broader objective of inclusive and effective environmental citizenship.

Furthermore, MacGregor (2011) highlights a paradox within projects of green citizenship: the dual expectation that individuals will adopt sustainable practices at home while also participating actively in public and community decision-making. This double demand unfairly burdens women who already carry extensive domestic responsibilities. The call for greater public engagement and private environmental management inadvertently requires women to contribute more without providing the time and resources necessary for effective action. MacGregor's ecofeminist perspective therefore insists upon addressing these gender inequalities in order to reveal, reconsider and articulate a more balanced and just framework for ecological citizenship and to ensure that the responsibilities and benefits of sustainable living are distributed equitably across genders.

2.4 GREEN CITIZENSHIP FROM A GOVERNMENTALITY PERSPECTIVE: TECHNOLOGIES OF THE (GREEN) SELF

In the introductory chapter, we theorised governmentality as an approach to understanding the exercise of power in the name of environmental and climate problems at different levels of political organisation, including supranational or regional formations such as the European Union. In presenting governmentality as an analytical approach, we also highlighted Foucault's reflections on how power constitutes and acts upon and through both collective and individual subjectivities. In relation to green citizenship as a specific constellation of populations, identities and forms of action, however, it is useful to consider this orientation and the operation of power as the "conduct of conduct" in greater detail. In *Security, Territory, Population*, Foucault

focuses on the concept of “conduct”, which he regards as parallel to the concept of power and especially useful because of its threefold meaning: one may conduct someone or something, but one may also conduct oneself (Foucault, 2009, p. 193). As Lorenzini (2023, p. 29) notes, Foucault further articulated this multidirectionality of conduct in his lectures at Dartmouth College, where he emphasised the interweaving of different modalities of the exercise of power in government: “The government of people, in the broad meaning of the word, is not a way to force people to do what the governor wants; it is always a versatile equilibrium, with complementarity and conflicts between techniques which assure coercion and processes through which the self is constructed or modified by himself” (Foucault, 1993, pp. 203–204). In these lectures, Foucault introduced the idea of technologies of the self in more analytical terms (Foucault, 1993, p. 203), defining them as a series of rational techniques involving the subtle integration of coercion and “self-technology” (Foucault, 1993, p. 204). These technologies enable individuals to perform operations upon their bodies, thoughts, conduct, behaviour and actions in order to transform themselves and attain desired states such as happiness, purity or perfection. The concept emphasises the role of self-government within the broader exercise of power, in which individuals are encouraged to alter their conduct in accordance with social and environmental objectives, producing a complex relationship between personal freedom and the mechanisms of power that shape it.

The notion of freedom is central to governing the conduct of selves. Foucault’s reflections suggest that power in (neo)liberal regimes fundamentally relies upon the freedom of individuals (Lorenzini, 2023, p. 8). In contrast to traditional understandings of power as a restriction, at least in part, upon freedom, Foucault’s analysis permits an inverse perspective. Contemporary power encourages individuals to understand themselves and act as free subjects and thereby to participate voluntarily in processes of self-subjection. Liberal forms of government do not rely solely on disciplining individuals. They characteristically govern through the production and organisation of

freedom and through individuals' capacity to govern themselves, while continuing to operate alongside disciplinary and security mechanisms. "Individual freedom provides states legitimacy for the deployment of functional apparatuses of power and knowledge. Indeed, it is freedom that elicits technologies of power. If there are relations of power in every social field, Foucault writes, this is because there is freedom everywhere" (Wiede, 2020). This process involves individuals voluntarily adopting forms of conduct and practices consistent with governmental objectives, thereby becoming participants in their own regulation. In this context, freedom is more than a right to be protected. It is a central element produced and organised by mechanisms of power in order to secure their effectiveness.

According to Foucault, liberalism and neoliberalism govern individuals through their freedom, with particular emphasis upon the freedom of the market. These power/knowledge regimes do not merely advocate or foreground freedom. They actively produce, organise and employ it for specific purposes, which means that individual freedoms are continually shaped and redefined to serve the needs of the market and apparatuses of power (Lorenzini, 2023). The capacity of mechanisms of power to operate effectively depends upon this production of freedom, which is therefore a crucial condition for the exercise of power. Freedom consequently becomes both an instrument and a product of the exercise of power, essential to maintaining its legitimacy and operation. Lorenzini (2023, p. 30) interprets Foucault as suggesting that particular forms of governmentality rely upon a continually reiterated 'I want' to be governed, directed or conducted in a particular way. This continuing consent legitimises governmental measures and ensures their effectiveness. Understanding this dynamic reveals how the self and self-regulation are integral to the operation of structures of power, including in the context of environmental and climate government.

Technologies of the self provide a possible conceptual apparatus for understanding contemporary green citizenship, including within the context of environmental government and sustainability as conceived,

presented, articulated and materialised at EU level. Individuals and collectivities should be understood as neither “coerced” into sustainable and environmentally acceptable practices nor entirely “autonomous” in their green conduct. Governmentality as an approach, and technologies of the self as a conceptual analytical apparatus, indicate that subjectivities are more than passive recipients of state policies or global and EU environmental directives. They participate actively in practices aligned with broader objectives of green environmental sustainability (S. Rutherford, 2007). Such practices include, for example, adopting a green lifestyle, participating in community environmental initiatives and making sustainable consumer choices (Soneryd & Uggla, 2015). Applying Foucault’s concept of technologies of the self demonstrates that these actions are responses to “external” legislation, directives and regulations and also forms of self-government through which individuals modify their conduct in pursuit of environmental objectives (Fletcher & Cortés-Vázquez, 2020).

The concept of technologies of the self foregrounds and illuminates the intersections between personal conduct and wider social objectives. Green citizenship involves individuals assuming responsibility for their ecological footprints through everyday actions. These practices must be recognised as technologies of the self through which individuals “voluntarily” adopt certain practices, relationships with the environment, understandings of sustainable development and approaches to combating climate change. This self-regulation is encouraged by political institutions at different levels, agencies, knowledge frameworks, social discourses and policies that define sustainable living as a personal responsibility and civic duty (Death, 2013, pp. 86–87). Understanding green citizenship through the prism of technologies of the self further emphasises the importance of voluntary participation and personal transformation in achieving sustainability objectives. Individuals do not merely comply with environmental laws. They participate actively in creating a sustainable future. Such participation frequently involves altering or adapting

personal values, norms, habits, behavioural patterns and priorities, so that environmental issues become integral to individual identity and “lifestyle”.

Foucault’s insights into the relationship between freedom and government are particularly important in the context of green citizenship. Mechanisms of power that encourage sustainable and “environmentally conscious” conduct depend upon individuals’ freedom to make choices that support environmental objectives. According to Foucault, freedom is “an interrelational process of constant and open negotiation in which we collectively shape our understanding of what it means to be free, what to resist, and what to submit to” (Malette, 2009, p. 225). Freedom is therefore neither given nor straightforwardly imposed or presented as “guaranteed”. The relevant question concerns the conduct of subjects as green citizens in terms of their self-government.

It is precisely in relation to recognising actual practices and the operation of technologies of the self within green citizenship that the role of education, “empowerment” and awareness-raising in encouraging environmentally acceptable action becomes particularly significant (Blewitt, 2018; Gruenewald, 2004; Masschelein et al., 2006). The declared objective of environmental education initiatives is to equip individuals with the knowledge and skills required to make informed decisions concerning their ecological impacts (Palmer, 2002). By transmitting knowledge and promoting awareness of environmental issues and the benefits of sustainable living, these initiatives direct, frame, encourage and “empower” individuals to adopt green practices as part of their self-government (Blewitt, 2018). Dominant forms of environmental and sustainability-oriented education therefore contribute to articulating the foundations of technologies of the self, which encompass the various techniques individuals employ to transform themselves.

A further dimension of approaching green citizenship through technologies of the self concerns the collective dimension of individual action. Although individual behaviour and practice are

crucial, contemporary constellations articulate environmental action and the struggle against climate change as endeavours or struggles undertaken by groups and communities. Green citizenship entails participation in collective action, including civil society initiatives. These activities are conceived and presented as fostering a sense of shared responsibility and collective empowerment and as reinforcing the idea that individual efforts form part of a broader social movement for sustainability (Bäckstrand & Lövbrand, 2007). Technologies of the self are therefore connected to and directed towards the individual, while simultaneously contributing to the creation of communities of practice in which individuals collectively recognise and construct which environmental problems are to be addressed, what those problems are, how they should be approached, what is effective and what is not, and which responses are appropriate and which are not.

3

THE HISTORY OF ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES AT THE EUROPEAN LEVEL: THE HETEROGENEOUS ORIGINS OF GREEN EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP

The purpose of this chapter is not to provide a comprehensive and detailed account of the development of environmental policies at the European level since the end of the Second World War. Such a genealogy, or historical account and interpretation, would require detailed engagement with the micro-specificities of the legislative, sociopolitical and economic constellations and transformations characteristic of particular periods, which would exceed the scope of this monograph. The discussion therefore focuses on key formative moments, significant ruptures and critical continuities that shaped European environmental, climate and sustainability policies, through which the heterogeneous foundations of the practices and ideas of green European citizenship were also established. By adopting

a narrower focus, we seek to highlight several key changes and continuities without entering into excessively extensive historical detail. Particular attention is devoted to landmark agreements and treaties, legal codifications, transformative political-discursive shifts and the identification of key actors whose interventions shaped the orientation and modes of environmental government at the European level. In this way, we seek to identify and outline how the political environment took shape historically and to define the principal transitions and the forces that drove them. This approach will enable us to establish how particular policies emerged, developed or were displaced, and what broader consequences these changes had for the environmental agenda.

The central objective of this part of the study is to reveal the epistemic foundations, discursive practices, hegemonic narratives and key political actors that make possible the present configuration of environmental policies at the European level and drive the specific government of green citizens. By examining the underlying forms of knowledge and dominant discourses, we seek to disclose the fundamental assumptions and values that orient policy-making processes. Identifying key political actors also contributes to illuminating relations of power by showing how their interests and actions shaped the terrain of environmental policy.

In doing so, we avoid simplified historical accounts that describe a linear and gradual development of environmental policies. Examples include academic contributions that count the number of policy documents adopted during a particular period and interpret their growing number as evidence of increasing importance (Delreux & Happaerts, 2016, p. 13). Although this number may indeed indicate the greater relevance and expanding scope of the field, such conventional approaches frequently neglect the complexity and contingency inseparable from policy development. By departing from such analyses, we seek to provide a more complex understanding of the development of environmental policies, including an examination of the qualitative dimensions of policy formation, the relevant

sociopolitical circumstances, interactions among actors and discursive changes over time. In accordance with the theoretical framework presented in the introductory chapter, the policy field is examined as a contingent domain into which different actors intervene at different historical moments and which is continually intertwined with broader relations and structures of power, as well as with the dominant or hegemonic sociopolitical practices of particular historical periods (Bacchi, 2012, 2023). Environmental policy is therefore interpreted as a site in which problems requiring intervention are constructed. This perspective enables us to understand policy formation as a dynamic process shaped by power relations and sociopolitical contexts rather than as a straightforward, linear development.

This historical perspective enables us to deconstruct these problematisations and identify the conditions of possibility for contemporary constellations and arrangements in the fields of environmental government and responses to climate change. By examining the historical construction and formation of environmental problems, we address the conditions within which present policies and governmental structures materialised.

Environmental policies in Europe after the Second World War and their development within integration processes must therefore be understood as historically conditioned.⁵ The origins of environmental and climate policies are heterogeneous, since they emerged as products of specific forms of knowledge rooted in modernity and as articulations of discourses and practices associated with ideas of nature, environmental care and sustainability. They arose through a complex interaction among scientific discoveries, philosophical reflections and sociopolitical processes and ruptures. The Enlightenment, for example,

5 It should be emphasised that “the environment”, as a concept encompassing almost all contemporary problems associated with the relationship between human beings and nature, is an invention of the 1970s. Before then, discourse focused upon the use and conservation of resources, the protection of nature, urban planning, the maintenance of cleanliness and similar concerns (Meyer, 2012).

introduced a regime of truth that redefined nature as an object of scientific examination and control, thereby establishing foundations for subsequent environmentalist discourses. The relationship between knowledge and power established during this period facilitated the conception of nature as a domain requiring government and care and contributed to the formation of contemporary environmental policies.

In *The Origins of Modern Environmentalism*, Powell (1997) traces the *longue durée* of environmental ideas and demonstrates that nature has for centuries been understood as a source of potential problems requiring human intervention: “Seen in these lights the environment has always presented ‘issues’, and human interest has been most enlivened by change or the prospect of change” (Powell, 1997, p. 275). This perception of nature as a problematic entity points to a historical continuity in which environmental challenges are constructed as issues to be addressed through human inventiveness and regulatory frameworks. The enduring conception of environmental problems as pressing social concerns has therefore been integral to the development of contemporary environmental policies.

At the same time, the modern imperative to subordinate nature to human will and exploit its resources constituted a dominant discourse, as discussed by Headrick (2019) and Powell (1997). Linton (2014) interprets the perception and government of water, showing how it was discursively rearticulated as a resource in the modern era. He observes, for example, that “the main epistemological effects of modern water are to drive out its social content, to render water ahistorical, to reduce it to an abstract quantity and make it amenable to the application of instrumental reason” (Linton, 2014, p. 113). This reductionist understanding of water as a resource underpins the perspective and mechanisms through which nature was to be mastered, abstracted from its sociohistorical contexts and subjected to instrumental rationality.

The same applies to the concept of sustainability, which is frequently understood as an entirely contemporary innovation. Warde (2018)

emphasises that the concept of sustainability is deeply rooted in historical contexts extending back to the sixteenth century. He traces one of its origins to eighteenth-century theories of circulation, which emphasised balance and renewal in the use of resources. These early epistemic frameworks and practices at least resemble contemporary principles of sustainability and contributed to the articulation of sustainable environmental government within modern regimes, including at the European level. Warde's analysis thus demonstrates how new ways of understanding nature and the possibilities of governing it emerged in particular historical periods and thereby contributed to shaping contemporary understandings of sustainability.

All these frameworks for understanding nature and particular natural elements became intertwined within the regimes of environmental government that emerged after the Second World War and during the processes of European integration. Discursive formations concerning nature, advances in scientific knowledge and transformations in philosophical perspectives contributed to the contemporary apparatus of environmental policy. The incorporation of environmental considerations and the formation of policies within European integration processes must also be understood as the sedimentation of these historical discourses and practices.

3.1 CONTEXTS AND ARTICULATIONS OF ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES AT THE EUROPEAN LEVEL IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE SECOND WORLD WAR

The prevailing account begins from the observation that no environmental policies existed at the European level immediately after the Second World War, since attention was directed entirely towards post-war reconstruction. In this regard, Delreux and Happaerts (2016, p. 12) argue that the founding fathers of European integration did not mention environmental policy in the first European treaties, leaving the legal basis for environmental protection extremely limited. Burnete and Ogunmokun (2017, pp. 42–43) make a similar observation,

emphasising that “odd though it may seem, vital environment problems were practically ignored until the post-World War II period” and that “the lack of action on the purpose of saving the environment also characterized the two decades after World War”.

The perceived and actual absence of a formalised political and legal framework for environmental protection at the European level does not render this period irrelevant. Our position is that key processes began to take shape in this field which, although they were neither captured nor articulated in legal codifications, established the initial and subsequent directions of environmental policy development in Europe.

It must first be recognised that the Second World War had a destructive impact on the natural environment as well as on human infrastructure. Tikhomirov (2006) emphasises that the war caused considerable environmental degradation, while the extensive use of military technology contributed to even greater extraction of natural resources. Numerous ecosystems across many European regions were destroyed or at least damaged, while pollution caused by warfare and the widespread use of heavy machinery had markedly negative environmental consequences.

While the war produced extensive degradation, post-war reconstruction in Europe contributed further to the pollution of the natural environment across the continent. Pál (2017, pp. 41–42) emphasises that substantial degradation occurred during this period because reconstruction efforts prioritised economic recovery over ecological concerns. Industrial pollution in the late 1940s and the 1950s was frequently regarded as unavoidable: “industrial pollution is a nuisance which ‘must be accepted’ in the interest of ‘industrialization’” (Pál, 2017, p. 42). This finding is also present in Meyer’s (2020) analysis, which connects the post-war economic boom with the expansion of mass consumerism, motorisation and the chemical revolution. The introduction of chemicals substantially increased agricultural productivity, while simultaneously producing harmful effects upon landscapes and biodiversity. Economic growth operated as a mantra and frequently overshadowed emerging environmental concerns.

The strong emphasis on economic recovery did not mean that alternative voices were absent. Environmental movements began to take shape after the Second World War in both West and East Germany, for example (Meyer, 2020; see also Nehring, 2009). Meyer (2020) observes that these movements built upon earlier efforts, extending back to the period before the First World War and the interwar years, to address and remedy different dimensions of environmental problems and to resist degradation. Although limited in scope, these early initiatives established foundations for environmental movements at different levels, including both the international (Jundt, 2014) and the local. One such episode was the Great Smog of London in 1952, which represented a pivotal moment in the development of environmental movements and heightened awareness of the consequences of industrial development. Wilson (2014) observes that this catastrophic event contributed significantly to broader awareness of the severe effects of air pollution upon human health and encouraged both public and governmental action. This episode in London's history led to the establishment of networks and movements devoted to environmental protection and significantly influenced the development of environmentalism in the United Kingdom and elsewhere (Wilson, 2014). The environmental consequences of continuing industrial activity and reconstruction became increasingly evident, heightening public awareness and concern. At the same time, the first local environmental movements and emerging forms of global environmentalism began to appear, while movements that were initially dispersed and local also started to combine their efforts and seek synergies.

In the period immediately following the Second World War, it is necessary to recognise the political processes through which Europe was constituted as a domain of economic integration, an entity to be governed and regulated. In this context, Haahr and Walters (2004, pp. 10–11) observe: “European integration implies a mutation in the logic of power. [...] [O]ne sees - questions of power and rule reformulated in terms of the governance of social and economic processes. [...]”

The most significant of these is surely the emergence following World War Two of a European economy as a presupposition and institutionalised object of policy". This conception of Europe as an entity that could be governed, directed and articulated as an economic domain reinforced a collective European identity, while principles of environmental government were subtly incorporated into the broader discourse of economic and political unity. As economic integration advanced, the increasingly interdependent European states eventually also emphasised the need for shared environmental government, as the following analysis will demonstrate.

3.2 THE FIRST FORMAL LEGAL FOUNDATIONS AND CODIFICATIONS OF ENVIRONMENTAL MEASURES AT THE EUROPEAN LEVEL: FROM THE TREATY ESTABLISHING THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY (1957) TO THE END OF THE 1960s

One of the most important formal legal foundations for the formative phase of European environmental policy was the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community (EEC). Adopted in 1957 and also known as the Treaty of Rome, the treaty continued the process of European integration after the Second World War. Its principal objective was to promote economic cooperation among European states and thereby achieve the highest possible degree of interdependence in this field (Parker, 2012; Streit & Mussler, 1995). Within this initial integration of European states into an economic community, early environmental policies served primarily economic objectives, particularly the construction of the common market. Their central purpose was therefore not environmental protection as such, but the reduction of trade barriers among the member states of the economic community. Environmental measures consequently resulted from the strengthening of "competition policy" (Knill & Liefferink, 2021, p. 14).

Although the Treaty of Rome contained no explicit references to the environment, it included three provisions that were subsequently

interpreted and justified by the EEC institutions as foundations for environmental measures at the European level. The first appeared in the Treaty's preamble, which stated that one of the central objectives of cooperation among the states was to pursue "the essential objective of their efforts the constant improvement of the living and working conditions of their peoples" (European Economic Community, 1957). This was interpreted as providing a justification for measures to prevent environmental pollution as a means of improving living conditions (Hildebrand, 1993). Second, Article 2 of the Treaty, which described the objectives of the EEC, included the aim of achieving "an accelerated raising of the standard of living" (European Economic Community, 1957). European institutions subsequently interpreted this objective to mean that raising living standards also encompassed environmental measures or policies as part of improving living conditions (Hildebrand, 1993). Third, Article 36 permitted exceptions to the removal of restrictions on trade within Europe and allowed measures based upon considerations such as the protection of the life and health of humans, animals and plants (European Economic Community, 1957).

The Treaty was therefore interpreted substantively in a particular manner and enabled the articulation of the idea that environmental problems should also be addressed at the European level as matters of common concern to the member states. In the absence of a specific legal basis for adopting and implementing such measures, early environmental action was justified under Article 100 of the Treaty establishing the EEC (European Economic Community, 1957). This article stipulated that, acting unanimously on a proposal from the Commission, the Council should issue directives for the approximation of national laws and other regulations directly affecting the functioning of the common market (European Economic Community, 1957). This broad provision made it possible to adopt legislation intended to harmonise product-related environmental regulations, including rules concerning vehicle emissions and the classification, packaging and labelling of dangerous substances (Delreux & Happaerts, 2016).

On this basis, several pieces of environmental legislation were adopted by the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, addressing issues such as vehicle emissions, permissible noise levels and the handling of dangerous chemical substances. The significance of these measures lies in more than their number. European institutions also began actively discussing and formulating environmental policies. As Meyer (2024) observes, the European Parliament began discussing environmental issues in the late 1950s, initially focusing on pollution of the River Rhine and the problem of acid rain in Europe, particularly in Scandinavia. These early discussions signalled the first attempts to frame environmental issues at the European level and to develop a systematic approach to regulating the environment within the European Community, thereby preparing the ground for subsequent policies over the following decades.

From our perspective, the early development of European environmental policies is crucial, although it is not usually recognised as such.⁶ It marks the emergence of environmental government as a distinct field. The Treaty of Rome and the subsequent measures of economic integration can be understood as part of a broader governmental rationality that began to treat, define and materialise the environment as a problem requiring government and regulation. This initial phase of environmental policy within the economic rationality of the European Economic Community was crucial to establishing the foundations for the institutionalisation of environmental government. As already emphasised, the Treaty of Rome focused primarily on economic cooperation and the creation of the common market, yet it contained provisions that were subsequently interpreted as justifying environmental measures at the supranational level. This radical interpretation illuminates how environmental issues were

6 Hildebrand (1993), for example, characterises the early policies of the 1950s as accidental and as an “incident”. His purpose is to emphasise that they did not constitute a systematic approach and that the policies were not comprehensive. Our position, by contrast, is precisely that such “accidental” policies were essential and constitutive to the articulation of the field of environmental policy at the European level.

gradually incorporated into the governmental structures of the EEC. References to the improvement of living and working conditions and the inclusion of health and safety exceptions to restrictions on trade provided a basis for the early framing of environmental issues. This was a process of problematisation through which the environment began to appear as a field requiring regulation, thereby establishing a new discursive space in which environmental questions were expressed and addressed through the prism of economic rationality. Furthermore, discussions of pollution within European institutions, including those concerning the Rhine and acid rain, illustrate the early mobilisation of actors who sought to define and govern environmental problems. The involvement of these actors in defining and addressing environmental issues marked the beginning of a governmental regime centred upon the environment.

The broader sociopolitical contexts that contributed to the further development of European environmental policies over the following two decades must also be considered. The rise of environmentalism in Europe during the 1960s and early 1970s should be understood as an expression of the complex interaction between new scientific discourses and a changing sociopolitical environment. Highly influential works such as Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962)⁷ and Paul Ehrlich's *Population Bomb* (1968) reflected the growing awareness of environmental problems at the time by explaining the harmful effects of pesticide use and rapid population growth upon the biosphere. The Club of Rome further crystallised this discourse in *Limits to Growth* (Meadows et al., 1972) and predicted the possible consequences of

7 It should be emphasised here that Rachel Carson's book had a considerable impact and undoubtedly contributed to the popularisation of environmental issues during the 1960s. At the same time, we do not understand this work as the "beginning" of environmentalism, as is frequently assumed, a point also raised by Montrie (2018).

unrestricted economic and demographic expansion.⁸ These scientific warnings also heightened public awareness of the need to govern the environment at the supranational level.

The sociopolitical context of the 1960s and 1970s, marked by widespread social upheaval and sharp criticism of established norms, created the terrain for the heterogeneous formation of environmental movements and civil society initiatives addressing environmental issues (Müller-Rommel, 2019, pp. 1–2). The countercultural movements of the 1960s, which sharply criticised the increasingly pronounced materialism and unrestricted consumerism of Western societies, provided a foundation for emerging environmental movements and produced a particular synthesis upon which they drew (Häberlen, 2023; Kirk, 2007). Influential environmental organisations such as Greenpeace emerged during this period (Zelko, 2013), and its early campaigns against nuclear testing and commercial whaling foregrounded the ethical demands of environmentalism.⁹

3.3 CONSOLIDATING THE GOVERNMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES AT THE EUROPEAN LEVEL IN THE 1970S AND 1980S AND THE FIRST FOUNDATIONS FOR FRAMING THE PARTICIPATION OF EUROPEAN CITIZENS

The United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, held in Stockholm in 1972, played an exceptionally important role

8 It must be noted that Limits to Growth constitutes an entirely neoliberal articulation of “concern” for the environment. It does not question the problematic character of the capitalist system and its destructive consequences for society and the natural environment, but advances arguments concerning how the uninterrupted stability of capitalism can be secured: “The Club directly linked the need to manage global environmental problems with the need for supranational institutions capable of ensuring economic stability for multinational corporations” (Nelson, 2015, p. 467).

9 Heightened awareness of environmental problems also contributed to the formation of green political parties. Green parties began to emerge precisely during the 1970s (Müller-Rommel, 1985).

in increasing the visibility of environmental issues and fostering awareness of the need for environmental government at the international or global level. It therefore exerted a significant influence upon European environmental policy at the time. The Stockholm Declaration produced by the conference emphasised the urgency of addressing environmental challenges and encouraged governments throughout the world to incorporate environmental considerations into their political programmes.

One must use knowledge to build in collaboration with nature a better environment. To defend and improve the human environment for present and future generations has become an imperative goal for mankind – a goal to be pursued together with, and in harmony with, the established and fundamental goals of peace and of world-wide economic and social development (United Nations, 1972, p. 3).

This international development, together with the increasingly dominant discourse and formations of knowledge concerning environmental degradation, resource exploitation and the associated limits to growth, encouraged changes in European states' approaches to environmental government. The Stockholm Conference's emphasis upon the urgency of action established foundations for incorporating environmental policies into broader political and economic frameworks and strengthened the environmental agenda at both global and European levels.

Following the Stockholm Conference, the Paris Summit of October 1972 constituted a landmark event in European environmental policy. The summit brought together the heads of state or government of the six EEC member states and the acceding states, the United Kingdom, Ireland and Denmark, primarily to strengthen political cooperation. The summit declaration also devoted particular attention to the environment:

Economic expansion, which is not an end in itself, must as a priority help to attenuate the disparities in living conditions. It must develop

with the participation of both sides of industry. It must emerge in an improved quality as well as an improved standard of life. In the European spirit special attention will be paid to non-material values and wealth and to protection of the environment so that progress shall serve mankind; (Commission of the European Communities, 1972, pp. 15–16).

This section of the Paris Summit declaration explicitly addressed environmental problems, particularly in relation to economic matters and economic cooperation in Europe. The environment was not rationalised exclusively through an economic prism, since a social dimension was also present. At the same time, the declaration established an imperative to govern the environment and affirmed the necessity of its regulation. This was not presented as an end in itself, but as necessary to ensure, in the words of the declaration, that progress would serve humanity. Environmental protection was therefore expected to benefit people.

Article 8 of the Paris Summit declaration was also important, as the leaders of the Community's member states referred directly to the importance of "Community environmental policies". They called upon the Community institutions to prepare an action programme with a precise timetable by 31 July 1973, that is, within one year. As Delreux and Happaerts (2016) observe, this declaration represented the first explicit mandate from the member states authorising the European institutions to undertake policy action in the environmental field. It therefore marked a shift towards recognising environmental protection as an essential dimension of European integration.

In response to the Paris Summit's call, the European Commission established an "Environment and Consumer Protection Service" within the Directorate-General for Industry. This working group provided the foundation for the subsequent establishment of the Directorate-General for the Environment (DG Environment) in 1981 (Delreux & Happaerts, 2016, p. 19). Before the prescribed deadline expired, the Commission prepared an action programme, which was approved in November 1973 (Hildebrand, 1993). The programme described various measures and projects intended to

reduce environmental pollution and coordinate the activities of the member states within international organisations. The principle of preventive action and the “polluter pays” principle were articulated for the first time in an official Community environmental programme, further consolidating a particular discourse concerning how the environment could be governed at the European level. The precautionary principle was incorporated into the Treaty framework only later, by the Maastricht Treaty.

The First Environmental Action Programme, adopted following the Paris Summit, established several fundamental principles of European environmental policy (Council of the European Communities, 1973). It presented economic development, prosperity and environmental protection as interdependent, while defining environmental protection as one of the Community’s essential tasks. Its key objectives were the prevention, reduction and control of environmental damage, the preservation of ecological balance and the rational use of natural resources. Machin (2019) critically interprets the programme’s particular discourse and demonstrates that the compatibility of economic objectives and the environmental dimension was already a central concern. On the one hand, the document stated that economic expansion was not an end in itself. On the other, it clearly stipulated that environmental policy had to be implemented in a manner that did not jeopardise the satisfactory functioning of the common market. The document recognised neither a contradiction between environmental and economic objectives nor any potential mutual benefit. The objectives were instead to be reconciled, since environmental policy could and should be compatible with economic and social development. The Community should adopt environmental protection measures in a manner that reconciled this objective with the satisfactory functioning of the common market (Machin, 2019).¹⁰

10 In addition to the first action programme, two further programmes were adopted during the period addressed in this subsection, covering 1977–1981 and 1982–1986. The third programme is particularly relevant in terms of discursive change, since it began to present environmental policy as an opportunity rather than focusing exclusively on environmental protection, including as a means of addressing economic problems such as unemployment (Machin, 2019).

Alongside the First Environmental Action Programme, the role of the Court of Justice of the European Communities must be emphasised in relation to the formal legal foundations established during this period. As Delreux and Happaerts (2016, p. 23) note, the initial treaties contained no direct legal codification of environmental policies. In this context, the Court's actions and judgments were crucial to the development of European environmental policy. The Court played an important role in supporting the expansion of environmental policy at the European level by advocating a broad interpretation of legislative competence that had not been explicitly defined in the Treaty of Rome. This judicial support provided a legal basis for the developing framework of environmental government within the European Community (Delreux & Happaerts, 2016).

Two sets of cases decided between 1972 and 1987 were relevant to this process, as they legitimised the use of Articles 100 and 235 of the EEC Treaty as appropriate legal bases for environmental measures (Koppen, 2005). Through its judgments, the Court confirmed that Article 100 could serve as a basis for environmental legislation, particularly when the harmonisation of environmental measures at the European level was necessary to eliminate barriers to trade within the European Community and was therefore primarily intended to realise the common market. In Cases 68/81 to 73/81, the Court also confirmed the use of Article 235 of the Treaty (European Economic Community, 1957), thereby recognising environmental policy as an "implicit competence" of the European Economic Community (Delreux & Happaerts, 2016). This interpretation meant that, although environmental policy was not explicitly specified in the Treaties, the Court's judgments established it as a legitimate and necessary dimension of European government (Koppen, 2005).

In addition to the Court's judgments, which consolidated the government of environmental matters at the European level, two European Council summits during the 1980s were also important. In June 1983, the Stuttgart European Council encouraged a shift towards stronger and accelerated measures to combat environmental pollution

at the national, Community and international levels (European Council, 1983, pp. 206–207). This orientation further consolidated environmental government and, importantly, emphasised the need for simultaneous action at several levels. At its Brussels meeting in March 1985, the European Council further embedded environmental policy within the European Community's principal operational fields by declaring it a fundamental component of economic, industrial, agricultural and social policy (Delreux & Happaerts, 2016).

It is important to note that European environmental policy during this early period was not yet explicitly focused upon citizen participation or the involvement of local communities. Institutional development resulted primarily from intergovernmental agreements, Commission initiatives and judicial interpretations rather than from bottom-up citizen mobilisation. Nevertheless, some ideas concerning public participation and contribution were already present in the political discourse of the period. For example, Chapter 3 of the First Programme of Action of the European Communities on the Environment, concerning urban development and the improvement of amenities, clearly stated:

In areas where the natural environment and the countryside has hitherto been fairly well preserved, it is essential that this state of affairs be maintained through measures relating to agricultural structures. It is the best means whereby these areas can attract people and new activities. They will thus be able to fulfil aspirations and a need for balance, which are no longer merely regional or national preoccupations but the common concern of all the peoples of the Community (Council of the European Communities, 1973).

This formulation is important because it identifies environmental preservation as the “common concern of all the peoples” and thereby implicitly indicates that environmental issues are not confined to technocratic government but concern the aspirations and needs of European citizens as a whole. Although this position had not yet been translated into formal mechanisms of public participation, it offered

preliminary formulations oriented towards a more European mode of environmental government, within which the conduct of people and populations in European states was also framed and directed.

Despite the absence of explicit participatory frameworks during this period, the institutional and legal developments described above collectively established a robust framework within which European “green” citizens could eventually emerge and act as significant political agents. The establishment of formal Community environmental policies on the basis of the Paris Summit mandate, the codification of environmental principles in the action programmes and the Court’s judicial legitimation of environmental competences created a multidimensional governmental structure that later articulated and enabled civic environmental engagement. By defining environmental protection as a task serving humanity and requiring the involvement of “all social partners”, early policy documents already identified the essential role of citizen participation in environmental government.

3.4 IN SEARCH OF COMPATIBILITY BETWEEN THE MARKET AND ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES: 1987–1992

The adoption of the Single European Act, which took place in 1986 and entered into force on 1 July 1987, must be recognised as one of the key moments in the development of European environmental policies. The foreign ministers of the twelve Member States signed the document in two stages, nine at Luxembourg on 17 February 1986 and three at The Hague on 28 February 1986. It resulted from lengthy negotiations within an intergovernmental conference and brought together in a single text provisions relating “in particular, to the reform of the Community institutions, to the extension of the powers and responsibilities of the Community and to cooperation in the sphere of European foreign policy” (CVCE, 2016). In addition, the Single European Act was “an essential stage in the completion of the single market as it enabled attainment of the 1992 Objective

to be speeded up and supported” (CVCE, 2016). To understand why this treaty came about and the role it subsequently played in European environmental policies, it is first necessary to examine its background.

The Single European Act represented an important step towards the economic and political integration of European states with the aim of creating a single market characterised by the free movement of goods, services, labour and capital. The purpose of the SEA was to remove non-tariff barriers and improve decision-making at Community level by extending qualified-majority voting, particularly for measures connected with the completion of the internal market, while unanimity remained required in several policy fields. The objective was to secure convergence among the economic and monetary policies of the Member States and thereby enable a more integrated and competitive European market (Koch, 2023).

The sociopolitical framework within which the SEA was formulated was strongly influenced by the economic and political crisis of the 1970s. That decade was marked by stagflation, the oil crisis and growing economic disparities among EEC states (Koch, 2023). These crises indicated the need for a more coherent economic policy and greater cooperation among European states in order to secure stability and growth. The 1984 Fontainebleau Summit laid the foundations for this transformation by resolving the British budgetary dispute and unblocking the integration process. The Commission's 1985 White Paper on completing the internal market then set out the programme for a single market, and the Milan European Council of June 1985 convened the intergovernmental conference that produced the Single European Act. These steps culminated in the Maastricht Treaty of 1992 (Koch, 2023). It is important to recognise that the content of the SEA was not the product of wholly unified visions among European leaders, but emerged through complex negotiations involving the different economic interests of the principal EEC

Member States, particularly the United Kingdom, France and West Germany (Koch, 2023).¹¹

Ultimately, the SEA was not a straightforward reflection of British neoliberalism, but a multidimensional agreement shaped by the competing interests and strategies of key actors. Although the Single European Act emerged through a complex process of negotiation among different national interests, it was fundamentally grounded in an economistic rationale that prioritised market efficiency and economic liberalisation. This emphasis on economic integration through the removal of trade barriers and the harmonisation of regulations was inherently favourable to neoliberal principles centred on free markets and competition. By enabling the free movement of goods, services, labour and capital, the SEA laid the foundations for a more neoliberal Europe (see Haahr & Walters, 2004, pp. 58–63).

Why is the Single European Act relevant to environmental policies at the European level? The treaty substantially altered the manner in which these policies were adopted and implemented by granting the Community new competences in this field. This change was institutionalised through the introduction of “Title VII – Environment”, which provided an explicit legal basis for European environmental policy (European Communities, 1986). As already shown, before the SEA environmental measures were generally justified primarily as necessary for the operation of the common market, whereas the treaty established the environmental field, at least nominally, as an autonomous domain (Delreux & Happaerts, 2016). This shift enabled the European Community to move from a reactive approach that

11 British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher initially advocated a minimalist neoliberal Europe, but she had to contend with the ordoliberal position of West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl and the neo-mercantilist approach of French President François Mitterrand. Despite her efforts, including her attempt to influence the negotiations through her economic adviser, Lord Arthur Cockfield, Thatcher's vision was moderated by the broader European consensus. Cockfield's detailed 1985 Commission White Paper, which set out measures for removing barriers within the Community, played a crucial role in shaping the SEA, although some in the United Kingdom regarded it as excessively supranational (Koch, 2023).

addressed environmental issues as they arose towards a more proactive position involving policies directly oriented towards environmental preservation and sustainability. The incorporation of Articles 130r, 130s and 130t, now Articles 191, 192 and 193 TFEU, established the fundamental objectives and principles of European environmental policy and its legislative procedures (European Communities, 1986).

It is also relevant to recognise that the Single European Act introduced decision-making reforms that were essential to achieving the “1992” objective of completing the internal market. These changes included strengthening the role of the European Parliament and extending the use of qualified-majority voting in the Council. The treaty introduced the cooperation procedure, which increased the Parliament’s legislative influence, particularly in relation to measures concerning the internal market. Under Article 100a, internal-market harmonisation measures, including measures with environmental implications, could generally be adopted by qualified majority. Environmental action adopted directly under the new Article 130s, however, generally continued to require unanimity, although the Council could unanimously determine matters on which decisions would subsequently be taken by qualified majority. The Single European Act therefore did not remove the unanimity requirement from environmental policy as a whole, but it created procedural routes through which some environmentally relevant measures could be adopted more efficiently and with a reduced possibility of obstruction by individual Member States. At least at the institutional and declarative levels, these reforms facilitated a more dynamic and responsive approach to environmental government at the European level and enabled certain measures to be adopted more rapidly in response to emerging challenges (Delreux & Happaerts, 2016, p. 28).

The adoption of the Single European Act was not an isolated process. The broader sociopolitical constellations have already been indicated. From the perspective of the treatment and government of environmental issues, however, it is particularly important that

the 1980s witnessed a new articulation of environmental problems at the international level through the emergence of the discourse of sustainable development.

The international consolidation of the discourse of sustainable development and the strengthening of the European communities' role in the international environmental sphere

Although some authors emphasise the exceptional heterogeneity of the origins of the discourse, practices and policies of sustainable development (Springett & Redclift, 2019; Warde, 2018), contemporary understandings and semantic dimensions of the concept are grounded in the 1970s. The rise and consolidation of sustainable development are associated with the previously mentioned United Nations Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm, Sweden, in 1972, which represented a key moment in the international discourse on environmental issues. One of the essential outcomes of the Stockholm Conference was the articulation of the inseparable connection between environment and development, captured in the statement that these priorities were “two sides of the same coin” (United Nations, 1972). Despite the establishment of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), which was intended to contribute at least partly to the search for environmental solutions, the conference had a limited impact because it failed to connect environmental protection more closely and substantively with developmental needs, particularly those of developing countries.

The 1980s were dominated by neoliberalism and the idea of accelerating unrestricted economic globalisation (see, for example, Ohmae, 1990), promoted through the policies of leaders such as Ronald Reagan in the United States and Margaret Thatcher in the United Kingdom (Harvey, 2005). The World Bank increasingly intervened in the economic and social policies of Third World countries, further increasing the complexity of relations among different actors. Within this dynamic, one of the key questions concerned how poverty in

developing countries could be reduced without increasing global and local environmental pressures. A central tension can therefore be identified between practices and ideas directed towards accelerating economic growth at an increasingly intensive global level, on the one hand, and an increasingly clear awareness of the problems associated with the excessive exploitation of natural resources and the environmental consequences of human activity, on the other. This period consequently witnessed extensive reflection and numerous attempts to reconcile economic development with environmental protection. Views differed as to whether local environmental problems resulted from local development or from unrestrained global capitalism, which compelled low-income countries to exploit their environments (Gibbs, 2003).

The establishment of the World Commission on Environment and Development in 1983 represented an important step towards addressing these questions. The Commission, known as the Brundtland Commission, was entrusted with formulating a global programme for sustainable development (Gibbs, 1996), as its chair herself explained at the inaugural event: “[T]oday’s development is not sustainable. Rather it is based upon a squandering of our ‘biological’ capital our soils, forests, animal and plant species, even our water and air. It consumes its own ecological foundations” (Brundtland, 1985). Within a few years, the Commission produced the report entitled *Our Common Future* (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987), which offered the now classical definition of sustainable development: “In essence, sustainable development is a process of change in which the exploitation of resources, the direction of investments, the orientation of technological development; and institutional change are all in harmony and enhance both current and future potential to meet human needs and aspirations” (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987, p. 8). Through this definition, the Commission sought to emphasise the necessity of addressing environmental problems in the context of expanding economic activity and the associated exploitation

of resources and other forms of intervention in the environment (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987, pp. 4–5). Although the report received largely positive responses, it was also subject to criticism, particularly concerning some of the problematic premises of sustainable development (Jacob, 1994). Despite such criticism, the concept gained political momentum, and the Brundtland Commission's report contributed substantially to establishing sustainable development as a fundamental framework for integrating environmental and developmental objectives into subsequent international policies (Sneddon et al., 2006).

From our perspective, the emergence of the discourse of sustainable development must also be understood through the prism of power relations and dynamics among different actors and the production of knowledge, which also involved transformations in traditional conceptions of sovereignty and new articulations of government (Luke, 1995b). In this context, Luke (1995b) emphasises that sustainable development implies the possibility of treating and managing nature as a system that can be measured, monitored, shaped, directed and adjusted so that it supplies resources in sufficient quantities for the production of the material goods required by humanity. The paradigm of sustainable development is founded upon this assumption and becomes a new form, or nexus, of power and knowledge. It confers authority upon a series of agencies and other actors at local and supranational levels through the mobilisation of new forms of knowledge about national economies and states that generally prioritise development, frequently at the expense of environmental degradation (Luke, 1995b, pp. 28–29). This discourse shifts attention from the idea of bounded state territories towards local and supranational levels at which actors pursue sustainable ecosystems. It incorporates both straightforward ecological and complex economic considerations and thereby reshapes the circuits of biopower, the regulation and government of life itself (Luke, 1995b, p. 29). In this context, the discourse of sustainable development does more than encompass, articulate and establish environmental and developmental

objectives. It also redefines power and government in the context of global environmental challenges. At the same time, the discourse of sustainable development remains firmly embedded in the imperative of capital accumulation, reorganising the conditions under which economic expansion and the exploitation of nature may continue. Environmental limits are thereby incorporated into the calculations of development rather than treated as grounds for questioning the prevailing organisation of production and consumption.

In relation to this new global regime of environmental government, it is essential that the European Communities took a major step forward as an actor by gaining recognition as a negotiating partner in the international arena, explicitly including in the field of environmental policy (Delreux & Happaerts, 2016, p. 28). The period around the transition from the 1980s to the 1990s was therefore marked by the active participation of the European Communities in international organisations, including at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.¹² Their participation in the conference, at which they presented a report on the state of environmental measures

12 The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, marked one of the key moments in the development of global environmental governance and policymaking. The summit brought together representatives of 179 countries, non-governmental organisations and experts from various scientific disciplines to address the complex interrelationship between human activities and the environment. The concept of sustainable development formed the central focus of the discussions and became established as a framework for balancing economic growth, social justice and environmental protection. The conference emphasised that these dimensions were interconnected and had to be addressed together in order to ensure long-term sustainability (United Nations, 2024b). One of the meeting's most important outcomes was the adoption of Agenda 21, a comprehensive action plan intended to guide international cooperation on sustainable development in the twenty-first century. Agenda 21 proposed a range of innovative strategies, extending from the sustainable management of resources to equitable economic practices and strengthened educational initiatives. These recommendations were intended to promote a global framework in which economic progress would not compromise environmental integrity or social equality. In addition, the Rio Declaration and the principles articulated at the summit laid important foundations for international environmental law and cooperation (United Nations, 2024b).

(Commission of the European Communities, 1992),¹³ was also important because they participated as a signatory to key international agreements, including the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (United Nations, 2024b). As a signatory, the Communities subsequently had to comply with the relevant arrangements and commitments, which also influenced the formation and content of environmental and climate government at the European level.

The European Environment Agency and the production of environmental knowledge

Alongside participation in the international arena, an important development within European integration processes at the transition from the 1980s to the 1990s was the articulation and establishment of the foundations for the European Environment Agency (EEA). This represented a key step towards collecting, accumulating and analysing data on environmental problems and formulating policy at the European level. The establishment of the EEA was formalised by a Council Regulation of 7 May 1990 (Council of the European Communities, 1990), which simultaneously established the European Environment Information and Observation Network. Although its legal basis was adopted in 1990, the Agency began operating from its headquarters in Copenhagen in 1994. From the outset, the EEA's task was to provide "objective, reliable and comparable" environmental data throughout Europe that "will enable the Community and

13 At the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992, the European Communities presented their framework for environmental policy and sustainable development. They emphasised their commitment to integrating environmental considerations across all areas of policymaking. Central to the presentation was the principle of subsidiarity, according to which action at the European Community level is justified only when it can improve environmental outcomes more effectively than measures undertaken independently by the Member States. The Communities also outlined their participation in international environmental agreements and conventions, thereby demonstrating their commitment to global cooperation in addressing environmental challenges (Commission of the European Communities, 1992).

the Member States to take the requisite measures to protect the environment, to assess the results of such measures and to ensure that the public is properly informed about the state of the environment” (Council of the European Communities, 1990). As Dilling (2000) observes, the institution was intended to overcome the fragmentation of environmental knowledge in Europe and to pursue a more coordinated and standardised approach to environmental information. From the perspective of the exercise of power in the environmental field, the establishment of the EEA was exceptionally important because it created a body dedicated to collecting and organising knowledge and to producing it, thereby making it possible to identify and articulate particular environmental problems requiring concrete responses or measures. In this sense, its establishment represented a normative shift towards a structured and institutionalised form of environmental knowledge acquisition and policymaking. It ensured that the Community and its Member States could rely upon “true” data as a basis for environmental protection measures and public awareness (Dilling, 2000).

The Europeanisation of environmental policymaking during this period was also accompanied by a considerable increase in the participation of non-state actors, including environmental non-governmental organisations and economically oriented lobbying groups (Hey, 2007). The expansion of competences and the supranational dynamics of European environmental policy attracted these groups, which increasingly directed their efforts towards the European level. Organisations such as the European Environmental

Bureau (EEB)¹⁴ and other Brussels-based actors played a key role in this new environment by lobbying for sustainable policies and contributing to the policymaking process. This period was crucial in the gradual incorporation of various actors, including civil society, into the network through which green measures were exercised at the European level. Thus, these actors formed a constellation that strengthened the legitimacy and diversity of European environmental policies.

3.5 FROM THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE EUROPEAN UNION TO THE END OF THE FIRST DECADE OF THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY: THE EXPANSION OF ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES AND GOVERNMENT AT THE EUROPEAN LEVEL

The Maastricht Treaty, the environmental dimension and the codification of EU citizenship

The Maastricht Treaty represented one of the key shifts in the development of European environmental policies, marking a change in the discourse concerning both the substance and the governing of

14 The European Environmental Bureau (EEB) describes itself as the largest network of environmental civil society organisations in Europe, bringing together more than 180 member organisations from 41 countries. It states that it represents a substantial constituency of approximately 30 million individual members and supporters who share a commitment to sustainable development, environmental justice and participatory democracy (European Environmental Bureau, 2024). The EEB identifies its principal mission as advocating progressive environmental policies within the European Union, focusing on a broad range of issues, including climate change, biodiversity conservation, circular economy practices and various forms of pollution control concerning air, water, soil and chemical pollutants. It also states that its influence extends beyond Europe, as it actively contributes to global sustainable development efforts through partnerships with international organisations such as the United Nations and the OECD, particularly in advancing the global sustainable development agenda. The EEB emphasises its role in promoting policies grounded in scientific research and in fostering a transparent and inclusive approach to environmental governance at both the European and international levels (European Environmental Bureau, 2024).

this field. The treaty establishing the EU entered into force in 1993 and continued the developmental trajectory initiated by the Single European Act, although with a critical redirection of institutional priorities and regulatory frameworks. The Maastricht Treaty established the EU upon three pillars: the European Communities, the Common Foreign and Security Policy, and Justice and Home Affairs. The first pillar, comprising the European Community (the renamed EEC) together with the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom) and the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), was particularly important for environmental policies (Knill & Liefferink, 2013, p. 20). It must first be emphasised that the Maastricht Treaty connected the European Community's traditional economic orientation more explicitly with the environmental dimension and indicated a paradigmatic shift in political discourse (Hildebrand, 1993, p. 37). The Treaty's preamble already expressed a commitment to promoting the economy while simultaneously emphasising the environment. The signatories undertook "to promote economic and social progress for their peoples, taking into account the principle of sustainable development and within the context of the accomplishment of the internal market and of reinforced cohesion and environmental protection" (European Union, 1992). Environmental themes were articulated in the treaty through the discourse of sustainable development. This is already evident in Article 2, which defined the central task of the EU as:

to promote throughout the Community a harmonious and balanced development of economic activities, sustainable and non-inflationary growth respecting the environment, a high degree of convergence of economic performance, a high level of employment and of social protection, the raising of the standard of living and quality of life, and economic and social cohesion and solidarity among Member State (European Union, 1992).

Hildebrand (1993, pp. 37–38) emphasises that environment-related matters, including sustainable development, thereby acquired a central position and became an integral part of the Union's operation.

The Treaty further consolidated the integration of environmental considerations into broader Community policies, including industrial policy (European Union, 1992). This transition towards a comprehensive “Community policy on the environment” signified the further incorporation of environmental government into the EU’s regulatory frameworks. This was also reflected in the fact that the environment received a separate title in the treaty, Title XVI, comprising Articles 130r, 130s and 130t, which carried over the article numbers established by the Single European Act (European Union, 1992). The environment was defined as a distinct field in which the Union should act primarily to preserve, protect and improve environmental quality, safeguard human health and secure the sustainable use of natural resources. The Treaty advocated international cooperation in addressing global environmental challenges. The policy was designed to secure a high level of environmental protection across the different regional contexts of the EU and was guided by principles such as precaution, the rectification of environmental damage at source and the “polluter pays” principle. Importantly, the Treaty strengthened the principle, already introduced by the Single European Act, that environmental-protection requirements should be integrated into the definition and implementation of other Community policies (European Union, 1992).

A further aspect of the Maastricht Treaty relevant to the implementation and adoption of green policy at the European level was the extension of qualified majority voting to most environmental matters, together with the cooperation procedure, which strengthened the role of the European Parliament in environmental decision-making. This represented an important advance and further dispersed power within the EU legislative process. Maastricht also introduced the co-decision procedure into the Treaty more broadly, although for environmental policy it initially applied only to the general action programmes; it was the Amsterdam Treaty that subsequently made co-decision the standard procedure for environmental measures. Under co-decision, legislative proposals from the Commission had to be approved by

both the Council and the European Parliament, thereby enabling the latter to act as a veto player (Delreux & Happaerts, 2016, pp. 30–31). Successive treaties, notably Amsterdam and later Lisbon, which renamed the procedure the ordinary legislative procedure, expanded the range of environmental issues it covered, reinforcing, in a way, the trend towards more robust and comprehensive environmental governance.

From analytics of government perspective, it is crucial to emphasise that, in addition to substantively consolidating environmental policies, the Maastricht Treaty formally and legally codified citizenship of the European Union. This made an important contribution to the subsequent articulations of environmental or green European citizenship. The establishment of the legal status of EU citizenship created conditions in which individuals appeared as the addressees of European environmental policies and, through different mechanisms, policies and exhortations, as potential actors in their co-creation. This opened a space for new forms of governing the EU's environmental or green citizens through the encouragement of participation, responsibility and identification with the European sustainability project. The citizen was understood as more than a bearer of rights, becoming a “green” subject whose participation in the European community was also realised through environmentally conscious conduct and care for the common environment.

On the Fifth Environmental Action Programme

During the period in which European states were working towards the establishment of the European Union, the Commission (1992) prepared¹⁵ the next, already fifth, Environmental Action Programme, which was groundbreaking in several respects. It represented an important shift because the discourse of sustainable development entered its framework with particular clarity, while implementation strategies moved from “top-down” towards “bottom-up” approaches

15 Following a request made at the European Council summit on 26 June 1990.

(Dilling, 2000, p. 29). The programme largely incorporated the concept of sustainable development as formulated and articulated in the Brundtland Report discussed above. By incorporating the discourse of sustainable development into the Action Programme, it actualised, at least in part, the idea that political measures alone were insufficient and that measures balancing ecological, economic and social objectives were also required (Machin, 2019, pp. 219–220). An important characteristic of the programme was its sectoral approach, which sought to integrate environmental considerations into the most polluting sectors, including transport, energy and agriculture (European Commission, 1992). The Action Programme thereby further actualised the idea that policies prioritising systemic change over reactive measures were required (Hey, 2007, p. 23).

The Fifth Environmental Action Programme also introduced several innovative instruments and strategies intended to improve environmental government and the participation of different actors. These comprised a series of instruments intended to promote sustainable practices and strengthen environmental protection in the European Union (European Commission, 1992). Regulatory instruments were presented as establishing new minimum standards for environmental protection, implementing international agreements and creating uniform rules and standards that supported the internal market. Financial instruments were designed to “encourage producers and consumers” to adopt responsible environmental practices through economic and fiscal measures and measures of “civic responsibility” (European Commission, 1992). The Action Programme envisaged the introduction of so-called horizontal measures concerning the improvement of environmental information and statistics through standardised nomenclature, criteria and methodologies, the promotion of scientific research and technological development, the refinement of sectoral and spatial planning, the improvement of public information through the development of databases and the strengthening of vocational training initiatives (European Commission, 1992). Financial support mechanisms, including the

LIFE programme, the Structural Funds, the Cohesion Fund and EIB loans, were intended to facilitate the implementation of these measures further, thereby strengthening the EU's commitment to sustainable development and environmental government through a comprehensive and integrated approach (European Commission, 1992).

As can be seen, the emphasis was placed on market-oriented instruments, including tax incentives and voluntary measures, which aligned economic interests with environmental objectives and enabled producers and consumers to make environmentally acceptable choices. This market-based approach was complemented by a new strategy for implementing the programme oriented towards consensus and recognising the key role of non-governmental organisations and local and regional authorities in representing environmental interests. The underlying idea was that this participatory model would raise public awareness and encourage innovative environmental concepts while also improving the enforcement of EU directives (Hey, 2007, p. 23). Participatory governance was thus increasingly clearly embedded in the mode of government at the European level, where power was exercised through encouraging participation and the self-regulation of diverse social and economic actors.

On the stagnation of environmental policymaking and measures in the early 1990s

Despite the introduction of new frameworks and mechanisms into European environmental government in the early 1990s, this period witnessed a marked stagnation in the formulation and implementation of environmental policies (Hey, 2007). Several broader processes contributed to this “setback” in environmental initiatives. The principal reason was the European Commission's excessive optimism concerning the willingness of Member States to accept a “paradigm shift” involving new concrete approaches. This unwillingness was also evident in the failure to implement the Fifth Environmental Action Programme, which most clearly exposed the limitations of

European integration in the environmental field. The programme's inability to achieve substantial change was symptomatic of broader scepticism and resistance among Member States towards adopting the Commission's new proposals (Hey, 2007, p. 24).

The economic crisis and difficulties in ratifying the Maastricht Treaty created further obstacles. The Commission adopted a more cautious position because it was aware of considerable resistance from the national authorities of Member States and from interest groups that would bear the burden of the new environmental approaches. Evaluation reports from this period found that progress towards structural environmental change was "partial and slow" and that efforts had effectively stalled (Hey, 2007, p. 24). German reunification altered policy priorities as the country confronted economic difficulties and high unemployment, marginalising its potential leadership role in EU environmental policy. This process contributed to the broader stagnation in the development of European environmental policy during this period (Hey, 2007, p. 24).

On the Amsterdam Treaty and the Cardiff process: Sustainable development as a priority of European integration

The Amsterdam Treaty¹⁶ is relevant despite, or precisely because of, the previously mentioned stagnation in implementing environmental policies at the European level during the 1990s. It played a key role

16 The Treaty of Amsterdam, signed in 1997 and entering into force in 1999, substantially transformed the European Union and its institutional framework. It strengthened the competences of the European Community, particularly in the areas of sustainable development, employment and social policy, and established a mechanism for coordinating policies among the Member States. In fields such as asylum, immigration, the protection of external borders and judicial cooperation in civil matters, it transferred important areas from intergovernmental cooperation to the Community framework, while police and judicial cooperation in criminal matters remained predominantly intergovernmental. The Treaty of Amsterdam also expanded the legislative powers of the European Parliament, extended the co-decision procedure to additional policy areas, and enhanced transparency and democratic accountability within EU decision-making processes. It further included institutional reforms associated with the anticipated enlargement of the Union, with the aim of adapting the functioning of its institutions to new circumstances and challenges (European Parliament, 2024).

in shaping EU environmental policy at the end of the decade by formally incorporating the concept of “sustainable development” into the EU treaty framework. Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union expressly identified the achievement of balanced and sustainable development as one of the EU’s principal objectives. Importantly, the principle of environmental integration, initially confined to a specific environmental title, was incorporated into Article 6 and thereby placed within the broader framework of the EU’s general political principles (Hey, 2007). This incorporation represented another shift in the discourse and mode of government, as environmental considerations moved from the margins towards an increasingly central position within the EU’s strategic vision.

To attain these strengthened environmental objectives, the entry into force of the Amsterdam Treaty encouraged the Commission and several Council presidencies to launch the Cardiff Process, which sought to integrate environmental policy into different sectors and policy fields (European Council, 1998). The process began at the June 1998 meeting of the European Council in Cardiff, where leaders agreed on further steps in developing the governing of environmental issues. The different formations of the Council of Ministers were asked “to establish their own strategies for giving effect to environmental integration and sustainable development within their respective policy areas. They should monitor progress taking account of the Commission’s suggested guidelines and identifying indicators” (European Council, 1998). This was a concrete step towards achieving the objectives of Article 6 of the EC Treaty, which required the integration of environmental considerations into all other Community policies. It represented a move towards a more comprehensive and, at the declarative level, “more extensive” articulation of environmental policy, emphasising sustainable development as a key element within the EU’s complex strategic framework.

From the perspective of environmental government at EU level, the Amsterdam Treaty provided a framework for strengthening the legitimacy and democratic character of the EU legislative system.

The expansion of the co-decision procedure, which became the standard procedure for environmental legislation, subject to certain exceptions, was intended to contribute to this objective. The co-decision procedure replaced the cooperation procedure introduced by the Single European Act and placed the legislative powers of the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers on an equal footing, effectively granting Parliament a right of veto (Orlando, 2016).

At the end of the 1990s, it is also necessary to highlight the increasingly visible discourse of combating climate change, which gained prominence at the international level during this period (Prahl et al., 2023). The Kyoto Protocol was adopted in December 1997. The European Community signed it on 29 April 1998 and approved it in 2002, committing the Community and the then fifteen Member States to an aggregate eight-per-cent reduction in greenhouse-gas emissions during the 2008–2012 commitment period. In its ambition to assume a leading global role in the environmental field, demonstrated during the Kyoto Protocol negotiations, the EU complemented this international role with strong internal climate change policies (Delreux & Happaerts, 2016, pp. 30–31).

The Sixth Environmental Action Programme and the introduction of green discourse and measures encouraging green citizenship practices

At the beginning of the 2000s, the Commission presented its proposal for the Sixth Environmental Action Programme in the communication “Environment 2010: Our Future, Our Choice” (European Commission, 2001c). The formal programme was adopted by the European Parliament and the Council in July 2002 and established the central framework for EU environmental policy until July 2012. The new Action Programme naturally proceeded from its predecessor, the fifth programme, as was particularly evident in its continued consolidation of the discourse of sustainable development and the struggle against climate change. At the same time, it emphasised

the need to move beyond legislative measures alone and to adopt a comprehensive approach involving heterogeneous elements of implementation. This included the use of various instruments and measures intended to influence the conduct of businesses, consumers, policymakers and citizens (European Commission, 2001c). The programme centred on five principal orientations: improving the implementation of existing legislation, integrating environmental issues into other policy fields, encouraging partnerships with business, empowering citizens to change their behaviour, and incorporating environmental considerations into land-use planning and management (European Commission, 2001c). It identified four priority areas for action: climate change, biodiversity, environment and health, and the sustainable management of resources and waste. Climate change was recognised as the most significant challenge, and the programme emphasised the urgent need to pursue radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, with short-term objectives aligned with the Kyoto Protocol and long-term objectives pursued through international cooperation. Efforts concerning biodiversity focused on protecting and restoring natural systems and halting biodiversity loss, while the health initiative sought to reduce environmental risks to human health. The sustainable management of resources and waste was another important component of the Sixth Environmental Action Programme (European Commission, 2001c).

Machin (2019) observes that the Sixth Programme was also explicitly economic in its orientation, despite declaratively promoting the decoupling of resource use from economic growth. In particular, she emphasises that the Action Programme also articulated environmental protection and sustainable development as an opportunity. For example, the programme states: “If tackled in the right way, our efforts to limit climate change are likely to generate significant opportunities and benefits for business as well as side benefits in terms of reduced air pollution” (European Commission, 2001c).

For our central discussion, it is also crucial that the Sixth Environmental Action Programme expanded and systematised the use of the term “green” as a central signifier and organising

concept across numerous areas of EU environmental policy. It thereby transformed the term from the narratives of environmental movements into what might be called official institutional language. Throughout the document, “green” functions as a signifier connected to different economic and social categories. The programme advocates the “greening” of products, markets, public procurement practices, investment funds, spatial planning and the financial sector, while also promoting “green technologies”, “green public procurement” and a “greener lifestyle” as policy objectives. This amounted to the creation of a new political vocabulary directing different actors within existing capitalist structures. Citizens were encouraged to make “green” purchasing decisions, businesses were enabled to access “green” investment funds, and public institutions were expected to become “green” in their operations, including public procurement. Repeated references to “green” thus served to normalise environmental considerations across different policy fields, while simultaneously confining environmental policy within market-friendly frameworks and defining “greening” as a process of incremental improvement.

Within the framework presented by the Sixth Environmental Action Programme, citizens were articulated primarily as consumers, recipients of information and participants in local environmental measures. They were simultaneously understood as passive subjects requiring education and as active actors capable of promoting market transformation. The programme envisaged citizens as individuals who “make decisions every day which directly or indirectly have an impact on the environment” and who required “better quality and more easily accessible information” in order to form their opinions and direct their consumer choices towards environmentally friendly products. The measures relating to citizens were largely oriented towards the provision of information, including environmental education, awareness-raising campaigns, practical guides to household environmental efficiency and transparent reporting on local pollution levels. At the same time, the role assigned to citizens remained largely instrumental and individualised. They were expected to recycle,

purchase eco-labelled products, participate in planning processes and alter their behavioural patterns, yet the programme did not address them as collective political subjects capable of challenging systems of production or demanding structural economic transformation.

On the effects of the Lisbon Strategy on environmental policy at EU Level

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, several processes substantially influenced the formation of discourse and concrete modes of governing environmental issues at EU level. In 2000, the EU was establishing important orientations for its future operation. At the turn of the millennium, the European Union was a growing and developing entity confronting and directing specific processes in an increasingly interconnected and globalised world. The idea of a common currency had been realised from 1999, while new Member States had joined the Union in the mid-1990s. At the same time, macroeconomists observed a decline in productivity in the euro area. The adoption of the Lisbon Strategy, initially conceived as a comprehensive plan for economic and social renewal, was therefore one of the most important developments for the EU in 2000 (European Council, 2000). The Lisbon Strategy was prepared in response to an increasingly explicit recognition that the EU had to modernise and become more “competitive” in order to succeed in the global economy. It established the ambitious objective of making the EU the world’s most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy by 2010, while simultaneously promoting social development (European Council, 2000).

The Lisbon Strategy established a framework that contributed substantially to a specific articulation of how the EU was understood and how it should operate. Central to this framework was the further consolidation of the conception of the EU as an economic environment supported by knowledge, science and new technologies, which strengthened the dominant neoliberal vision (van Apeldoorn & Hager, 2010). The strategy’s emphasis on economic growth and

competitiveness demonstrated its commitment to market liberalisation and deregulation. At the same time, it incorporated the notion of social security, which served to legitimise the pursuit of economic growth as the primary objective of the EU area (van Apeldoorn & Hager, 2010). Alongside its influence on the general understanding of the EU and its key objectives, the Lisbon Strategy significantly determined the reconceptualisation of different EU policies, including environmental policy.

In this context, Delreux and Happaerts (2016, p. 32) write that, because of the period's focus on productivity, economic efficiency and international competitiveness, the adoption of legislation and specific EU-level environmental measures declined. At the same time, narratives also appeared at the European level that presented environmental investments as profitable because they would provide "investors" with financial returns while contributing to economic growth and thereby to achieving the objectives of the Lisbon Strategy (Tišma & Čermak, 2010, p. 254).

A further relevant aspect of how the Lisbon Strategy institutionalised the government of environmental issues at EU level during this period was the process associated with the Gothenburg 2001 Summit of 15 and 16 June, held soon after the adoption of the Lisbon Strategy. At the summit, it was decided that the environmental dimension, specifically "sustainable development", should constitute the third dimension of the Lisbon Strategy and was therefore added to it. The Gothenburg Summit (European Council, 2001) thereby responded to and incorporated the Commission's new "European Union Strategy for Sustainable Development" (European Commission, 2001a), published in May 2001. The strategy addressed key priorities including climate change and clean energy, sustainable transport, sustainable consumption and production, the conservation and management of natural resources, public health, the global challenges posed by poverty and sustainable development, social inclusion, demography and migration (European Commission, 2001a). The Gothenburg Summit, however, fully immersed the environmental dimension

within the economistic logic of the Lisbon Strategy: “Clear and stable objectives for sustainable development will present significant economic opportunities. This has the potential to unleash a new wave of technological innovation and investment, generating growth and employment. The European Council invites industry to take part in the development and wider use of new environmentally friendly technologies in sectors such as energy and transport” (European Council, 2001; Shore, 2011).

After several years, the Commission concluded that the implementation of the Sustainable Development Strategy (European Commission, 2001a) had to be reviewed and evaluated. This process began as early as 2004 and represented another turning point in the EU’s approach to incorporating sustainability into its policy framework, as the evaluation led to the presentation of a new, revised strategy. In March 2005, the European Council welcomed the proposed revised strategy and emphasised that the scope of the Lisbon Strategy should be broadened to incorporate sustainable development. This underlined the EU’s commitment to the key objectives of environmental quality, economic prosperity promoted through innovation and ecological efficiency, social justice and global solidarity (Boissière, 2009). It is also important to recognise that the guiding principles of the proposed revised strategy articulated and attributed significance to the involvement of citizens and stakeholders, policy coherence and precautionary action, and laid the foundations for the future coordination and review of policies (Boissière, 2009).

In June 2006, the European Council adopted the renewed Sustainable Development Strategy, which sought to address the central challenge of moving from unsustainable patterns of consumption and production towards more sustainable and integrated policymaking. Its principal objective was to enable the continuous improvement of quality of life for present and future generations through the development of sustainable communities. These communities were expected to manage resources effectively, harness

ecological and social innovation, and balance prosperity, environmental protection and social cohesion. The strategy's integrative approach encompassed seven key policy fields, including climate change, sustainable transport and global poverty (Boissière, 2009).

From our critical perspective, it is evident that the renewed EU Sustainable Development Strategy emphasised a significant alignment between environmental issues and the Lisbon Strategy and indicated the necessity of a strategic connection intended to promote an eco-efficient economy. This alignment was explicitly and implicitly connected to the EU's efforts to construct a comprehensive policy framework that did not merely address environmental sustainability in isolation, but incorporated it into the broader context of economic growth and competitiveness. The emphasis on objectives, indicators and efficient monitoring procedures represented an approach to government centred on regulatory mechanisms and a specific framing through which regulatory power, or the exercise of power, was extended into the environmental domain.

The renewed strategy can also be interpreted as promoting a neoliberal version of sustainable development in which the efficient use of resources was paramount. Efficiency thus became a central principle, embedding economic principles deeply within the structure of environmental government. At the same time, aligning sustainable development with the EU's long-term objectives reinforced a discourse defining sustainability in terms of quality of life, intergenerational justice and long-term social viability. Such framing remained fully aligned with and situated within the neoliberal paradigm, which emphasised economic prosperity and innovation as essential to environmental protection and social cohesion and thereby redefined market solutions as key instruments of government.

The White Paper on European Governance as one of the foundations for governing environmental issues

Another important process took place at EU level in 2001, when, after extensive preparation, the Commission (2001b) published the

White Paper on European Governance, which was also significant for the environmental field. Under the leadership of Romano Prodi, the European Commission identified the reform of European governance as one of its four strategic objectives (Shore, 2011). It proceeded from the observation that the EU faced a dual challenge: the need for urgent measures to adapt governance within the existing treaties and the need for a broader debate on Europe's future in order to address increasingly widespread distrust, scepticism or public disinterest towards the EU (European Commission, 2001b). The EU therefore sought to respond to these problems by adapting the operation of its institutions and making its policies more transparent and comprehensible to its citizens. The White Paper on European Governance (European Commission, 2001b) was presented as a means of opening up the policymaking process and securing greater involvement by people and civil society organisations in formulating and implementing EU policies (Shore, 2011). It proposed greater openness and responsibility among numerous political actors and institutions, including state authorities, regions, cities and civil society in present and future Member States. The intention was to establish a basis for reforming EU governance in cooperation with other institutions. The Commission therefore proposed a range of measures intended to help the EU focus its activities upon clear priorities within the tasks conferred by the Treaty on European Union, including the right of initiative, policy implementation, its role as guardian of the treaties and the EU's international action (European Commission, 2001b).

Viewed from the perspective of the formation and construction of a specific mode of exercising power, the White Paper outlined a series of proposed techniques and technologies for governing different aspects of European society. It proposed a governance framework emphasising transparency, responsibility and participation. This can be understood as an attempt to frame and shape the conduct of individual citizens and organisations so that they communicate particular problems to EU authorities, which are then to be addressed and resolved jointly (Enroth, 2013).

Within this context, the Commission also defined environmental issues as a domain that could be subjected to a new mode of government. Through our theoretical lens and analytical framework, this can be recognised as an attempt to establish a new mode of exercising power, as the document sought to affirm the EU's legitimacy and control over different policies at the European level, including environmental policy. The emphasis on addressing issues such as climate change and sustainability reflected a strategy for governing the population and natural resources in the name of the public good. By advocating more inclusive policymaking procedures involving regional and local authorities, civil society and other actors, the White Paper dispersed power and created the appearance of participatory governance. As stated in the document (European Commission, 2001b), the EU sought to "establish a more systematic dialogue with representatives of regional and local governments" and to provide "greater flexibility into how Community legislation can be implemented" in order to take local specificities into account. Yet this inclusion also functioned as a method for normalising and co-opting disagreement, ensuring that alternative voices were incorporated into the dominant discourse without challenging the fundamental structures of power.

The document's call to incorporate environmental considerations into all EU policy fields further reveals a strategic move to consolidate environmental government within the broader framework of neoliberal rationality. The use of mechanisms such as introducing "flexibility" into the implementation of environmental measures and legislation can be understood and interpreted as techniques of government that decentralise responsibility while retaining central control. This indicates that, at the beginning of the new century, there was an increasing tendency to exercise power through the regulation of conduct and the creation of self-regulating subjects, alongside direct control.

3.6 GREEN EU POLICIES AND THE CONSTITUTION OF THE GREEN CITIZEN IN THE CONTEXT OF THE LISBON TREATY AND THE EUROPE 2020 STRATEGY

To understand the articulation and formation of practices of green government at EU level towards the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, it is first necessary to recognise the broader sociopolitical and economic constellations that, both perceptually and materially, brought exceptional changes to the European Union. This period saw the formation of a new institutional framework for environmental and climate policies and, more intensively than before, a new image of the citizen as a green subject called upon to participate in achieving the objectives of sustainable development, environmental efficiency and competitiveness. Green government therefore concerned technocratic and institutional mechanisms as well as subtle processes of subjectivation through which citizens were interpellated as green citizens.

At the centre of these transformations were the Lisbon Treaty and the Europe 2020 Strategy, which represented two key moments in establishing contemporary frameworks of European green governmentality. The Lisbon Treaty introduced important institutional and political reforms intended to increase the efficiency and legitimacy of EU action and consolidated the foundations for further integrating environmental objectives into European policies. At the same time, the Europe 2020 Strategy produced a discursive reorientation. Environmental and climate policies were increasingly treated as drivers of economic growth, innovation and competitiveness, while citizens were constructed as key bearers of change in their capacities as consumers, workers and entrepreneurs within the “green economy”. In this context, a new form of European citizenship emerged, interweaving environmental responsibility, market rationality and active participation in projects of sustainable “progress”.

It is first necessary to highlight changes within the European Union that had already occurred by the middle of the first decade of the

twenty-first century. European integration processes were disrupted above all by the unexpected rejection of the proposed European Constitution by French and Dutch voters,¹⁷ which revealed a pressing need to address the democratic deficit and increase the legitimacy of EU decision-making. This prompted reflection on institutional reform and on ways of reinvolving citizens in the European project. Emerging discourses of the “active”, “responsible” and “engaged” citizen began to intertwine with environmental themes, establishing a basis for the further formation of a green citizenship paradigm. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the EU also expanded considerably: ten new states joined in 2004 and a further two in 2007. This rapid enlargement increased the urgency of institutional reforms that would permit more effective governing of the Union, while also encouraging the search for new ways to construct a sense of belonging, solidarity and responsibility among diverse European citizens, including through shared frameworks of green policies and sustainable practices.

The Lisbon Treaty as a further framework for governing environmental matters at EU level

The Lisbon Treaty was adopted to address multidimensional challenges and streamline EU decision-making procedures. One of its

17 The final text of the proposed constitution, entitled the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe, was agreed by the heads of state or government on 18 June 2004 and signed in Rome on 29 October 2004 before being submitted to the Member States for ratification. Although fifteen Member States had ratified it by June 2006, and eighteen eventually did so, the Treaty was rejected in referendums held in France and the Netherlands in 2005. Following these rejections, the European Council initiated a period of reflection in June 2005 and agreed to assess the national debates and determine how to proceed during the first half of 2006. At its meeting in June 2006, it adopted a two-track approach, requesting a report on the future of the Constitutional Treaty during the first half of 2007 and envisaging further decisions on the reform process by the second half of 2008 at the latest. The European Council subsequently agreed upon a mandate for a new intergovernmental conference in June 2007. The resulting Treaty of Lisbon was signed on 13 December 2007 and entered into force on 1 December 2009. It abandoned the constitutional format and amended the existing treaties while preserving many of the substantive reforms contained in the proposed Constitution (Newman, 2023).

principal objectives was to strengthen the democratic legitimacy and accountability of EU institutions. It introduced significant changes, including an expansion of the European Parliament's legislative powers, the establishment of a full-time President of the European Council, elected for a term of two and a half years and eligible for one renewal, and the creation of the office of High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy in order to secure coherent external action. The declared objective of these reforms was to make the EU more transparent and efficient and better able to address internal and external challenges (European Union, 2007).

The effect of the Lisbon Treaty upon EU environmental policymaking is generally regarded as minimal (Benson & Adelle, 2012). As an amending treaty, it revised the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty establishing the European Community, renaming the latter the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. The TEU and TFEU, in their amended and consolidated forms, consequently constitute the principal treaty framework within which EU environmental policy is organised. Since environmental policy was already a well-developed area of EU competence, the Lisbon Treaty offered limited possibilities for fundamental change (Delreux & Happaerts, 2016, pp. 33–34). In addition to a new formulation of the objective of sustainable development, the treaty also emphasised animal welfare as an EU objective. Although the EU acquired no new environmental competences under the treaty, Delreux and Happaerts (2016, p. 33) argue that the addition of a new sentence to Article 191 TFEU, incorporating the objective of combating climate change at the international level, enabled the European Commission to assert greater external competence in this area, including the representation of the EU in international climate negotiations. This was the first reference to climate change in an EU treaty. The Lisbon Treaty also renamed the co-decision procedure — introduced at Maastricht and placed on a genuinely equal footing between the Council and the European Parliament at Amsterdam — as the “ordinary legislative procedure”. The procedure

itself remained unchanged: the Commission proposed environmental legislation, while the Council and the European Parliament adopted it (Delreux & Happaerts, 2016, pp. 33–34).

The global financial and economic crisis and its effects in the EU

Alongside the new formal legal framework, this period was also defined by the global financial crisis. Its highly heterogeneous causes must be sought in long-term processes within the operation and transformation of capitalism and the associated questions of class, neoliberalisation and financialisation at the global level (Harvey, 2009; Heyes et al., 2012), rather than exclusively in the United States. In 2008, the crisis struck the European Union with unprecedented intensity and confronted it with the most serious challenges in its recent history. It affected every Member State, although the greatest burden of economic decline was borne by the countries of Southern Europe. These states faced severe and prolonged economic challenges that further exacerbated their pre-existing fiscal difficulties (Farneubun, 2016, p. 62).

The EU responded by seeking to strengthen economic integration and international competitiveness, particularly within the euro area, where the effects of the crisis were felt acutely. A series of measures, including austerity policies, structural reforms and privatisation initiatives, were implemented to restore market confidence and fiscal discipline (McKeown & Glenn, 2018), with particular emphasis on the countries most severely affected by the crisis, including Greece, Ireland, Portugal, Spain and Italy (P. A. Hall, 2012). Jessop (2015) and Aalbers (2013) highlight the problematic character of these measures, which resulted in drastic reductions in public expenditure on essential services such as healthcare, education, pensions and social protection. This increased social inequalities, contributed to greater poverty within Member States and deepened inequalities among them. The measures also imposed strict conditions upon states receiving assistance and were characterised as undemocratic

because citizens and democratic institutions within those countries were not adequately consulted or involved, thereby contributing to a decline in the democratic legitimacy of EU institutions (Giannone, 2015). Rather than strengthening integration, the period deepened divisions among Member States as the Union became increasingly fragmented between creditor and debtor states, core and periphery, and North and South. This widening divide produced growing tensions and distrust, undermining social cohesion and solidarity among EU states (Jessop, 2015).

Concrete EU responses to the crisis included the European Economic Recovery Plan (European Commission, 2008), intended to stimulate demand and support employment through fiscal and monetary policy; the European Financial Stabilisation Mechanism (European Commission, 2010b), which provided financial assistance to states experiencing debt difficulties; and the establishment of the Banking Union, which introduced common mechanisms for banking supervision and resolution, while deposit protection continued to be organised principally through national deposit-guarantee schemes.

Green policies in the light of the Europe 2020 Strategy

Another response to the crisis at the European level was the Europe 2020 Strategy. Its predecessor, the Lisbon Strategy adopted in 2000, had failed to meet the expectations of the Union and its Member States despite an attempted relaunch (European Commission, 2005), making a new approach necessary. Europe 2020 was conceived as a comprehensive plan to direct the EU's future development and address the challenges and opportunities that had emerged during the preceding decade. Alongside the financial and economic crisis, several pivotal events significantly influenced the formulation of the new strategy and determined the Union's trajectory over the following decade. The strategy was presented in March 2010 by the then President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso. He described the financial crisis as a bitter awakening and, simultaneously, an opportunity: "The crisis is a wake-up call, the moment where

we recognise that “business as usual” would consign us to a gradual decline, to the second rank of the new global order. This is Europe’s moment of truth. It is the time to be bold and ambitious” (European Commission, 2010a). For Barroso, it was clear that persisting along established paths would lead the Union towards decline and reduce it to a less significant global actor incapable of shaping the world order during a period of profound change. A different approach was therefore required:

To achieve a sustainable future, we must already look beyond the short term. Europe needs to get back on track. Then it must stay on track. That is the purpose of Europe 2020. It’s about more jobs and better lives. It shows how Europe has the capability to deliver smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, to find the path to create new jobs and to offer a sense of direction to our societies (European Commission, 2010a).

What did this approach entail, and what were the objectives of the new strategy? Its long-term sustainability objective encompassed three interconnected priorities intended to establish a “social market economy for the twenty-first century”: 1) smart growth, meaning the development of an economy based on knowledge and innovation; 2) sustainable growth, meaning the promotion of a more resource-efficient, greener and more competitive economy; and 3) inclusive growth, meaning the fostering of a high-employment economy delivering social and territorial cohesion (European Commission, 2010a).

How, then, did the Europe 2020 Strategy discursively frame environmental and climate policies? The second objective, sustainable growth, is particularly relevant to our analysis. In this context, the strategy defines sustainable growth through “building a resource efficient, sustainable and competitive economy, exploiting Europe’s leadership in the race to develop new processes and technologies, including green technologies, accelerating the roll out of smart grids using ICTs, exploiting EU-scale networks, and reinforcing the com-

petitive advantages of our businesses, particularly in manufacturing and within our SMEs, as well through assisting consumers to value resource efficiency” (European Commission, 2010a, emphasis added). A key element of the “green economy” was the struggle against climate change. The strategy emphasised that this would require

reducing emissions significantly more quickly in the next decade than in the last decade and exploiting fully the potential of new technologies such as carbon capture and sequestration possibilities. Improving resource efficiency would significantly help limit emissions, save money and boost economic growth. All sectors of the economy, not just emission-intensive, are concerned (European Commission, 2010a, emphasis added).

Another element was the provision of clean and efficient energy, whose objective was not presented as environmental sustainability in itself but evaluated through its capacity to create new employment: “Meeting the EU’s objective of 20% of renewable sources of energy alone has the potential to create more than 600 000 jobs in the EU” (European Commission, 2010a).

As Delreux and Happaerts (2016, p. 36) importantly observe, and as the Europe 2020 Strategy itself demonstrates, the framework and discourse of EU environmental policy underwent a major change. Environmental issues were no longer treated principally from the perspective of environmental protection but were addressed more clearly and explicitly as contributions to economic growth and competitiveness. In this sense, they were presented as part of the response and solution to the financial and economic crisis. Expressions such as “green economy”, ‘green jobs’, ‘green growth’, ‘sustainable growth’ or ‘low-carbon economy’ (Delreux & Happaerts, 2016, p. 36) began to dominate environmental discussions and established the framework through which environmental problems were identified, understood and addressed in the EU. The positioning of environmental policy under the rubric of “green growth” is a key characteristic of the current phase of EU environmental policy. This shift also reveals how the

perceived and real environmental limits were incorporated into a strategy for renewing economic accumulation after the crisis. Rather than questioning the imperative of growth that had contributed to environmental degradation, the Europe 2020 framework recast climate action, resource efficiency and green technologies as new fields for investment, productivity gains and competitive advantage. The green transition was organised around the continued expansion of economic activity, while environmental policy became a means of restructuring markets, production and labour in ways intended to restore the conditions for accumulation. In this configuration, ecological crisis was treated primarily as a problem to be managed within, and rendered productive for, the prevailing economic order.

The Seventh Environmental Action Programme

Following a proposal from the European Commission, the Seventh Environmental Action Programme was adopted by the European Parliament and the Council on 20 November 2013 through Decision No 1386/2013/EU. The programme provides another example of the “greening” of environmental policies and articulates the following long-term vision:

In 2050, we live well, within the planet's ecological limits. Our prosperity and healthy environment stem from an innovative, circular economy where nothing is wasted and where natural resources are managed sustainably, and biodiversity is protected, valued and restored in ways that enhance our society's resilience. Our low-carbon growth has long been decoupled from resource use, setting the pace for a safe and sustainable global society (European Commission, 2013).

To attain this long-term vision, the programme proposed nine priority objectives and tasks to be fulfilled by the EU by 2020. Its key objectives included protecting and enhancing natural capital, transitioning towards a green, low-carbon and resource-efficient economy, and protecting citizens from environmental risks. The programme sought to increase the benefits of existing legislation

through improved implementation, strengthen the knowledge and evidence base for policy decisions, and secure the necessary investment while addressing environmental externalities. It also sought to improve policy coherence and integration across sectors, promote sustainable urban development and enhance the EU's effectiveness in addressing international environmental and climate challenges (European Commission, 2013).

From our perspective, it is important to recognise that the Seventh Environmental Action Programme to 2020 employed the term “green” both literally and metaphorically as an expression of commitment to environmental sustainability. The document emphasised a transformation towards a “green economy” characterised by low-carbon growth and resource efficiency, with particular attention to innovation and the sustainable management of natural resources. This transformation was intended to decouple economic growth from environmental degradation and ensure that economic activities did not exceed the planet's ecological limits. At the declarative level, the “green economy” described in the text was broadly conceived and committed to reducing inequalities, protecting human health, creating decent employment and preserving biodiversity and ecosystem services, suggesting a comprehensive approach to sustainability (European Commission, 2013). The term “green” also referred to specific measures and strategies intended to improve environmental protection. For example, the text addressed “green infrastructure”, involving the identification and implementation of nature-based solutions such as green spaces and aquatic ecosystems in order to secure ecological, economic and social benefits. The reformed Common Agricultural Policy incorporated “greening” measures that encouraged environmentally friendly agricultural and forestry practices. The document also emphasised the need for “green public procurement” to ensure that public-sector purchasing supported environmentally sustainable goods and services (European Commission, 2013).

The discourse of the “green” within the Seventh Environmental Action Programme to 2020 can be understood as embodying a

specific green governmentality in which environmental and climate government became increasingly embedded within frameworks of economic rationality and market mechanisms (Machin, 2019). The document's emphasis on transforming the economy into an inclusive "green economy" aligned environmental objectives with economic imperatives, making sustainability a question of resource efficiency, innovation and competitive advantage. This interweaving of green initiatives with economic strategies reflected a transformation in government through which environmental problems were managed by market-based solutions, technological advancement and regulatory frameworks prioritising economic growth alongside environmental preservation. During this period, the concept of the "green" therefore increasingly became an instrument of government that addressed environmental issues through ecological measures and through the transformation of economic practices to align them with sustainability objectives.

At the same time, it is important to emphasise that, as Delreux and Happaerts (2016, p. 36) write, political attention and the importance attributed to environmental policy diminished at least partly during the first half of the 2010s, as addressing the financial and economic crisis became the principal priority for EU policymakers and national governments.¹⁸ The impetus to develop ambitious environmental policies receded at least partly into the background,

18 On the other hand, the problematic nature of this assessment is demonstrated by the fact that a new mechanism, the Environmental Implementation Review, was established in the mid-2010s. This mechanism consists of a regular cycle of analysis, dialogue and cooperation intended to improve the implementation of EU environmental policy and legislation in the Member States. The European Commission introduced the Environmental Implementation Review in order to address and potentially remedy the persistent problem of inconsistent implementation of EU environmental laws and policies across the Member States. The mechanism was established through an initial Communication in 2016 and was designed to provide a structured and regular assessment of compliance with key regulations in individual countries (European Commission, 2016). The inaugural cycle in 2017 constituted an important first step, as it presented detailed country reports identifying the principal implementation gaps and proposing specific priority measures. This initial phase also highlighted the financial and technical support available to the Member States for addressing these deficiencies (European Commission, 2024).

and environmental issues became less prominent on the agenda. This changed dramatically, however, with the emergence of new and simultaneous crises and the responses formulated to them at EU level.

4

THE EUROPEAN GREEN DEAL AND THE GOVERNING OF GREEN CITIZENS

It is now clear to each and every one of us that we must once again take a stand and fight for our Europe. The whole world is being challenged by disruptive developments that have not passed Europe by. Demographic change, globalisation of the world economy, rapid digitalisation of our working environment and, of course, climate change. None of these meta-developments is new: science predicted them a long way back. What is new is that we, as citizens of Europe — irrespective of the country in which we live — are feeling and experiencing their effects first hand.

Our most pressing challenge is keeping our planet healthy. This is the greatest responsibility and opportunity of our times. I want Europe to become the first climate-neutral continent in the world by 2050. To make this happen, we must take bold steps together. [...] To make this happen, I will put forward a Green Deal for Europe in my first 100 days in office. I will put forward the first ever European Climate Law which will set the 2050 target into law (von der Leyen, 2019b).

These were the words with which Ursula von der Leyen, then the European Council's candidate for President of the European

Commission, addressed the European Parliament on 16 July 2019, before Parliament elected her later that day. Several months before her Commission took office on 1 December 2019, she announced that a substantial part of its efforts under her leadership would be directed towards green policies, an orientation that formed part of the programme she presented before her election (von der Leyen, 2019a). As a candidate for President of the European Commission, she employed a discourse of green solutions in her “Agenda for Europe” and emphasised that European voters, including the younger generation, were urgently demanding decisive action on climate change. She legitimised her proposed solutions by presenting them as a response to clear calls from citizens who wanted Europe to assume a leading role in climate action. Von der Leyen emphasised that she drew inspiration from the energy and conviction of young people campaigning for their future (von der Leyen, 2019a, p. 5). Her proposal for a European Green Deal, including the first European Climate Law enshrining the objective of climate neutrality by 2050, was presented as a direct response to the call of “millions of our young people” (von der Leyen, 2019a, p. 5). By connecting the urgency of innovation, economic transformation and a modernised industrial policy with the voices of EU citizens, she sought to demonstrate clearly that her proposals arose from the demands of the people.

As already noted, after her election as Commission President she again announced the publication of the European Green Deal, which the Commission duly presented at the end of the year, on 11 December 2019, in the form of a communication whose introduction states that it is intended for the European Union and “its citizens” (European Commission, 2019b, emphasis added). Its central objective is expressed as follows: “transforms the Union into a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy where there are no net emissions of greenhouse gases by 2050, where economic growth is decoupled from resource use [...]” (European Commission, 2019b). The content and discursive characteristics of the Commission Communication and the measures based upon it are examined below.

Before doing so, it is useful to present the contextual dimensions and conditions of possibility underlying the establishment of the Green Deal. We focus on the context in which the European Green Deal emerged because it should not be treated as an isolated proposal or as Ursula von der Leyen's idea alone. Understanding the full significance of this plan requires attention to the broader framework. We therefore examine two key dimensions that shaped the development and adoption of the Green Deal. The first concerns the historical context of the concept of a "green deal", tracing its development and the precedents that influenced its formation.

The second dimension involves reflecting upon the contemporary sociopolitical and economic circumstances that gave rise to the European Green Deal. In this light, we consider the urgent environmental challenges, public demand for climate action and economic conditions that encouraged a shift towards sustainable development. Examining these dimensions will show how the Green Deal emerged as a comprehensive response to long-standing environmental questions and the particular demands of the contemporary period, while locating its roots within a broader context.

4.1 KNOWLEDGE FRAMEWORKS AND THE SOCIOPOLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CONTEXTS OF THE EUROPEAN GREEN DEAL

On the concept of a "Green Deal"

One of the key foundations and reference points for the concept of the Green Deal is the New Deal, which can be approached through a Foucauldian prism as a discursive formation and as a series of concrete projects, public works and financial reforms that catalysed significant socioeconomic changes between 1933 and 1939. Through its interconnected reforms, the New Deal sought to transform the socioeconomic order by reducing unemployment, extending economic prosperity and promoting social justice. This set of policies altered

existing power relations and established a reformed economic model and social contract that, at least to a significant extent, provided the foundation for the “golden age” of American capitalism during the 1950s and 1960s (Brown et al., 2023). It must nevertheless be emphasised that the New Deal also reproduced certain imbalances of power. Although it substantially increased employment, it failed to secure full and equally accessible employment and did not adequately address gender inequality and racial discrimination (Brown et al., 2023; Klein, 2020). Within this “first” New Deal, Roosevelt recognised that the imperative of social progress had to be adapted to the emerging challenge of environmental protection. The establishment of the Civilian Conservation Corps, which provided “green jobs” in forestry and dam construction for a total of three million unemployed people between 1933 and 1942, was among the new administration’s first measures (Maher, 2008).

Against this historical background and the implementation of these strategies and practices, the concept of a Green New Deal was subsequently articulated. Its intellectual and political antecedents can be traced to the environmental debates of the 1970s, including the Club of Rome’s report on the limits to growth, which problematised the sustainability of prevailing economic paradigms (Luke, 1995b, p. 16). The designation “Green New Deal”, however, acquired prominence much later, particularly during the period surrounding the global financial and economic crisis of 2007–2009 (Charveriat, 2023). Thomas L. Friedman was among its early prominent users, the British Green New Deal Group published a report under this title in 2008, and the United Nations Environment Programme subsequently promoted the idea of a Global Green New Deal as a response to interconnected economic and environmental crises. This connection between social and ecological concerns also formed the core of the Green New Deal resolutions introduced in February 2019 by Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez in the House of Representatives and Senator Edward Markey in the Senate (Aiello, 2022). The House resolution did not receive a floor vote. In the Senate,

a procedural vote to advance parallel Green New Deal language failed on 26 March 2019, with 57 senators voting against proceeding and 43 voting present. Nevertheless, the proposal proved highly influential. It identified “systemic injustices”, both social and ecological, as a fundamental cause of the poor condition of American democracy and assigned the federal government a “duty” to undertake a transition promoting “justice and equity” (Laurent, 2020).

Another key source of contemporary green deals as a concept and practice is the thought of already mentioned Thomas L. Friedman, which focuses particularly on the structure, formation and potential of “green dirigisme”. According to Luke (2009, p. 16), this approach inspired China’s environmental policy under President Hu Jintao. Friedman’s reflections are grounded in the idea of a transition towards a “geo-green future”. He argues that the failure of traditional political parties to address energy and environmental challenges could accelerate the emergence of a third political force centred upon green policies (Friedman, 2009; Luke, 2009). His formulation of a Green New Deal includes raising taxes on petroleum products as one of the central mechanisms for enhancing energy security, environmental protection and economic stability (Friedman, 2009). Friedman was therefore among the earliest prominent users and popularisers of the designation “Green New Deal”. (Charveriat, 2023).

Although Friedman is predominantly regarded as a key author of the Green Deal, Mark Hertsgaard (2009, 2015) and Van Jones (2009) are also important. Hertsgaard’s idea is straightforward: “Why not revive New Deal policies but apply them in a green and global fashion? The program could be called the Global Green Deal” (Hertsgaard, 2015). Central to his argument is the need to combat poverty and climate change through an approach that generates both economic and environmental benefits. Van Jones (2009), meanwhile, advocates the idea of a “green-collar” economy as a practice centred upon low-technology interventions, such as retrofitting buildings, in order to promote a green economy capable of lifting individuals and communities out of poverty.

Having focused thus far primarily on the knowledge frameworks that contributed to constructing the idea of a new green deal, it is also important to address the broader sociopolitical contexts, particularly those specific to Europe, that constituted conditions for the emergence of the European Green Deal.¹⁹

The sociopolitical and economic contexts of the rise of the European Green Deal

The rise of the European Green Deal must be understood as a response to several intersecting crises that were addressed and problematised at the European level as problems requiring a common European response. First, the increasingly compelling evidence of climate change remained an important driving force (Haas et al., 2022, p. 248). It is crucial to emphasise that civil society formations, including non-governmental organisations and movements such as Fridays for Future and Extinction Rebellion, critically highlighted the inadequacy of existing measures despite the EU's ambitious decarbonisation objectives. Their criticisms concerned environmental issues and the systemic organisation of societies more generally: "a wealth of new social movements and forms of activism have been repoliticising social arrangements and beliefs which had come to be regarded as non-negotiable and immutable" (Blühdorn & Deflorian, 2021, p. 259). In this context, civil society movements continued to raise public awareness of these issues while also pointing out, for example, that the EU's efforts between 1990 and 2019 had reduced emissions by only 25.4 per cent, which was insufficient to meet the objectives of the 2015 Paris Agreement (Haas et al., 2022).

Second, economic disparities within the EU, further exposed and intensified by the financial crisis during the latter half of the first decade of the twenty-first century, brought structural inequalities among the Member States into even sharper relief (Maris & Manoli, 2022). In particular, the incorporation of economies with different

19 In the discussion below, we draw primarily on the work of Haas et al. (2022).

rates of economic growth and varying capacities into a common monetary union without adequate social and economic equalisation mechanisms produced the “de-industrialisation and financialisation of the southern and south-eastern European periphery”, while the states of northern and central Europe “benefited from the common economic and monetary union because of their strong export orientation and broad industrial base” (Haas et al., 2022, p. 248). The market-liberal policies adopted in response to the crisis failed to overcome these disparities and instead further consolidated uneven development (Farneubun, 2016). The European Central Bank’s expansionary monetary policy concealed these fundamental economic inequalities rather than resolving them (Fontan, 2018).

Third, the financial crisis just mentioned, the responses to it and its consequences had broader sociopolitical implications and also affected political relations at the EU level. Haas et al. (2022, p. 249) observe that public disillusionment with the EU and its institutions intensified because of their technocratic and non-transparent mode of operation and a sense of their remoteness. This was reflected in the rise of right-wing populist parties in the Member States, which often oppose deeper integration and the continuation of the European project and instead advocate a weak Union or even withdrawal from it. The Brexit referendum and the United Kingdom’s subsequent departure from the EU are illustrative examples of this crisis of further integration (Antonucci & Varriale, 2020; Chelotti & Bressanelli, 2021). Measures at the European level to consolidate the EU’s legitimacy consequently became necessary, contributing at least in part to the proposal and adoption of the European Green Deal.

Alongside these internal crises, the EU also faced external pressures arising from significant geopolitical shifts. The rise of China as a global economic power and the protectionist policies of the United States at least partly rearticulated global power dynamics. This new polycentric global order, marked by an economic and technological “race” between the United States and China, required a reassessment of the EU’s trade and industrial policies (Haas et al., 2022). The

EU's efforts to maintain its position within the global division of labour and avoid becoming entangled in this confrontation led to initiatives to modernise industry and protect critical infrastructure, constituting a strategic response to these global changes.

Within this context, the European Green Deal appears as a complex response intended to confront these interconnected crises. It must therefore be read as a problematisation, namely as a process through which ways of exercising power in response to perceived and specifically constructed problems were sought at the European level. The objective of the European Green Deal should be understood as the formation of modes of exercising power and governing new realities in which economic and ecological objectives could and must be reconciled, while the EU's self-image as a leader in climate and environmental policy could be mobilised to renew its legitimacy and cohesion. By addressing uneven economic development within the Union, responding to geopolitical challenges and fulfilling international climate commitments, the European Green Deal constitutes, as demonstrated below, a strategic response to the sociopolitical and economic conditions that shaped both its necessity and its possibility.

4.2 THE PRESENTATION AND POLITICAL LEGITIMATION OF THE EUROPEAN GREEN DEAL: PERCEPTIONS OF THE ROLE OF GREEN EU CITIZENS

Ursula von der Leyen announces the European Green Deal as the newly elected president of the European Commission

As already highlighted in the introduction to this chapter, when Ursula von der Leyen assumed the presidency of the European Commission, she drew upon existing ideas and knowledge frameworks to announce, in a speech before the European Parliament, that the Commission would present a European Green Deal.

I will put forward a Green Deal for Europe in my first 100 days in office.
[...] It means change. All of us and every sector will have to contribute,

from aviation to maritime transport to the way each and everyone of us travels and lives. [...] But what is good for our planet must also be good for our people and our regions. [...] This is the European way: we are ambitious. We leave nobody behind. And we offer perspectives. If we want to succeed with this ambitious plan we need a strong economy. Because what we want to spend we need to earn first.

I want European citizens to play a leading and active part in building the future of our Union. [...] All of us in this room live in a Europe that has grown, matured and become strong with its 500 million inhabitants. More than 200 million people went to the polls. This Europe has influence. It wants to take on responsibility for itself and the world (von der Leyen, 2019b).

In her speech, Ursula von der Leyen developed a narrative that strategically presented the Green Deal as her own initiative and simultaneously as a collective responsibility. By declaring, “I will put forward a Green Deal for Europe in my first 100 days in office”, she asserted her leadership and vision. Immediately afterwards, however, the words “All of us and every sector will have to contribute” transferred responsibility for its success to the community, indicating that the burden of implementation had to be distributed throughout society. This rhetorical move performed a dual function: it acted as a preventive measure intended to mitigate potential criticism of her leadership while also emphasising the need for broad participation and action.

Von der Leyen’s discourse also assumes a global perspective and incorporates a vision of Europe as a global leader and regional custodian. By asserting that what is good for the planet must also be good for people and regions, she places global environmental concern alongside local well-being. This dual emphasis positions Europe as a central actor on the global stage, responsible for promoting global climate action while protecting the interests of its citizens. Von der Leyen thereby sought to foreground, strengthen and elevate Europe’s political position and to align the success of global environmental efforts with the well-being of EU citizens.

Von der Leyen also constructs a vision of an ambitiously united Europe grounded in strong economic government. By claiming that ambition is “the European way” and that “We leave nobody behind”, she articulates a collective identity combining the desire for progress with inclusion. This form of narrative is embedded within an economistic discourse that establishes a “strong economy” as the foundation for achieving the objectives of the Green Deal. Such framing serves to reconcile environmental objectives with economic imperatives, making the ecological transition conditional upon economic stability and the idea of progress. The discourse manages potential conflicts between economic growth and environmental sustainability by presenting them as mutually reinforcing rather than antagonistic.

From our perspective, it is also important that von der Leyen invokes the democratic legitimacy of her programme in the statement cited above and emphasises the electoral participation of European citizens. By declaring that “More than 200 million people went to the polls”, she seeks to ground her policy in the democratic will of the population. Her intention is fairly clear: the move seeks to pre-empt frequent criticisms of elitism or the top-down imposition of measures, while foregrounding the voices of EU citizens allows her to represent the Green Deal as an expression of collective democratic support.

The European Commission presents the European Green Deal

As von der Leyen had announced, the European Commission prepared the European Green Deal by the end of 2019 and presented it on 11 December 2019. At the launch event, the Commission President defined it as a growth strategy and placed its economic effects before its environmental benefits. By describing the European Green Deal as “our new growth strategy – for a growth that gives back more than it takes” (European Commission, 2019b), she articulated the strategy as a response to economic challenges, implying that the government of the environment was intended primarily to promote economic

development. This framing indicates that the European Green Deal concerns ecological sustainability while fundamentally constituting an economic opportunity capable of stimulating innovation and global competitiveness.

In her speech, von der Leyen emphasised that the Green Deal's success required a common effort and called upon all sectors and the citizens of the European Union to contribute: "We can all be involved in the transition and we can all benefit from the opportunities" She also stressed that the "transition to a green economy is a common endeavour that promises general benefits" (European Commission, 2019b, emphasis added). The Commission President therefore called for common, collective action, while the Green Deal's overall design was grounded in its conception as a fundamental platform for new economic opportunities. The shared endeavour was consequently expected to generate mutual benefits and strengthen the sense of common responsibility and cooperation among Europeans.

It is worth emphasising that von der Leyen first defined the Green Deal in economic terms, as already noted. Another indication of how the President articulated the new strategy through an economic prism is her conviction that the Green Deal would help the European economy become a global leader by "moving first and moving fast" (European Commission, 2019b). This statement advances a narrative of competitive advantage, suggesting that the early and rapid adoption of green policies would place Europe at the forefront of the global economy and require other actors to follow. The Green Deal is thus framed as a strategic economic initiative intended to secure global economic leadership through sustainable innovation, intertwining economic growth with environmental responsibility. By emphasising the possibility of persuading other countries "to move with us", she reinforces the idea that leadership in this field can encourage a global transition towards sustainability. The EU is thereby represented as a key actor in the international arena, while the Green Deal is further legitimised as a comprehensive strategy combining economic, environmental and geopolitical objectives.

Alongside its economic effects, she nevertheless also highlighted its environmental benefits: “for Europe’s natural heritage, for biodiversity, for our forests and our seas” (European Commission, 2019b). This invokes a particular idealised image of a green Europe as a region endowed with abundant natural assets. It functions as a metaphorical strategy for legitimising the newly proposed overarching strategy by appealing to a shared sense of pride in Europe’s natural beauty and heritage.

Debate on the European Green Deal and green citizenship in the European Parliament

On the same day that the Commission publicly presented the European Green Deal strategy, it also presented it to the European Parliament, after which Members of the European Parliament debated the proposal (European Parliament, 2019). From our perspective, the particularly relevant question is how speakers addressed citizens in the context of the Green Deal’s future implementation. The discussion below therefore focuses on this dimension. The Commission President emphasised:

We set ourselves the target to be, as a Commission, climate neutral by 2030 [...]. It’s a challenge, but let’s do that together. Let us support active citizenship and call on grass roots initiatives. Let us work with teachers and educators, because our children are not passive spectators. They are very active players in this endeavour. Our climate pact will be with them and for them and for all those who are ready to play a part in this endeavour (European Parliament, 2019).

In her statement, Ursula von der Leyen employed a discourse that intertwined collective action with a call to achieve climate neutrality by 2030. She framed the Commission’s pledge to make its own operations climate neutral by 2030 as a major challenge and a collective mission, emphasising the scale of the commitment and seeking to cultivate unity and shared responsibility. This framing constitutes the climate objective as a common endeavour essential to fostering broad participation and commitment across different

sectors of society.

Von der Leyen calls for support for “active citizenship” and urges the Commission to “call on grass roots initiatives”, thereby articulating another important dimension of the Green Deal, namely its incorporation of and reliance upon green citizenship (European Parliament, 2019). By invoking active citizenship and bottom-up initiatives, she emphasises the role of individuals and local movements in bringing about change and seeks to demonstrate the democratic foundation of the measures envisaged under the Deal. Through this appeal to initiatives from the public as a whole and from all citizens, the climate agenda is framed as a participatory process requiring the involvement and intervention of all citizens rather than as an exclusively top-down directive.

The educational dimension is also important from our perspective. Her emphasis on involving “teachers and educators” further connects this discourse to education, indicating that climate action constitutes a long-term investment in future generations. She explicitly stresses that children and young people “are not passive spectators”; they are “very active players in this endeavour” (European Parliament, 2019). This introduces a generational perspective through which the significance of education and youth participation in achieving the green transition is constructed. Young people are constituted as key actors, and climate action is consequently framed as an intergenerational commitment essential to society’s future well-being.

Another important formulation within this narrative is that the implementation of the Green Deal will be “with them and for them”. This constitutes a particular contractual metaphor that reinforces the idea of reciprocal obligations and benefits. It thereby symbolises a binding agreement between present and future generations and indicates a moral and ethical commitment to participating in the implementation of the proposed policies.

During the parliamentary debate, several Members of the European Parliament also addressed the role of citizens in shaping

and implementing the European Green Deal. One Member of the European Parliament whose contribution focused on citizen involvement was Alexandra Phillips of the Greens political group (European Parliament, 2019):

Across the world we are mobilising in our millions to protect our planet, led often by young people themselves, and as a result, the European Commission is following our lead and now talking the green talk". She continued by presenting the Deal as a means of confronting three crises, namely "the crisis of inequality, the crisis of democracy and the climate crisis": "A genuine Green New Deal rises to these challenges. It engages with unions, bringing everyone with us on this exciting journey through citizen-led assemblies and, crucially, raises the standard of living and creates new jobs. We have just 10 years to curb the worst effects of the climate crisis. This Green Deal must not be yet another greenwash. It must deliver a positive reality for all European citizens (European Parliament, 2019).

In her speech, Phillips focuses on citizens and emphasises the important role of individuals and collective action in addressing the climate crisis. She begins by asserting that the Deal originates "from the people" and identifies the active participation of citizens, particularly young people, as the driving force behind green action. This orientation positions ordinary people as the principal bearers of change. Phillips explicitly directs her message towards citizens, acknowledges their leading role in climate action and represents the European Commission as responsive to the initiatives expressed, demanded and initiated by citizens. This narrative advances a particular logic of power in which the proposition that institutional measures result from public pressure and citizen activism validates and reinforces citizen participation. By presenting the Commission as a formation of power that follows the demands and wishes of the population, Phillips emphasises the legitimacy and influence of civil society movements in policy formation.

Her vision of a genuine Green New Deal is grounded in the idea of inclusiveness and stresses the need to involve the broadest possible

range of social actors in policy formation and implementation, from trade unions to local community assemblies. By advocating citizen-led assemblies, Phillips emphasises the importance of democratic participation and deliberation in shaping green policies at the European level and suggests that a successful Green Deal must incorporate diverse voices and perspectives. The emphasis on inclusive participation highlights the collective character of the Green Deal as a shared endeavour.

Phillips also highlighted the material benefits of the Green Deal for citizens and emphasised its potential to improve living standards and create new jobs. This representation allows the Green Deal to be understood as a response to citizens' various concerns regarding economic security and quality of life. By connecting efforts towards sustainability with job creation and improved living conditions, she presents the Green Deal as a comprehensive strategy addressing both ecological and economic dimensions.

The next speaker, Josianne Cutajar of the S&D Group, stated the following about the European Green Deal:

It is indeed very ambitious, but we cannot ignore this strong need for change. I believe that the green transition will require a common effort. EU institutions, Member States, local authorities, civil society, citizens, businesses: everybody is called to play their part. If we want the European Green Deal to deliver its ambitious results, we need to fight for adequate resources to finance it. Research and innovation will be paramount in order to make sure that citizens and enterprises keep up with technological process and will be able to meet the targets the Green Deal is going to set (European Parliament, 2019).

As can be seen, Josianne Cutajar emphasised the urgency and inevitability of the green transition in her speech and presented environmental action as the only successful path forward. A narrative again emerges in which green action is constituted as the only possible and unavoidable course. By describing the transition as ambitious yet necessary, she framed the green agenda as an inevitable response to pressing ecological challenges. This framing leaves virtually no

space for potentially alternative positions, since it suggests that the urgency and gravity of the circumstances require an uncompromising commitment to the green transition. Cutajar's metaphor of struggle constitutes another important articulation of the Green Deal, similarly expressing the urgency and intensity of the commitment required to achieve climate objectives. By describing efforts towards environmental and climate objectives as a struggle, she communicated to citizens the seriousness of the endeavour and the need for determined and unwavering action. This metaphor is highly significant in political discourse because it articulates and evokes particular emotions. In this case, it specifically served to mobilise public support and encourage action by defining the Green Deal as a decisive battle for the future rather than solely as a policy initiative.

It is essential to recognise that Cutajar called for a common approach to implementing environmental policies and emphasised the need for coordinated efforts at different levels of society. By calling upon the EU institutions, Member States, local authorities, civil society, citizens and businesses each to play their part, she reinforced the idea that successful environmental policy implementation depends upon cooperation and shared responsibility. Citizens occupy an important position here as one of the central groups of actors and must form part of a broad coalition of support.

Another aspect of Cutajar's statement worth highlighting is her emphasis on securing adequate resources to finance the Green Deal. This focus on financial support reflects a pragmatic recognition of the economic challenges associated with the green transition and also advocates investment in research and innovation intended to enable citizens and businesses to achieve the new environmental objectives.

Let us also consider the statement made by the Slovenian Member of the European Parliament Milan Brglez, who likewise represented the S&D Group:

The European Green Deal, particularly with regard to achieving the 2050 climate objectives, is not a choice but a necessity. We will be able to choose only among the most effective measures for implementing

the policies that form an integral part of this Deal. [...] Politics and the economy are not alone in facing a demanding challenge; every EU citizen faces one as well. The role of the informed individual, primarily as a consumer and, let us not forget, as the bearer of all human rights, may constitute only one small piece in the mosaic of the Green Deal, but it can have a crucial and, above all, lasting effect on its successful implementation (European Parliament, 2019).

In his speech, MEP Milan Brglez, like Cutajar before him, emphasised the necessity of the European Green Deal and presented it as the only option, one that was effectively non-negotiable and had no alternative. By representing the Green Deal in this manner, he stressed the urgency and central importance of the initiative in light of the 2050 climate objectives. Brglez also highlighted the role of citizens and emphasised that everyone must confront the challenge posed by environmental problems and climate change. By stating that this demanding challenge faces politics and business as well as “every citizen”, he emphasised the need for broad participation and responsibility on the part of all. This constitutes a means of delineating and actualising green citizenship, of which everyone is expected to be a bearer, while the participation of all is presented as essential to addressing climate issues and realising the Green Deal. Brglez therefore assigned (green) citizens a crucial role in the successful implementation of the Green Deal by emphasising that informed individuals, particularly as consumers and bearers of human rights, are essential to the initiative’s success. Positioning citizens as key actors who must assume responsibility and care foregrounded the significance of individual actions and decisions in contributing to the broader objective formulated at the European level through the Green Deal.

The European Council takes note of the Green Deal and endorses the 2050 climate-neutrality objective; the European Parliament adopts a resolution

The day after von der Leyen presented the Green Deal and the European Parliament held the debate interpreted above, the European

Council took note of the Commission Communication at its meeting on 12 December 2019 and invited the Council to take the work forward. It separately endorsed the objective of achieving a climate-neutral EU by 2050, although Poland could not at that stage commit to implementing this objective. This limited but politically significant response can be interpreted as a reinforcement of the exercise of power at the European level, with the Council's position contributing to the formation of broad institutional support for the Green Deal's discourse and strategic orientation. Taking note of the Communication was therefore a move that consolidated the Green Deal on the EU agenda while giving Member States time to negotiate and align their national interests with the proposed supranational objectives.

The European Parliament's decision to adopt a resolution on the Green Deal on 15 January 2020 marked the next critical point in its legitimisation (European Parliament, 2020). In this context, analysis of the European Parliament resolution on the European Green Deal shows that the role of citizens received considerable emphasis. The resolution consistently stressed the necessity of involving all citizens in the green transition and recognised them as essential actors in the struggle against climate change and environmental degradation. This is evident in formulations calling for the active involvement of "citizens, regions, local communities, civil society, businesses (including SMEs) and trade unions as active participants in the transition to climate neutrality [...]" (European Parliament, 2020). By identifying citizens as central actors in the transition, the resolution reinforced the idea that environmental policies must be implemented collaboratively and inclusively and that the ambitious objectives of the Green Deal cannot be achieved without citizen participation.

From the perspective of our analytics of power, it is important to recognise that the resolution (European Parliament, 2020) assigns at least part of the responsibility for realising the Green Deal to citizens. It states, for example, that the Green Deal's success requires

“substantial public and private investment” and emphasises that “every Member State must contribute to implementing climate neutrality” (European Parliament, 2020). This description assigns a proactive role to all actors, meaning that their informed action is crucial to shaping the success of the Green Deal.

As the Members of the European Parliament argued during the debate discussed above, the final resolution also defined the European Green Deal as the only path rather than one possible option, implying that no viable alternative to the green transition existed. This is evident in the resolution’s assertion of the “urgent need for ambitious action” and its call for the “necessary transition to a climate-neutral society by 2050 at the latest” (European Parliament, 2020). By presenting the Green Deal as the inevitable path forward, the discourse sought to eliminate any ambiguity concerning the need for drastic and immediate action. The objective of this narrative strategy is equally clear: to secure support by presenting the Green Deal as the only logical course of action in the face of imminent climate and economic challenges.

Furthermore, through the resolution, the European Parliament adopted a position in favour of inclusive dialogue and participatory processes involving citizens. It referred to the importance and necessity of “genuine dialogue and transparent and participatory processes” (European Parliament, 2020). This emphasis on dialogue indicates a commitment to democratic participation that ensures citizens actively contribute to policy formation and implementation rather than remaining passive recipients of policy. It thereby constructs the idea of the necessary involvement and engagement of active green citizens who will recognise a clear purpose and added value in the Deal for themselves and their communities.

The question of added value for individuals as citizens constitutes another element shaping the resolution’s substantive orientation. The adopted text also emphasises the benefits that the Green Deal is expected to bring citizens, with the objective of improving living standards and creating new jobs. In this context, the resolution

stressed that the Green Deal should create economic opportunities, drive investment, provide quality jobs, improve the well-being of all and reduce disparities among Member States (European Parliament, 2020). By linking environmental action with socioeconomic improvements, the discourse sought to address potential concerns about the economic effects of the Green Deal and to demonstrate that the Green Deal constitutes a route towards greater social and economic well-being for all citizens as well as a necessity for protecting the environment and preventing climate change.

4.3 The substantive framework of the European Green Deal and some key strategic and legal foundations

Whereas the discussion thus far in this chapter has focused primarily on the process through which the European Green Deal was adopted and articulated, as well as on the role of EU (green) citizens, attention now turns to its substantive content. It should first be emphasised that, as already noted, the European Green Deal is very broad in scope and may be understood as a blueprint for the transformation of European society and as an extensive framework for further action across a range of policy areas. Nevertheless, several key objectives set out in the Commission Communication can be identified (European Commission, 2019b). First, the Green Deal focuses on achieving net-zero emissions through proposals for specific strategies to reduce emissions in all sectors, with particular emphasis on energy, which accounts for more than 75 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions in the EU. Second, under the European Green Deal, European society is expected to pursue the decoupling of economic growth from resource use. Although Europe has reduced its emissions over the past decade, it remains a major consumer of global resources. To achieve this objective, described as “this generation’s defining task” (European Commission, 2019b), society would need to transform the way in which it operates, particularly its economic organisation. Third, the Green Deal emphasises the need to promote a just and inclusive green transition that leaves no one behind and ensures that

its benefits are distributed fairly across all sectors of society. In this sense, a social dimension is also present, at least at the declaratory level (European Commission, 2019b).

It should once again be emphasised that the European Green Deal was adopted in the form of a European Commission communication. This means that the document is not legally binding in itself. Nevertheless, as already noted, it covers a wide range of issues and establishes the fundamental coordinates for subsequent action. The Communication was designed to provide the basis for, and continues to lead to, the adoption of various instruments, including new complementary communications and binding legal acts such as regulations, directives and decisions (European Commission, 2019b).

Eight key areas of the Green Deal

The Green Deal identifies eight key areas in which action was envisaged through the introduction of legislation, instruments and programmes. These areas are examined below.

First, increasing the EU's climate ambition for 2030 and 2050. In the European Green Deal, the Commission established the achievement of climate neutrality by 2050 as an objective and therefore set out proposed steps towards achieving it (European Commission, 2019a). It announced that it would propose the first European Climate Law by March 2020, which was envisaged as establishing the conditions for an effective and fair transition to climate neutrality and providing predictability for investors. The Commission also announced that, by the summer of 2020, it would present a plan to increase the EU's greenhouse-gas reduction target for 2030 to at least 50 per cent and towards 55 per cent compared with 1990 levels, involving a review of the existing Emissions Trading System and other relevant climate-policy instruments. As part of this objective, the Commission (2019a) also planned to introduce a carbon border adjustment mechanism for selected economic sectors in order to reduce the risk of carbon leakage to countries with less

stringent environmental policies. In accordance with international rules, the mechanism was intended to ensure that the price of imported products more accurately reflected their carbon content. In relation to climate change adaptation, the Green Deal also envisaged strengthening Europe's resilience to climate impacts and promoting investment in nature-based solutions and adaptation measures. Ensuring access to data and developing instruments to integrate climate-related risks into risk-management practices were regarded as crucial, enabling all stakeholders, from investors to citizens, to prepare for and respond more effectively to climate-related challenges (European Commission, 2019a).

Second, supplying clean, affordable and secure energy. The Commission (2019a) emphasised in the Green Deal that further decarbonisation of the energy system was critical to achieving the climate objectives for 2030 and 2050, since the production and use of energy across economic sectors accounted for more than 75 per cent of the EU's greenhouse gas emissions. In this context, the Commission argued that energy efficiency must be prioritised alongside the transition to renewable energy sources, while coal must be rapidly phased out and gas decarbonised. For the Commission, it was essential to ensure a secure and affordable energy supply for consumers and businesses in the future. This required the European energy market to become fully integrated, interconnected and digitalised (European Commission, 2019a). One of the measures envisaged in this area was for the Member States to prepare and submit their revised energy and climate plans by the end of 2019. These plans were to specify national contributions to EU-wide objectives, which the Commission would assess in terms of their level of ambition and use as a basis for determining whether additional measures were required (European Commission, 2019a). Within the Green Deal, the Commission further emphasised that the clean energy transition must involve and benefit consumers, with renewable energy sources playing a central role, including the expansion of offshore wind energy. The Commission stressed the need for the smart integration

of renewable energy and other sustainable solutions, which could contribute to decarbonisation at the lowest possible cost. The declining cost of renewable energy had limited its impact on household energy bills, while the Commission presented measures intended to facilitate smart integration (European Commission, 2019a). In this context, the Commission also addressed the risk of energy poverty, arguing that the problem could be tackled through appropriate schemes to finance household home renovations. The Commission further emphasised the importance of smart infrastructure, including smart grids and carbon capture facilities, which would enable better integration across energy sectors (European Commission, 2019a).

Third, mobilising industry for a clean and circular economy. In relation to this priority, the Commission emphasised that achieving a climate-neutral and circular economy required the “full mobilisation” of industry, which meant that key decisions and actions had to be taken within the following five years. In outlining the context, the Commission observed that the substantial increase in the global extraction of raw materials since 1970 had contributed to rising greenhouse gas emissions, biodiversity loss and water stress. EU industry continued to contribute significantly to these problems because of its linear and resource-intensive model of operation (European Commission, 2019a). According to the Commission, the transition towards sustainability offered an opportunity to expand “sustainable and job-intensive economic activity”, including in the fields of low-emission technologies and the circular economy, which offered considerable potential for “new activities and jobs” (European Commission, 2019a). The Commission considered progress to be too slow and uneven. One of the objectives of the European Green Deal was therefore to accelerate this transition by incorporating the digital transformation into the EU’s industrial strategy, adopting a new circular economy action plan and promoting sustainable growth and the development of markets for climate-neutral and circular products.

The Commission announced the preparation of an action plan that would give priority to resource-intensive sectors such as textiles,

construction, electronics and plastics, as well as to issues including microplastics and packaging. It announced measures to support the sustainable design of products, reduce waste and promote recycling and reuse. It also highlighted the role of consumers, who were to be empowered to make environmentally sustainable choices through reliable product information and a right to repair intended to counter premature obsolescence. In addition, the Commission announced that it would strengthen the rules governing the substantiation of green claims, improve the sustainability of digital technologies and support strategic initiatives such as the development of clean hydrogen, alternative fuels and energy storage, while working to secure a sustainable supply of raw materials. The Commission further announced that the EU would promote cooperation and investment in key industrial sectors, such as the battery value chain, in order to strengthen the circular economy and accelerate technological innovation towards a zero-carbon future (European Commission, 2019a).

Fourth, building and renovating in an energy- and resource-efficient way. In relation to this priority, the Commission first emphasised that the construction, use and renovation of buildings required considerable amounts of energy and resources, with buildings accounting for 40 per cent of energy consumption in the EU (European Commission, 2019a). The annual renovation rate of the building stock in the Member States ranged from 0.4 to 1.2 per cent and would have to at least double in order to achieve the EU's energy-efficiency and climate objectives. The Commission also emphasised the implications for citizens, noting that 50 million consumers struggled to keep their homes adequately warm. To address these problems, the Commission announced that the EU and its Member States would promote a "renovation wave" for public and private buildings. This was expected to increase renovation rates, lower energy bills, reduce energy poverty and stimulate the construction sector, thereby creating opportunities for economic operators (European Commission, 2019a).

The Commission further announced that it intended to enforce legislation concerning the energy performance of buildings and would begin assessing the Member States' long-term renovation strategies in 2020. It also planned to examine the possibility of including emissions from buildings in the European Emissions Trading System and to review the Construction Products Regulation so that the design of new and renovated buildings would be consistent with the needs of the circular economy, digitalisation and climate resilience. Efforts were to focus on larger renovation projects in order to secure better financing conditions and economies of scale, remove regulatory barriers to energy-efficiency investment in rented and multi-ownership buildings, and prioritise the renovation of social housing, schools and hospitals in order to support vulnerable households and improve public services (European Commission, 2019a).

Fifth, accelerating the shift to sustainable and smart mobility. The European Commission stated in the Communication that transport accounted for a quarter of the EU's greenhouse gas emissions and that these emissions would need to be reduced by 90 per cent by 2050 in order to achieve climate neutrality. In this context, it announced that road, rail, aviation and waterborne transport would all have to contribute to this comprehensive objective, with particular attention being paid to providing users with "more affordable, accessible, healthier and cleaner alternatives" (European Commission, 2019a). The Commission explained that it would adopt a strategy for sustainable and smart mobility in 2020, addressing all sources of emissions and promoting multimodal transport in order to increase efficiency. Among the key measures identified were shifting a substantial proportion of inland freight from roads to railways and inland waterways, revising the Combined Transport Directive and advancing the Single European Sky initiative in order to reduce aviation emissions. The Commission emphasised that technological developments such as automated and connected multimodal mobility, smart traffic-management systems and "mobility as a service" would be crucial to reducing congestion and pollution, particularly in urban areas.

The European Commission also set the objective of ensuring that the price of transport reflected its environmental and health impacts, ending subsidies for fossil fuels and addressing tax exemptions for aviation and maritime fuels (European Commission, 2019a). In addition, the Commission emphasised that it planned to extend the European Emissions Trading System to maritime transport and revise road-pricing measures.

Sixth, from “Farm to Fork”: designing a fair, healthy and environmentally friendly food system. This is an exceptionally important area, particularly for EU citizens. The European Commission (2019a) announced that, through the Farm to Fork Strategy, which would address the environmental effects of existing food-production practices, it sought to transform the EU food system into a global standard for sustainability. The Commission stated that, despite the first steps towards sustainability, food production continued to pollute the air, water and soil, contribute to biodiversity loss and climate change, consume excessive amounts of natural resources and generate substantial amounts of waste. Poor-quality diets were also associated with obesity and disease (European Commission, 2019a).

The European Commission explained that the strategy, which was to be launched in 2020, would involve a broad stakeholder debate and harness new technologies and public demand for sustainable food, benefiting all operators in the food value chain. The emphasis would be on designing a fair, healthy and environmentally friendly food system. The question, of course, is how this was to be achieved. In this regard, the Commission emphasised that farmers and fishers were central to managing the transition and that the strategy would strengthen their efforts to tackle climate change, protect the environment and preserve biodiversity. The intention was for the common agricultural and common fisheries policies to support these efforts and allocate substantial proportions of their budgets to climate action. The European Commission further announced that the revised Common Agricultural Policy, which was expected to begin operating in 2022, would ensure that national strategic plans

reflected the ambitions of the Green Deal and placed emphasis on sustainable practices such as organic farming and agroforestry.

Another aspect of this area, as explained by the Commission in its Communication, was that, alongside the promotion of organic farming, the strategy would seek significant reductions in the use of chemical pesticides, fertilisers and antibiotics. It would also address food processing, retail, transport, storage, packaging and waste, while stimulating sustainable food consumption and promoting affordable healthy food (European Commission, 2019a).

Seventh, preserving and restoring ecosystems and biodiversity. In relation to this area, the European Commission (2019a) explained that ecosystems provided essential services, including food, fresh water, clean air and climate regulation. At the same time, it noted that the EU was failing to achieve important environmental objectives such as the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. The 2019 Global Assessment Report highlighted the substantial erosion of biodiversity worldwide, primarily as a result of changes in land and sea use, the direct exploitation of natural resources and climate change.

In this context, the European Commission (2019a) announced that the forthcoming Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Kunming, China, would provide an opportunity to adopt a robust global framework for halting biodiversity loss. As part of the preparations, the Commission was to present a Biodiversity Strategy by March 2020, establishing measurable objectives for addressing the main causes of biodiversity loss in the EU. The European Green Deal therefore announced that the Biodiversity Strategy would include specific measures such as expanding protected areas and restoring damaged ecosystems, with an emphasis on urban biodiversity and the greening of European cities.

The European Commission (2019a) further emphasised that the new EU Forest Strategy would seek to improve both the quality and quantity of forests and promote their sustainable management and restoration. The Green Deal also addressed the “blue economy”

and recognised the role of the oceans in climate change mitigation and adaptation. The Commission would propose measures for the more sustainable management of maritime areas, support offshore renewable energy and combat illegal fishing. It would also use the 2020 United Nations Ocean Conference to emphasise the importance of protecting ocean health (European Commission, 2019a).

Eighth, a zero pollution ambition for a toxic-free environment. As in the previous areas of action, the Commission first identified the central problems in this field and emphasised the urgency of addressing them. The European Commission explained that creating a toxic-free environment in the EU required more action to prevent pollution from being generated, together with measures to clean up and remedy existing pollution. The Commission emphasised that the EU needed to improve the monitoring, reporting, prevention and remediation of pollution affecting the air, water, soil and consumer products. Achieving this objective required a more systematic approach across all policies and regulations. The European Commission therefore announced that it would adopt a zero pollution action plan for air, water and soil in 2021.²⁰

The Commission also emphasised that the natural functions of groundwater and surface water had to be restored, since this was essential to preserving and restoring biodiversity and preventing and limiting flood damage. Measures to improve air quality were another important component. The Commission was expected to strengthen monitoring and air-quality planning and to align air-quality standards more closely with the recommendations of the World Health Organization. In addition, the Commission announced that it would review EU measures addressing pollution from large industrial installations and improve the prevention of industrial

20 On 12 May 2021, the Commission duly adopted the plan. It sets out an integrated vision for 2050: “a world where pollution is reduced to levels that are no longer harmful to human health and natural ecosystems, as well as the steps to get there”. Through the plan, the Commission seeks to bring together the various EU policies “to combat and prevent pollution” (European Commission, 2021).

accidents, thereby ensuring consistency with climate, energy and circular economy policies. A chemicals strategy for sustainability was also announced. This was expected to include the simplification of the legal framework, a strengthened role for EU agencies and greater transparency in chemical risk assessment. The Commission emphasised that this approach would contribute to better protection of human health and the environment while also strengthening global competitiveness (European Commission, 2019a).

The foundations for implementing the European Green Deal

The preceding pages focused on the substantive areas that constitute the principal orientation of the European Green Deal and provide the guiding frameworks for concrete green policies. This raises the question of their implementation and of the specific practices and mechanisms through which they are to be governed. Of particular importance here is the European Green Deal's foundational intention that sustainability-related or green measures should be mainstreamed across all policy areas (European Commission, 2019a). As demonstrated in the historical overview of the development of environmental policy at the European level, the idea of its rhizomatic character became increasingly prominent. It is therefore unsurprising that this logic is also present in the European Green Deal. The Commission accordingly proposed a number of concrete measures intended to facilitate such implementation.

In this context, the Commission anticipated that achieving the objectives of the European Green Deal would require exceptional levels of investment, estimated at an additional EUR 260 billion annually in order to meet the 2030 climate and energy targets. The Communication announced the presentation of a Sustainable Europe Investment Plan, which would combine financing for sustainable projects with an improved framework conducive to green investment (European Commission, 2019a). The Commission explained that the EU budget would play a central role, with a proposed target of dedicating 25 per cent of expenditure across all programmes to

climate-related objectives. The InvestEU Fund was also expected to contribute to climate action and to work with the European Investment Bank and national promotional banks to strengthen investment in sustainable initiatives. In addition, the European Commission announced the establishment of a Just Transition Mechanism intended to ensure the broadest possible inclusion. Particular attention would be directed towards the regions and sectors expected to be most affected by the transition, while support would be provided for reskilling, job creation and energy-efficient housing. According to the Commission (2019a), mainstreaming sustainability also meant “greening” national budgets.

In addition to establishing financial instruments and providing resources for the realisation of the Green Deal’s objectives, “mobilising research and fostering innovation” was identified as another important element of its implementation (European Commission, 2019a). In this context, the Communication reveals a logic of exercising power that relies heavily upon knowledge and its use to legitimise green policies. This involves a specific form of disseminating and deploying knowledge as an instrument of government, with emphasis placed on “new technologies, sustainable solutions and disruptive innovation”. Through this approach, the EU positions itself as a rational actor whose environmental policies are grounded in scientifically informed knowledge. By connecting the objectives of green policies with research and innovation, the text consolidates the idea that addressing complex environmental challenges requires the continuous production and application of scientific and expert knowledge.

The incorporation of innovation and technological solutions into the European Green Deal constitutes a clear example of what may be understood as a governmental technology. It encompasses the instruments and strategies through which the EU seeks to govern different sociopolitical domains in the name of sustainability. The Commission Communication (2019a) emphasises the role of Horizon Europe and other EU programmes in the deployment and demonstration of new technologies, thereby framing innovation

as a central component of government. By promoting technological solutions such as clean hydrogen, low-carbon steel production and smart urban mobility, the EU asserts its position as an exerciser of power by directing social development towards a particular vision of sustainability. It should nevertheless be noted, as Haas et al. (2022, p. 252) observe, that although the promotion of innovation through EU programmes such as Horizon Europe is a central component of the European Green Deal, it remains uncertain “whether the targeted technological options will be available in time and at the desired scale”. The “realism” of the actual implementation of technological solutions is, however, not necessarily the decisive issue. The narrative of technological progress is itself significant because it presents technology as more than a means of achieving a particular objective. It establishes it as an essential element of government, through which the governing of society and the environment becomes intertwined with the promotion of particular technological pathways.

The Communication on the European Green Deal also reveals a clear connection between frameworks of knowledge and economic actors, indicating that government under the European Green Deal is grounded to a considerable extent in economic rationality. References to partnerships with industry and to the role of the European Innovation Council in supporting high-potential start-ups and small and medium-sized enterprises exemplify this logic (European Commission, 2019a). The EU’s approach, which defines economic actors as key partners in the achievement of environmental objectives, presupposes that economic value can and should be generated from efforts towards sustainability. At the same time, this governmental reasoning seeks to govern populations, in this case by directing them towards the green transition, through mechanisms that align economic growth with environmental policies. EU support for economic actors within this framework reflects a broader strategy of governing through the market, in which economic incentives are used to pursue wider sociopolitical objectives.

A further aspect of the rationale underlying the implementation of the European Green Deal can be identified in its emphasis on

cross-sectoral cooperation and interdisciplinarity, both of which may be understood as mechanisms for the exercise of power. The text's emphasis on involving a wide range of stakeholders, including regions, citizens and different sectors, points to a particular conception of how multiple frameworks of knowledge, actors, practices and technologies are to be brought together. This interdisciplinarity is presented as indispensable to achieving the systemic changes required by the Green Deal, thereby legitimising the EU's role in coordinating and connecting these diverse elements. By bringing together different subjectivities and forms of expertise, the EU exercises power by directing a variety of actors towards a "common objective" rather than through domination.

4.4 THE ROLE OF GREEN CITIZENS IN THE REALISATION OF THE EUROPEAN GREEN DEAL

In the previous section, we identified the fundamental elements that the Commission presents in its Communication on the European Green Deal as necessary for the systematic, structured and comprehensive introduction of the green transition at all levels of the EU, if that transition is to be effectively realised. Among other elements, we highlighted financial mechanisms, frameworks of knowledge, practices and policy arrangements. It should be emphasised, however, that the document also addresses other key elements, including the conceptualisation, role and participation of citizens. Given the central place of this dimension in the study, it is examined separately below.

Green citizenship in the European Green Deal

In the Communication on the European Green Deal, we examined how citizenship is articulated or, more specifically, how EU citizens are represented, what role is attributed to them, and what forms of action are envisaged for them in the realisation of the Green Deal and the implementation of green policies. The analysis of the Communication revealed several distinct thematic emphases.

First, citizens can be identified as both active agents and recipients of the proposed environmental policies, establishing a specific relationship between power exercised at the European level and the population over which it is exercised. This dual role of citizens is framed through a discourse emphasising that European-level green policies and their implementation can improve citizens' well-being. The document states that the Green Deal aims to "protect, conserve and enhance the EU's natural capital, and protect the health and well-being of citizens from environment-related risks and impacts" (European Commission, 2019a). In this way, the Commission articulated a comprehensive policy framework whose primary task or purpose is to protect and improve the lives of EU citizens. Such an articulation strategically aligns citizens' interests with the EU's environmental agenda and presents the Green Deal as a benevolent strategy that responds directly to the needs of the public. One important effect of framing the Green Deal in this way is that it appears to be oriented primarily towards caring for citizens, while the EU institutions retain control over the direction and implementation of these policies and citizens are positioned predominantly as their recipients. A further aspect of this representation of citizens as recipients or as the "target group" of measures undertaken within the Green Deal is their articulation as subjects whose lives can be continually improved, who can be empowered and strengthened, and whose well-being can be secured (European Commission, 2019a). In this sense, the Communication refers to the benefits that citizens will enjoy, including improvements in the "quality of life of current and future generations", indicating the orientation of European governmental power towards securing these effects.

At the same time, our analysis shows that the Communication does not construct citizens exclusively as passive recipients. It also positions them as agents involved in implementing the Green Deal. At the very beginning of the Communication, it is emphasised that "active public participation and confidence in the transition is paramount". A discourse of citizenship is present that is situated, in

this context, within a neoliberal framework emphasising individual and collective responsibility. By constructing citizens as participating agents, part of the responsibility for the success of the Green Deal is subtly transferred to citizens themselves. Citizens must participate actively and support the policy if it is to be effective. According to the Communication, this is possible only if the transition is “just and inclusive” and “put[s] people first”, meaning that citizens’ involvement is presented as a precondition for the success of the Green Deal (European Commission, 2019a). This may be interpreted as a form of conditionality in which the benefits promised by the Green Deal also depend on whether citizens comply with environmental objectives as envisaged and actively participate in their realisation.

Participation is one of the central terms in this context. The European Green Deal establishes citizens’ participation as a foundation for successful implementation. Citizenship is therefore defined as more than a legal status, since it also entails an active and engaged role in the formulation and implementation of environmental policies. The European Commission, for example, emphasises in the Communication that “active public participation and confidence in the transition is paramount if policies are to work and be accepted” (European Commission, 2019a). It is important to recognise that this establishes a clear connection between the idea of green citizenship and participatory democracy, implying that the legitimacy and effectiveness of the Green Deal depend on citizens’ active participation. The emphasis on participation also presupposes an engaged disposition among citizens, their involvement in implementation and, at least to some extent, their assumption of responsibility for bringing the Deal to fruition.

Another particular feature of the discourse surrounding public participation in the Green Deal should be highlighted, namely the ambivalence of the Commission’s position or, more broadly, of power exercised at the European level. On the one hand, the Green Deal Communication is founded on the very concept of a deal, which implies comprehensive agreement among all actors without coercion.

On the other hand, the text is repeatedly formulated in a manner that presupposes that the programme and its parameters have already been determined and that citizens are expected to contribute within this established framework. The text states that the Commission will “launch” a European Climate Pact and “engage with the public on climate action” in doing so (European Commission, 2019a). This illustrates that engagement follows the launch, occupies a secondary position and takes place only after the decision to establish the Pact has already been made. Although the initiative is intended to foster dialogue and cooperation, the question simultaneously arises of the extent to which citizens can genuinely influence political decisions rather than participate within a predetermined framework.

One important narrative concerning citizen participation relates to their presumed level of information. The document emphasises the need for “sharing information, fostering inspiration and promoting public understanding” as key components of the European Climate Pact. This promotes active and participatory citizenship, while simultaneously presupposing that citizens must remain continuously informed and capable of understanding complex information concerning the environment and green policies. A significant problem is that citizens differ in their access to information and in their capacity to understand it. These capacities are not distributed equally across the population. The Communication recognises this issue only to a very limited extent, potentially resulting in the marginalisation of those who lack the resources, education or time required to engage with the information provided. This points to the limited inclusiveness of the Green Deal.

Furthermore, the discourse of citizenship as informed engagement generally constructs knowledge as a precondition for participation, which may exclude less-informed citizens from decision-making processes. The emphasis on education and information exchange suggests that only those who are adequately informed are qualified to participate in the ecological transition. Such a framing can inadvertently produce a hierarchy of citizenship in which those with

better access to information and higher levels of environmental literacy are regarded as more legitimate participants in the green transition. By privileging informed participation, the discourse may overlook the value of other forms of participation, including experiential knowledge and community-based practices. Critical discourse analysis reveals that, although the Green Deal seeks to empower citizens through informed participation, it risks creating barriers to the participation of those who are less well informed and thereby restricting the democratic inclusiveness of the environmental transition.

The articulation of green citizenship can also be understood as proceeding from the fundamental assumption that citizens constitute a homogeneous group with equal capacities to participate in the green transition. The assertion that “citizens are and should remain a driving force of the transition” (European Commission, 2019a) implies a universal capacity and willingness to participate, while overlooking the socioeconomic, cultural and geographical differences that may affect an individual’s ability to participate meaningfully. On the other hand, the Green Deal Communication again displays a degree of ambivalence because the idea that “no one is left behind” is also employed as a means of legitimation, indicating a certain sensitivity to social differences among citizens.

The complexity of addressing citizens within the European Green Deal can therefore also be identified in the fact that citizens are not addressed exclusively as individualised subjects. They are also articulated through a narrative concerning the European Union’s social orientation. Regarding this narrative, Bäckstrand and Lövbrand (2007, p. 140) draw attention to a global transformation in the exercise of power in which “capacity building, increased investments in social, economic and technical resilience for the most vulnerable countries and new multi-sectoral public-private partnerships” are defined within this discourse as effective means of simultaneously ensuring “climate security, social development, poverty eradication, participatory democracy” (Bäckstrand & Lövbrand, 2007, p. 140).

In this context, the European Green Deal Communication must also be understood through its insistence on a “just and inclusive transition”, with citizenship, understood in terms of equality and fairness, occupying a central position in the successful achievement of the envisaged or presumed green objectives. The document emphasises that the Green Deal must “put people first” and pay particular attention to “the regions, industries and workers who will face the greatest challenges” (European Commission, 2019a). This discourse articulates justice as one of the key dimensions of implementing environmental policies and suggests that the transition to a sustainable economy must be conducted in a manner that benefits all citizens, particularly those who are socially disadvantaged and vulnerable.

The discourse of justice within the Green Deal frequently emphasises the need to support disadvantaged groups through mechanisms such as the Just Transition Mechanism, which seeks to “protect the citizens and workers most vulnerable to the transition”. At first sight, this indicates a commitment to addressing social differences and inequalities. These are, however, predominantly compensatory measures that substitute for the articulation and actual potential of more substantial structural transformations. The approach adopted within the European Green Deal reinforces a paternalistic model of government in which the EU institutions, or power exercised at the European level, operate as a benevolent provider of support to marginalised groups, while the underlying causes of inequality remain unaddressed, relegated to the background and silenced.

Another dimension through which the European Green Deal articulates citizens is consumption. Citizens’ consumer choices are presented as crucial to the success of the environmental transition. In this context, the Commission Communication (2019a) emphasises that “consumer policy will help to empower consumers to make informed choices and play an active role in the ecological transition”. Consumption, as a specific activity performed by citizens, is thereby defined as a key site of action and one of the essential domains of civic conduct. The underlying logic is that one of the central characteristics

of citizens is their role as consumers, making it necessary for green citizens also to become green consumers. This narrative focuses on the proposition that citizens can contribute directly to environmental objectives by making sustainable consumer choices. A significant proportion of the responsibility for the success of the Green Deal is consequently transferred into the domain of consumption and therefore into the sphere of economic conduct. Within this neoliberal conceptualisation of green citizens as consumer subjects, individuals become actors whose market choices can potentially resolve social and environmental problems. Environmental and climate action is thus defined as a series of individual decisions concerning lifestyle rather than as a collective political struggle for systemic transformation.

As Soneryd and Ugglä (2015, p. 914) argue, these are policy measures intended to promote individualised responsibility that should be understood as “technologies of responsabilization”. Such policy measures “are designed to help individuals address these responsibilities by informing, guiding, and providing products and tools facilitating individual choice”, and may assume a wide variety of forms (Soneryd & Ugglä, 2015, p. 914). In this context, for example, the Commission Communication (2019a) emphasises that consumers must demand sustainable products, which can potentially “drive change in industry”. This consumer-centred conception of citizenship suggests that individuals contribute to environmental sustainability primarily through their choices, preferences and purchases.

Crucially, citizens, whether addressed as consumers or as politically engaged actors, are articulated in the Green Deal Communication as agents of change. The document states that “citizens are and should remain a driving force of the transition”, with public participation presented as central to achieving the Green Deal’s ambitious objectives. The representation of citizens as proactive and empowered actors is intended to mobilise public action and encourage individuals to assume responsibility for the environmental agenda. This “entails a moral imperative of individualised responsibility that works through subtle forms of power whose effects depend on the sense-making

and responses of the governed subjects” (Soneryd & Ugglå, 2015, p. 914). The discourse of citizens as agents of change reflects a broader trend in government at the European level that continually demands, encourages and presupposes the bottom-up involvement of citizens and the empowerment of individuals (Haahr & Walters, 2004). In this context, the Green Deal Communication announced initiatives such as the European Climate Pact, which was intended to create “both real and virtual spaces for people to express their ideas and creativity and work together on ambitious action” (European Commission, 2019a). The following chapter examines the European Climate Pact as a key and exceptionally complex mechanism for governing green EU citizens and environmental and climate-related issues.

5

THE EUROPEAN CLIMATE PACT: GOVERNING GREEN CITIZENSHIP

5.1 THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE IDEA AND THE PROCESS OF ESTABLISHING THE EUROPEAN CLIMATE PACT

With the expansion and increasingly extensive implementation of green measures at the European level, it became ever clearer that the European Union required the broadest possible legitimacy for its environmental and climate policies. As in many other fields, it therefore turned its attention to citizens and their involvement, as demonstrated in the preceding chapter. The adoption of the European Green Deal included numerous references to the necessity of involving the EU population, which also constitutes one of the central strategic elements of the European Climate Pact, itself part of the European Green Deal.

Von der Leyen's Plan: Announcing the Climate Pact through the problematisation of (social) inequality in the EU

When presenting her political programme as a candidate for President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, as already argued, announced the European Green Deal and stated that she

would propose a European Climate Pact. She situated this announcement specifically within the context of the transition towards “Europe as a climate-neutral continent”, inspired by the passion, determination and energy of “millions” of young people (von der Leyen, 2019a):

We need a just transition for all. In this transition, we must recognise and respect that we do not all start from the same point. [...] This is the European way: we are ambitious and we leave nobody behind. We also need more education and motivation. To this end, I will propose a European Climate Pact – bringing together regions, local communities, civil society, industry and schools. Together they will design and commit to a set of pledges to bring about a change in behaviour, from the individual to the largest multinational. This will be a key part of the just transition for all (von der Leyen, 2019a).

Von der Leyen’s announcement of the European Climate Pact is grounded in a discourse of justice that defines the green transition as an inclusive and fair process. By emphasising that “we do not all start from the same point”, she highlighted and acknowledged the inequalities that form part of the reality of the European Union and established justice as the central principle upon which their redress must be based. In this context, justice operates as a technology of power and a narrative mechanism supporting the argument that every citizen must be included in the green transition, irrespective of social or economic status. This strategy anticipates potential criticisms that the green transition will deepen existing inequalities and thereby articulates the terrain for a more unified and cohesive European response to climate change.

Furthermore, by framing the transition through the principle of justice, von der Leyen (2019a) highlighted existing social and economic inequalities within the EU and defined a particular problem that her future administration at the EU level was prepared to address. Her proposal to establish a Just Transition Fund constituted a direct response to this problem, conveying that the green transition would

not be identical for everyone but would instead be adapted, flexible and responsive, providing the most vulnerable regions and people with the support they required.

Von der Leyen's statement outlines a comprehensive Climate Pact that establishes a new framework for the green transition, extending beyond policy into society and involving the participation of collective and individual subjects. By proposing a European Climate Pact, she delineated a framework for cooperation among different sectors, including regions, communities, industry and education, all of which must contribute to the green transition. The central idea is cooperation, which fosters a sense of collective responsibility for the climate agenda and establishes the necessity of transforming the thought and conduct of all subjects. This further consolidates the conviction that the green transition constitutes an environmental necessity and a transformation of the conduct of individuals and collective actors in accordance with the guidelines that the EU has already established and will continue to establish, particularly within the framework of the European Green Deal announced at the time.

The Climate Pact in the context of the publication of the Commission Communication on the European Green Deal

Although the European Green Deal was analysed in the preceding chapter, we deliberately left largely aside the question of how the Climate Pact was initially conceived within the Communication on the European Green Deal (European Commission, 2019a).

The European Commission's Communication (2019a) on the European Green Deal articulates the need for a European Climate Pact through a rhetorical strategy that can be understood as a non-choice. The approach presents an apparent choice between two options: citizens may participate in the Green Deal and thereby ensure its success, or they may decline to participate, causing the transition to fail. Through this formulation, the Commission effectively excludes the possibility of non-participation, making participation the only viable option. This rhetorical device serves to manage potential

opposition in advance by implying that non-participation is not an alternative and subtly imposing citizen participation as the only logical and moral choice.

In this context, the EU population is presented as the driving force of the green transition. The Commission (2019a) emphasises that the Green Deal's success depends upon the active participation of citizens, thereby establishing the necessity for the EU to facilitate and encourage such participation. The underlying message is that the EU must do everything within its power to mobilise and sustain public participation.

The Commission (2019a) describes the strategy for implementing the Climate Pact in three strands. The first concerns expanding and improving public knowledge of the Green Deal and its associated policies. The production and dissemination of knowledge emerge as key mechanisms of power. By directing the narrative and the circulation of information, the EU can shape public understandings of climate issues and guide citizens towards desired forms of conduct. This is an approach to disseminating knowledge within a specific framework in which the EU establishes the parameters of what is important and how the green transition should be understood.

The second strand, or mode of implementing the Climate Pact, involves creating both physical and virtual spaces for public participation, in which citizens can express their ideas and participate in climate action. This inclusion is not unconditional, however. The Commission subtly indicates that only voices consistent with its guidelines and objectives will be recognised and amplified. This should be understood as a particular form of controlled, directed and governed participation intended to ensure that the discourse remains within the boundaries established by the Commission, enabling it to retain control over the direction of public involvement. By guiding the dialogue and its participants, the EU can govern the narrative and ensure that the Climate Pact supports its broader strategic objectives.

The third strand of the Climate Pact, as conceived in the Communication on the Green Deal (European Commission, 2019a),

emphasises the promotion of initiatives at the local level, indicating a specific articulation of the exercise of power. Rather than relying exclusively upon top-down directives, the Commission recognises the significance of action at the micro level and the role of individual and collective initiatives in the green transition. By announcing its support for and encouragement of these bottom-up efforts, the Commission appears to decentralise its position, while maintaining the strategic orientation that the green agenda can be strengthened through smaller, local practices. The approach therefore incorporates, or at least seeks to incorporate, the EU agenda into citizens' everyday practices. From the outset, the Pact is conceived through an idea of dispersion, in which government operates through the cultivation of a culture of green citizenship aligned with the EU's general objectives rather than through direct imposition.

5.2 THE COMMISSION COMMUNICATION ON THE CLIMATE PACT: THE OPERATIONAL FRAMEWORK

When the Commission (2019a) outlined several elements of the European Climate Pact in its December 2019 Communication on the European Green Deal, it also provided an indicative timeline for the Pact's publication and launch. It allowed itself only a few months, since the Pact was expected to be launched in March 2020. In fact, the Commission adopted its Communication on the European Climate Pact (European Commission, 2020a) on 9 December 2020, roughly nine months later than initially envisaged, thereby formally launching the Pact as a Commission initiative. A dedicated online launch event followed on 16 December 2020 and is examined in the following section.

Reasons for its establishment

An analysis of the Communication (European Commission, 2020a) first reveals a particular line of argument concerning the reasons for introducing the Climate Pact as a distinct initiative.

Unsurprisingly, the climate crisis is presented as the primary reason. In this context, the Commission (2020a) emphasises the continuing character of the climate crisis, articulating it as a pressing issue that must urgently be addressed. We do not question the reality of the climate crisis or the need to address it rapidly and effectively. Rather, we wish to emphasise that the Commission depicts it through data and a discourse of extremes, enabling climate change to be presented as an indisputable reality requiring immediate action. The crisis is therefore presented as a concrete and present danger rather than as a distant or abstract problem. As Ewald (1991; see also Banjac, 2017) demonstrates, imminent danger and risk are central elements in the government of contemporary societies, which involves measuring, organising and evaluating dangers and uncertainties, as well as seeking responses to them. By presenting climate change as an immediate threat, the European Commission establishes the European Climate Pact as an urgent intervention that cannot be postponed. It also links the rhetoric of risk and imminent danger to the demographic effects of climate change, thereby adding another layer of complexity. By warning of “more radical” change and “unpredictable consequences”, the Commission (2020a) explicitly evokes a sense of uncertainty and fear. The Pact is consequently presented as one of the urgent measures capable of providing a meaningful and positive response.

The next reason through which the Commission (2020a) justifies the introduction of the Pact concerns the social vulnerability of the EU population, which also gives the Pact a moral and ethical dimension. By emphasising the disproportionate effects of climate change on vulnerable groups, the text appeals to the values of justice and equality, similarly to the argumentation identified in von der Leyen’s presentation of the Pact, and implies that inaction would be ethically unacceptable. Fiona James (2022) discusses how the exercise of power has become increasingly connected to an ethical duty to care for vulnerable people, transforming government into a moral enterprise. In the context of efforts to combat climate change, this framing places the green agenda within the field of broader social

responsibility and articulates the Climate Pact as a moral imperative concerned with both sustainability and equality.

The role of the EU institutions is also emphasised in the argumentation for introducing the European Climate Pact (European Commission, 2020a), thereby legitimising the Pact as part of broader institutionalised efforts at the European level. References to the European Green Deal and the EU legislative framework position the Climate Pact within a continuity of European-level action, which is intended to strengthen its credibility and give it broader significance. Dean (2010, p. 29) emphasises that understanding the exercise of power through the prism of governmentality does not entail denying the existence or significance of centres of power or authority that operate according to the principle of sovereignty. Viewed in this light, new articulations of the governing of green citizens must be understood as an ordering of sociopolitical reality through institutional frameworks that legitimise and enact particular measures and policies. In this sense, the Climate Pact constitutes one point in a continuing process through which new forms of institutionalised government over the lives and conduct of subjects within the EU are established.

As is evident from the Commission's argumentation (2020a), existing green initiatives constitute another important reason for establishing the Climate Pact. By referring to existing initiatives, networks and movements, the Commission sought to emphasise that the Pact was not being created on empty terrain, but would operate alongside already established mechanisms and practices. By invoking successful initiatives such as the EU Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy, the text suggests that the Climate Pact is based on tested models and practices. One of the Commission's central strategies is therefore to present the Pact as a "natural" continuation of previous successes, thereby emphasising continuity.

The Commission (2020a) further identified the Pact's potential contribution to climate-neutral operation as one reason for its introduction, while committing itself to "leading by example

and becoming climate neutral by 2030". This form of leadership is intended to inspire confidence and demonstrate that the European institutions are prepared to comply with the same standards that they advocate for others. Bröckling et al. (2010, p. 3) show that leading by example is a contemporary form of pastoral power in which leadership is exercised through exemplary conduct, meaning that others are guided through moral and ethical example. By committing itself to ambitious climate objectives, the Commission seeks to assert its role as a moral leader and thereby encourage others to follow it in the transition to climate neutrality.

Another argument for introducing the European Climate Pact proceeds from the idea and ideal of progress and development, with research and innovation presented as driving forces of change, including change directed towards achieving the EU's climate objectives. This narrative framework of progress and optimism rests on the conviction that solutions to climate change are attainable if the appropriate investments are made. Pellizzoni and Ylönen (2016) demonstrate that "technoscience" is intertwined with neoliberal rationality in contemporary configurations of power. It functions as a mechanism for identifying new areas of expansion in which the environment is treated as a field that can be utilised and from which added value can be extracted, rather than as a limit. By positioning research and innovation as drivers of change, the Commission encourages stakeholders to understand the Climate Pact as an opportunity for growth and modernisation.

Defining the Pact: What is it?

One of the key questions addressed by the Communication (European Commission, 2020a) concerns the nature of the Climate Pact itself. It is defined as a strategic initiative intended to encourage collective climate action across different sectors of society. The document presents the Pact as a mechanism for empowering individuals and organisations, with emphasis placed on an inclusive and participatory approach. Through its repeated use of terms such as "inclusiveness",

“participation” and “co-creation”, the text stresses the significance of broad-based and diverse civic action (European Commission, 2020a). The articulation of the participation of green citizens will be discussed further below. At this point, however, it is already possible to identify a deliberate effort to “democratise” climate action, which is intended to ensure that the Pact is accepted by a broad range of stakeholders, from those already active in climate action to those previously described as “indifferent” or “hard to reach”. Expressions such as “a lively space”, “meaningful participation” and the “aggregated impact of joint actions” indicate that the European Climate Pact is intended both to mobilise resources and to foster a sense of community and shared responsibility for addressing the climate crisis (European Commission, 2020a).

In defining the Pact, the document also presents its basic structure and operational mechanisms. It highlights, for example, the operationalisation of implementation through new organisational structures such as a dedicated Secretariat and a Knowledge Hub. This indicates a methodical approach to governing the initiative and disseminating knowledge, with institutional support mechanisms and the production of knowledge intended to sustain its operation. The Pact should not, however, be understood exclusively as an institutional framework or a form of “mechanical” implementation. It was also envisaged as a framework for a new green culture. The emphasis on “multilingualism”, for example, reinforces the perception of European diversity while acknowledging that climate action must be adapted and made accessible to everyone. Proposed indicators of success, including the number of pledges or Climate Pact Ambassadors, a mechanism discussed separately below, also constitute an important element of the Pact’s definition and indicate its focus on tangible results (European Commission, 2020a).

Mechanisms of participation within the Pact

The European Climate Pact places strong emphasis on encouraging citizen participation and involvement as essential components of the

struggle against climate change. In this context, the Communication states that the Pact will “link with all levels of government as well as civil society and Europe’s citizens directly, by launching democratic debates that include the perspectives of people in all their diversity” (European Commission, 2020a, p. 7). This description demonstrates the Commission’s intention to make green measures the subject of debate and reflection at different events, with the central purpose of diffusing the agenda and green content across a variety of settings. In addition to establishing this presence, which is important for ensuring that different stakeholders are informed and aware of the principles, substantive content and concrete practices of the European Green Deal and the associated environmental and climate measures, the Commission emphasised direct public involvement in climate strategy. It argued that “involving people directly in important and complex discussions creates co-ownership, unlocks technological and social innovation, and optimises decision-making” (European Commission, 2020a, p. 7).

From our perspective, it is significant that this narrative establishes conversation, discussion and debate as key elements of the green transition, since it suggests that the inclusion of people in a space in which they may express ideas and reflections on green issues itself produces more innovative and effective solutions. The ideas of innovation and optimisation appear once again, anchoring the narrative in a neoliberal discourse that emphasises innovation, continuous progress and growth. This corresponds precisely to Fletcher’s observation (2010, p. 172) that environmental policy increasingly adopts a neoliberal economic logic based on several propositions: the creation of capitalist markets for the exchange and consumption of natural resources, the privatisation of control over resources within these markets, and the commodification of resources to facilitate their exchange. This logic also advocates reduced direct state intervention in market transactions and the decentralisation of resource governance to local authorities and non-state actors such as non-governmental organisations. By invoking the idea of “unlocking” innovation, the

Commission seeks to frame the green agenda through the argument that public participation will increase the legitimacy of climate policies while also encouraging the development of new technologies and social practices regarded as essential to achieving sustainability objectives.

In interpreting the articulation of participatory mechanisms in the design of the European Climate Pact, attention should also be paid to the Commission's emphasis on strengthening "social bonds" (European Commission, 2020a, p. 7), which are expected to emerge and become stronger through community-led environmental and climate action. The text refers to participatory mechanisms such as local initiatives, pledges and dialogues, which are constructed as opportunities for individuals to become involved in climate action at both personal and community levels. This emphasis on community-led activities indicates that the Commission recognises the social dimension of efforts to combat climate change. By promoting these forms of participation, it seeks to generate a sense of mutual responsibility among citizens and thereby encourage a more resilient and connected society (European Commission, 2020a).

The role attributed to young people in the Communication should also be highlighted. Young people are defined as a particularly important demographic group and as those who "arguably have the biggest stake in climate action" (European Commission, 2020a, p. 8). The document emphasises that they will be most affected by the outcomes of contemporary climate policies, since present decisions will shape the world in which they will live as adults and which they will leave to their children. The Commission evidently sought to demonstrate that it recognised young people's environmental action and activism, treating them as a relevant political subject that must necessarily be addressed, assigned a particular role and directed towards forms of action consistent with the design of green policy at the European level. By assigning young people a significant share of responsibility for the implementation of climate action, the Commission emphasises their subjectivity as green citizens.

It is also important that the Commission Communication (2020a, p. 8) does not discuss participation exclusively in abstract and general terms. It describes concrete ways in which the European Climate Pact would encourage participation through structured and accessible channels. These include the possibility of registering climate initiatives and pledges on the Pact's planned online platform and potential cooperation with global campaigns such as Count Us In. This illustrates the Commission's commitment to making participation as straightforward and effective as possible. The emphasis on online platforms and global campaigns reflects an understanding of the potential of the digital age to amplify individual action and create a sense of collective impact. Particularly noteworthy is the direct reference to Count Us In, which operates in the fields of branding and marketing and "harnesses the power of popular culture to inspire and engage mainstream audiences to take climate action – driving wider systems change" (Count Us In, 2024). As Ninan et al. (2019) demonstrate, branding is a form of exercising power in contemporary sociopolitical configurations. Its purposes include popularising particular products, measures and policies, while also seeking to normalise and secure public acceptance of particular forms of behaviour and practice. By embedding particular meanings, associations and emotional connections in products and services, branding shapes the conduct of the public, conceived primarily as consumers, in a manner that appears rational and natural, similarly to other mechanisms of government (Lemke, 2002). Viewed in this light, branding seeks to generate affiliation, support and loyalty towards a policy. As Aaker (1996) observes, branding concerns more than identifying a product or process. It involves constructing complex emotional and relational networks that influence how people perceive the world and interact with it. Branding thereby extends beyond business transactions, becoming deeply embedded in the fabric of everyday life and influencing economic choices as well as personal and social relations. Through cooperation with Count Us In, the European Commission evidently sought to popularise green measures and embed them within the social fabric so that the

population would recognise them as positive, beneficial, meaningful, desirable and attractive.

Other measures within the Pact

In addition to the articulations of participation interpreted above, the Communication on the European Climate Pact (European Commission, 2020a) outlines and proposes several other mechanisms intended to involve the public in the realisation of the European Green Deal. The Commission also assigns an important role to digital tools, which it clearly regards as a means of using new technologies to encourage participation and direct citizens' conduct. By promoting digital technologies such as "sensors, Artificial Intelligence, data" and integrated IT systems, it seeks to obtain data while also using these technologies "to deliver the best results and accelerate the green transition" (European Commission, 2020a, p. 10). By determining the purposes for which these technologies should be used, including the collection of data at the local level, the Commission establishes the parameters for employing technology as a means of monitoring, directing and governing the conduct of individuals and communities by "correlat[ing] citizen data with wider European trends" (European Commission, 2020a).

In the subsection "Building on and supporting existing initiatives", the Commission (2020a) further substantiates its proposed mode of operation and explicitly indicates its intention to centralise various local micro-initiatives that support and implement the green transition. It announced the establishment of a Knowledge Hub that would "pull together" relevant information and expertise (European Commission, 2020a, p. 10). From a governmentality perspective, this hub can be understood as a form of control because it is expected to operate as a gatekeeper that regulates the circulation of knowledge and determines which initiatives will be strengthened and which will not. By positioning itself as the provider of essential resources and support, the Commission seeks to ensure that local-level initiatives are aligned with its broader climate objectives. References to helping

initiatives “scale up” and “replicate what already works” indicate a desire for uniformity and standardisation across the EU, potentially restricting the heterogeneity of local approaches to climate action.

The idea of “green areas”, referring to green spaces both within and outside cities, should also be considered. The expansion of green areas is expected “to build resilience in the face of climate and health threats” (European Commission, 2020a, p. 11), revealing a dual strategy of environmental government and social control within the Pact. The promotion of urban green spaces and tree planting is defined as a public good that strengthens climate resilience and improves public health. At the same time, it serves as a means through which the Commission can shape urban and rural landscapes in accordance with its environmental objectives. By connecting these initiatives to agricultural plans and EU-supported funds, the Commission seeks to coordinate local action effectively with its central policies and to ensure that community-led projects remain consistent with the overarching objectives of the European Green Deal.

Another measure or mechanism concerns “green mobility”, which, if realised, is expected to enable people to “move around efficiently” while “improving our health and our environment” (European Commission, 2020a, p. 12). The Commission’s intention to shape the conditions and operation of urban and rural transport is clearly visible. By promoting forms of “clean mobility” and supporting local authorities in introducing these solutions, the Commission encourages and directs the transition towards more environmentally sustainable transport. The use of expressions such as “innovative mobility and logistics solutions” and “participatory and sustainable urban mobility plans” indicates a particular narrative in which the Commission establishes the mobility agenda and presents it as a collective choice that benefits everyone, including both the environment and individual health. This gives the measure a biopolitical dimension.

The final mechanism that should be mentioned is the promotion and support of “the development of green skills” (European

Commission, 2020a, p. 14). The underlying argument is that the green economy and the broader societal green transition require new skills and competences, meaning that the Commission seeks to shape the future workforce in accordance with its environmental objectives. By encouraging the development of green knowledge and skills through education and training programmes, the Commission actively directs labour markets throughout the EU. The emphasis on reskilling and upskilling reflects a particular rationality according to which the transition to a green economy must necessarily be accompanied by new forms of employment and a redirection of the population's economic participation, ensuring that workers possess the competences required to support the Commission's climate agenda. The Commission also understands this as a potential field of investment. References to various EU funds and programmes, including the Just Transition Fund, should be understood as a means through which the Commission uses financial incentives to direct educational institutions and local authorities towards desired outcomes.

5.3 MARKING AND PROMOTING THE LAUNCH OF THE CLIMATE PACT: THE INAUGURAL ONLINE EVENT

The European Climate Pact was established through the Commission Communication adopted on 9 December 2020 and was publicly presented and promoted at a dedicated online launch event on 16 December 2020 (European Commission, 2020b). The event is important because it gave concrete expression to certain elements of the Climate Pact and constituted the first “demonstration” of the specific narrative and practical mechanisms outlined in the Commission Communication. Although the event can be understood as a form of promotion for the European Climate Pact, from our perspective it should also be approached as one of the initial techniques and materialisations of the envisaged mode of governing diverse subjectivities within the context of the European Green Deal. In this section, we therefore examine and interpret the event primarily by asking

who participated and what roles were assigned to the participating actors. This is relevant from a governmentality perspective because the government of environmental and climate-related issues at the European level involves a wide variety of organisations, agencies, centres, civil society organisations and individuals, or green citizens, who are expected to contribute, potentially and in practice, to the realisation of a particular agenda. Moreover, given the focus of this study, it is essential to examine how green citizenship was articulated and what role was assigned to individual citizens. Finally, the discussion below considers the significance and role attributed to education in its various forms and dimensions.

Analysis of the speeches delivered by event participants

A deliberate heterogeneity of participating actors was created at the launch event for the European Climate Pact. Participants included EU and local political representatives, young people, representatives of civil society organisations and businesses, European Climate Pact Ambassadors, and representatives of local initiatives (European Commission, 2020b). This diversity was a strategic choice that conveyed a particular message: that there was broad consensus and a willingness to contribute to the implementation of climate and environmental measures. At the symbolic level, the very presence of actors from different fields of activity and different segments of the population emphasised that the EU institutions were not acting alone in the struggle against climate change. Rather, a coalition of actors was already present at the launch of the Climate Pact, each bringing their own perspectives, resources, practices and willingness to participate and act.

The expression of will is crucial here. As Cruikshank (1999) demonstrates, expressing one's will, including the will to contribute, participate and act, is an essential political act in which domination and freedom are intertwined. On the one hand, the articulation and demonstration of will, as observed at the inaugural event for the European Climate Pact, produces an expectation and even a

compulsion for different actors to participate. At the same time, it opens a field of possibilities and offers an apparent freedom of participation. Will as a political mechanism is connected to the constitution of citizens as subjects, which “requires technologies of subjectivity, technologies that produce happy, active and participatory democratic citizens” (Cruikshank, 1999, p. 101). Eric Steinberger, the executive director and co-founder of ClimateScience, a non-governmental organisation operating an educational platform, expressed this position in his opening address: “When I first realised how big of a problem climate change is, I immediately wanted to do something. I wanted to act” (European Commission, 2020b, emphasis added).

In this context, the event can be understood as a means of disseminating and multiplying will. This constitutes part of a broader governmental strategy in which the will to act appears to emerge “of its own accord” from different actors. It is personal, pervasive and apparently unstoppable, and it appears exceptional in every instance because it is established at the personal and individual level. Responsibility is consequently distributed among different actors and networks, shifting the approach away from an exclusively top-down model towards a more decentralised and participatory one. As Frans Timmermans, then Executive Vice-President of the European Commission responsible for the European Green Deal, stated during the event: “People need to be part of this, not just asking us to come with the solutions. But they have to shape the solutions themselves” (European Commission, 2020b).

This statement has a double direction or edge, moving between instruction and encouragement. On the one hand, Timmermans’s statement carries the connotation of a command. It instructs green citizens that they must not remain passive, expect too much or rely excessively on the EU institutions. On the other hand, it carries the connotation of benevolent encouragement, inviting people to become as proactive as possible in identifying new ways of contributing to the green transition. By emphasising partnerships among authorities at different levels, non-governmental organisations, economic actors

and local communities, the EU sought to demonstrate that climate action constituted a collective endeavour. It thereby reinforced the proposition that every sector of society had a crucial role to play in achieving the objectives of the European Green Deal.

Although the event focused on broad participation and served as a demonstration of the heterogeneity of the actors involved, the authority of the EU was unquestionably foregrounded. This was most clearly visible in the position and role assigned to Frans Timmermans. As Executive Vice-President responsible for the European Green Deal, he occupied the visual and substantive centre of the event, emphasising his position as one of the principal figures in environmental and climate governance at the EU level. His central role in answering questions and directing discussions demonstrated his individual importance, while he simultaneously personified the EU's leading role in setting the agenda for climate and environmental action. Timmermans himself emphasised the central position of the European Commission:

Everybody [is] doing their part. You know, the European Commission is about making regulations, making sure we have the right legal framework. That's what we do. But at the same time, we bring together all sorts of people from all walks of life and we can help and support them in what they're doing (European Commission, 2020b).

Timmermans therefore positioned the EU as the central actor in two respects. First, in his account, the Commission is the institution that establishes the "right" legal framework for action. Contemporary systems are predominantly understood as being founded on law, while formal legal codifications are consequently presumed to be central and indispensable to the regulation of different sociopolitical domains and concrete policies. Second, Timmermans emphasised that the Commission is the institution that "brings together" different actors and people. The Commission occupies the position from which it can hold the various threads together and facilitate synergies among them. Its authoritative position is also visible in Timmermans's

presentation of the Commission as an institution that “helps” and provides support, which represents a characteristically paternalistic position.

Timmermans’s positioning served a particular function within the event. Although he encouraged a decentralised approach to climate action, he simultaneously reinforced the authority of the EU as the principal bearer of the Green Deal and ensured that the contributions of different actors were aligned towards a unified objective.

Alongside Timmermans’s authoritative role, the event was organised in a manner that strongly emphasised the role of experts and expert knowledge, with different specialists playing active and prominent roles in the discussions (see European Commission, 2020b). This indicates that one of the event’s purposes was to establish expert knowledge as a relevant framework for the implementation of the European Climate Pact. It is therefore no coincidence that the first speaker was Eric Steinberger of ClimateScience. ClimateScience is a non-governmental organisation that has established an online educational platform intended to empower people to address climate change through “short, science-backed information” (ClimateScience, 2024). In his contribution to the event, Steinberger also sought to demonstrate the urgency of action by mobilising statistical data as a particular form of expert knowledge: “Over 90% of all greenhouse gas emissions come from energy and agriculture, so we should unite and we should focus on these two issues” (European Commission, 2020b).

Steinberger therefore assumed the role of someone who could contribute directly to the green transition and of an expert who could use statistical data to offer solutions and directions for environmental and climate action. Experts such as Steinberger were presented as key actors whose knowledge and experience were required to guide and validate the efforts of the wider public. The event thus maintained a balance between encouraging broad participation and reinforcing the importance of expertise in the formulation of effective climate policy.

Furthermore, it is also important to reflect on how the position and role of the general public were conceived. As this was an open public event intended, among other things, to inform the public about the launch of the European Climate Pact, it is appropriate to consider the position in which those who registered to watch the event were placed, how the audience was defined and what role was assigned to it. An analysis of the event shows that the organisers did not seek to assign the audience an entirely passive role. The use of technology was particularly important, especially tools such as Slido, through which the organisers sought to “give a voice” to the audience. By facilitating real-time interaction with viewers, the organisers attempted to demonstrate the inclusiveness and transparency of the European Climate Pact.

Using Slido, the moderator, Beatriz Rios, collected questions from the audience and asked participants where they were joining from and what they had “done today for the environment” (European Commission, 2020b). She encouraged participants to share their actions, and responses from the audience included taking a shorter shower and using public transport.

This interaction and the substantive framing of the discussion through the digital tool performed several functions in the establishment of the governing of green conduct, which will be examined in the following section. Crucially, by displaying the countries from which participants had joined, the event emphasised the Pact’s geographical reach and scale and reinforced the idea that environmental awareness was a shared European value. Although the use of technology was intended to democratise the event, the audience could respond only to questions formulated in advance. The presentation therefore remained a structured and moderated environment in which the circulation of information and selection of questions remained under the control of the event’s organisers.

In reflecting on the actors participating in the event, it is also important to highlight the significant role assigned to young people. Their presence was emphasised primarily through the participation

of representatives of youth organisations and young activists. One of these participants was the young energy researcher and co-founder of the European Youth Energy Network, Luciana Miu, who was among the first speakers and explicitly drew attention to her position as a young person: “I am privileged to share with you today some thoughts on the role of young people in driving meaningful climate action” (European Commission, 2020b).

A certain paternalism was nevertheless also reflected in the way youth participation was constructed. Timmermans expressed this position in the following terms:

It was a minority thing at first. But thanks to the young generations, it's now become something that has been embraced by almost all of society. I mean, young people should be very proud of what they have achieved. It's only a beginning, I know, but it's a hugely important beginning (European Commission, 2020b).

Through this narrative, Timmermans acknowledged the influence and increasingly visible role of young people and praised their achievements. At the same time, however, he characterised their contributions as relatively limited and preliminary steps, implying that subsequent action had to be undertaken together with other actors and political decision-makers. This subtle preservation of existing power relations indicates that the event sought to elevate the voices of young people while retaining a hierarchical structure in which their contributions continued to be treated as supplements to the leading role of more established institutions, particularly those operating at the EU level.

Green citizenship within the Pact: Roles and practices

Individualisation: Activating Individuals

At the European Climate Pact launch event, individualisation was employed as a principal strategy for involving citizens, particularly by encouraging them to regard themselves as key individual actors

in the struggle against climate change. Citizens were frequently addressed as individuals who were expected to reflect on their everyday environmental practices. The event facilitated such reflection directly through Slido. Through this application, the organisers personalised the broad and frequently abstract concept of “combating or acting against climate change” and transformed it into a series of tangible individual responsibilities. Every action, irrespective of how small it might be, was presented as an essential component of a collective endeavour, thereby articulating climate action as a personal matter.

Timmermans, for example, individualised green conduct particularly clearly: “If you’re consistent with your beliefs, you feel better, you feel better as a citizen, as a human being, and we’re trying to do that. We fail sometimes. Sometimes we are a bit inconsistent, but every step counts” (European Commission, 2020b).

This constitutes a particular form of exercising power through which citizens are treated as more than passive recipients of instructions and guidance. They are activated as responsible actors who must align their everyday behaviour, and even their beliefs and norms, with the EU’s broader environmental objectives. Through this process, the event created a narrative that shaped the identities of participants and encouraged them to understand themselves as self-regulating and environmentally conscious citizens who constituted an integral part of the EU’s climate objectives.

By emphasising the individual’s capacity to contribute to environmental sustainability, the event reinforced the idea that the solution to the climate crisis lay in the accumulation of small personal actions. This narrative is central to the diffusion of a particular relationship to environmental and climate-related issues throughout society and to its incorporation into citizens’ everyday lives. It positions every individual as a “key” actor whose everyday choices directly affect the success of the EU’s climate objectives. It directs the individual towards more sustainable conduct and, at least at the declaratory level, strengthens a sense of ownership and personal responsibility for broader environmental outcomes.

Creating the belief that every action matters

Another mechanism is closely connected to the individualisation of citizen engagement analysed above: the strategic cultivation of the belief that every action is important in addressing the climate crisis. This was intended to instil a sense of empowerment and responsibility among participants. By continually asserting that “every action counts”, the event sought to dispel the feelings of powerlessness or pessimism that might prevent individuals from participating in climate action.

When responding to a question about how to persuade those who did not believe that climate change was occurring, Timmermans stated that this could be achieved “by showing that whatever you do yourselves, the small steps, they all contribute to that” (European Commission, 2020b). Beatriz Rios, the event moderator, also repeatedly stated that everyone could do something in the struggle against climate change. Towards the end of the event, she emphasised: “As important as raising awareness is to take action, and every action counts” (European Commission, 2020b).

One of the event’s central purposes was therefore to create, reinforce and disseminate the belief that no action was too small to make a difference. Personal achievements and contributions were thereby valued and celebrated, while broader systemic or structural transformations were scarcely discussed. The emphasis on “small steps” made it possible to silence demands for systemic change and the potential articulation of subversions and alternatives. In this way, the event reinforced a neoliberal governmental rationality in which the burden of climate action becomes a matter of adapting the existing system, while actors operating within that system are encouraged to understand these adaptations as opportunities. The event thus promoted personal action while simultaneously, and perhaps more importantly, aligning individual conduct with the wider objectives of the EU’s green agenda.

Stories of green citizens

One of the key strategies through which the subjectivity of green citizens was shaped during the launch of the European Climate Pact was storytelling. The personal experiences of individuals such as Eric Steinberger, Massimo Bottura and Luciana Miu were used to demonstrate how apparently ordinary people could become influential actors.

Eric Steinberger, the executive director and co-founder of ClimateScience, described his journey towards recognising the scale of climate change while studying. Frustrated by the absence of accessible scientific information for the public, he established ClimateScience, a global educational organisation that translates complex scientific information concerning environmental issues into more readily understandable content (European Commission, 2020b). Through courses, children's books, YouTube videos and other resources, the organisation empowers individuals through knowledge and reinforces the proposition that education is a crucial instrument in the struggle against climate change.

The event also foregrounded the story of Massimo Bottura, the internationally renowned chef who recognised the problem of food waste within the culinary world. Bottura became aware of this problem after years of focusing on technical culinary excellence, when he recognised the scale of food waste and its environmental implications. In response to this significant problem within the food industry, he established the Food for Soul initiative, which seeks to combat food waste by combining food recovery with social inclusion, particularly through community kitchens serving people in need (European Commission, 2020b). In this context, Bottura's story is connected to waste reduction, while the narrative also demonstrates how the role of the chef can be linked to social and environmental responsibility.

Luciana Miu, a young environmental activist and founding member of the European Youth Energy Network, presented her story in a particular manner. She addressed young people especially by recounting

her journey from growing up in Romania to obtaining a doctorate in energy efficiency in the United Kingdom. Her involvement in various environmental initiatives, including the organisation of the world's largest youth energy forum and the development of a low-carbon beer, demonstrates how young people can act as agents of change. Miu presented herself as "your average run-of-the-mill millennial" and sought to emphasise that everyone could make a significant contribution to the climate movement, irrespective of their personal circumstances (European Commission, 2020b). Her involvement in activist activities at the local and international levels was intended to demonstrate that young people could engage with environmental issues exceptionally effectively, while also functioning as a call to other young citizens to assume similar roles.

Although the individuals and stories presented above could be characterised as a straightforward promotion of engagement and as legitimate examples of how people can address environmental and climate-related issues, from our perspective they must be understood as a governmental technology for the production of green citizenship. By sharing these stories, the event offered models that participants could follow in their own actions and subtly directed them towards conduct consistent with the EU's climate objectives.

The narration of stories concerning individuals' social and political engagement through different media is an effective instrument for forming subjects and, in this context, exercising power. It offers legitimate narratives that influence how people understand themselves and their roles in society, while indicating what is appropriate and desirable. This occurs because media representations of activism, dissent or civic participation frequently normalise particular forms of behaviour, ideology and identity while marginalising others. By selecting and foregrounding particular stories, media can direct public understandings of what constitutes legitimate or desirable political action. They thereby shape individuals' conceptions of themselves and the ways in which they engage with structures of power.

Storytelling consequently becomes a subtle form of government, shaping subjectivities so that they correspond to broader political and social norms. It may reinforce a prevailing order or challenge it through the introduction of alternative narratives. As Bragg (2007) argues, an analytics of power as a particular perspective on stories, narratives and “voices” does not deny the positive potential of different forms of sociopolitical activity and engagement. It does, however, draw attention to their complexities, including new hierarchies of value and potential forms of exclusion and the silencing of subversive practices.

The call to make pledges

The call to make pledges at the European Climate Pact launch event was one of the concrete mechanisms or practices used to align individual conduct with the wider objectives of the EU’s green agenda. By inviting participants to commit themselves to sustainable practices, whether through small changes in their everyday lives or larger and more ambitious initiatives, the event sought to foster a sense of personal responsibility and agency in addressing climate change.

The (discursive) act of pledging performed a dual function from the outset. It operated at the symbolic level and, through this symbolism, functioned as a strategic instrument for exercising power by encouraging citizens to internalise environmental practices as components of their identities and civic duties. Beatriz Rios described the idea that large effects could grow from small actions in the following terms: “These could go from committing to small changes at home to live a more sustainable life, to bolder, bigger initiatives that can inspire others as well” (European Commission, 2020b).

The purpose of this discourse was to demonstrate that every action, irrespective of its scale, constituted an important contribution to the collective endeavour. The call to commit oneself to sustainable and green conduct must necessarily be understood through a Foucauldian perspective as a governmental technology for shaping particular subjectivities. In this context, the pledge operates as a form

of governmentality through which citizens are governed through direct governmental guidance and initiatives and through self-regulation and voluntary adaptation to green objectives. By encouraging individuals to make personal commitments to sustainability, the pledge functions as a governmental technology directed towards promoting self-discipline.

The pledge or promise embodies a particular form of conduct through which citizens internalise environmental norms, motivate themselves and become morally committed to particular actions. A pledge establishes a relationship to the self in which debt or obligation constitutes a central element. When individuals commit themselves to something, they become obliged to adhere to and fulfil that commitment. The pledge consequently operates as a governmental mechanism through which individual choices are framed within the ethical and political rationality of green citizenship. It seeks to ensure that individuals act in accordance with established objectives while continuing to perceive their actions as autonomous and ethical.

5.4 EUROPEAN CLIMATE PACT AMBASSADORS

One of the most visible mechanisms for promoting the European Green Deal and the EU's broader environmental and climate agenda through the European Climate Pact is the ambassador scheme. As already indicated, its central position makes it appropriate to examine this mechanism in greater detail, which is the principal purpose of this section.

The discussion below first explains how the mechanism was established and how its mode of operation was designed. It then turns to an analysis of the discourses of ambassadors who published their plans and objectives on the European Commission's websites. Through discourse analysis and interpretation informed by an analytics of eco-governmentality, this part of the chapter investigates how the figure of the green citizen is constituted within the European Climate Pact and what role Pact Ambassadors play as intermediaries and

bearers of a particular governmental rationality. The analysis is based on a dataset comprising 839 ambassadors from all EU Member States. Our concern is not confined to their geographical distribution, but focuses primarily on how they articulate their position, tasks and, above all, the addressees of their activities, namely citizens, in their profiles and statements. The central purpose of the chapter is to reveal how ambassadors use discursive practices to produce particular subjects who are expected to be environmentally aware, responsible and active in the struggle against climate change, and how normative horizons of conduct and action consistent with EU climate policies are thereby established.

European Climate Pact Ambassadors as an innovation?

Before outlining some of the stages in the formal establishment of EU Climate Pact Ambassadors, it should be emphasised that the concept of ambassadors as advocates of environmentally and climate-friendly measures preceded the European Commission's initiatives and has long been employed as a strategy in various environmental campaigns. The Commission's use of the ambassador model forms part of a broader practice in which individuals are appointed as advocates for sustainability and entrusted with raising awareness and encouraging collective action. The designation of individuals who played a leading role in promoting environmentally responsible conduct as ambassadors can therefore be identified before the Commission adopted this approach. The mechanism was used, for example, by various non-governmental organisations and community-led projects to raise awareness of climate change, recycling and biodiversity conservation.

One such example was the "Eco Ambassadors" project, which began in South Wales in 2005 and was explicitly intended to promote environmental and global citizenship and strengthen democratic practices within the community through an emphasis on sustainable action (M. Hall & Bassot, 2009). The project was implemented in cooperation with several key partners, including the University of

Glamorgan, local schools and residential homes for older people. It focused on three principal objectives: raising environmental awareness, cultivating a sense of global responsibility and encouraging democratic participation (M. Hall & Bassot, 2009). To achieve these objectives, the project implemented various educational programmes, including workshops, seminars and community events, which helped participants understand environmental issues and adopt environmentally responsible practices. It also emphasised the importance of community involvement and encouraged local residents to participate in decision-making processes and activities. The use of the term “ambassador” played an important role in disseminating and encouraging green conduct within the community. By designating participants as ambassadors, the organisers sought to emphasise their role as representatives and advocates of environmental sustainability and to position them as examples for others.

Another example of climate ambassadorship predating the EU mechanism can be found in Denmark (Jørgensen & Pedersen, 2015). During the first decade of the twenty-first century, Danish municipalities introduced environmental and climate ambassador programmes in response to legislative requirements and the Local Agenda 21 strategy (Hoffmann, 1999). The programmes constituted a practical response to the increasing sustainability requirements placed upon local government. As Jørgensen and Pedersen (2015, pp. 108–109) explain, all 98 municipalities were required to prepare twelve-year municipal plans covering land use, energy supply, employment and housing, while also incorporating sustainable development into these plans. Municipalities were additionally required to publish a strategy focused on sustainable development. They therefore needed a concrete means of involving local citizens and businesses in environmental decision-making and reducing the environmental impact of municipal activities. Ambassador programmes emerged as a practical mechanism for fulfilling these obligations by establishing networks of individuals responsible for promoting environmental initiatives across municipal departments and institutions.

One of the earliest climate ambassador programmes in Denmark was established in 2008 in the municipality of Hvidovre and focused on initiating climate action within public institutions and administrative bodies (Jørgensen & Pedersen, 2015). As in its diplomatic meaning, the use of the term “ambassador” reflected the role of an individual who served and advocated environmental interests within the community, in a manner comparable to a state ambassador representing national interests abroad. Municipalities such as Furesø, Lyngby-Taarbæk and Frederiksberg subsequently introduced ambassador programmes with varying emphases, ranging from climate impacts to broader sustainability issues such as water and waste management (Jørgensen & Pedersen, 2015). The level of formalisation, the involvement of management and the extent to which community users, including school pupils and users of sports facilities, were involved differed among municipalities. This demonstrates the flexibility and adaptability of the ambassador model in responding to local environmental challenges (Jørgensen & Pedersen, 2015).

Establishing the ambassador mechanism within the European Climate Pact

Although Ursula von der Leyen (2019a) announced the European Climate Pact as part of the European Green Deal when presenting her political programme, she did not mention an ambassador mechanism. The Commission Communication on the European Green Deal (European Commission, 2019a) likewise did not yet refer to the idea of ambassadors, although it already presented the European Climate Pact as a framework for promoting the Green Deal and involving citizens. The idea of establishing an ambassador mechanism was nevertheless already under discussion before the Commission published its final Communication in December 2020. This is demonstrated by the exploratory opinion on the European Climate Pact prepared by the European Economic and Social Committee at the request of the Commission’s Directorate-General for Climate

Action. Work on the opinion was initiated by a Bureau decision of 21 January 2020, and the EESC adopted it on 15 July 2020 (European Economic and Social Committee, 2020).

In its opinion, the European Economic and Social Committee emphasised that Climate Pact Ambassadors could become key actors in encouraging participation and coordinated climate action across different sectors and levels, from the local to the European. In the Committee's view, these ambassadors could play a central role in identifying strategic and thematic priorities, organising events and stimulating new climate initiatives (European Economic and Social Committee, 2020). Their function was considered crucial to bridging existing divides among actors, including national governments, businesses, local communities and civil society organisations, thereby strengthening cooperation on climate-related issues. By appointing ambassadors with particular areas of focus, such as youth, local communities, cities and regions, the Committee envisaged a more targeted and effective approach to climate advocacy. Significantly, it proposed that the roles of ambassadors operating at the EU level should be differentiated from those operating at national, regional or local levels. This would require coordination to ensure consistency among different activities, projects and programmes.

The European Economic and Social Committee (2020) further argued that appointing its own members and members of the Committee of the Regions as EU-level Climate Ambassadors would make use of their existing networks and strengthen cooperation between civil society and local authorities. This could potentially increase the effects of climate initiatives, particularly through the involvement of organisations directly connected to workers and businesses, such as trade unions and business associations (European Economic and Social Committee, 2020).

The Commission's final Communication on the European Climate Pact (2020a) did include a defined ambassador mechanism. The

document clearly stated that, from the beginning of the Pact's implementation, ambassadors would constitute one of its fundamental promotional instruments and would be expected to produce particular effects within society: "The European Climate Pact will focus on spreading awareness and supporting action". At its launch, the Pact will invite people and organisations to learn and to commit to specific actions by becoming Climate Pact Ambassadors (European Commission, 2020a).

In the Communication, the Commission (2020a) presented European Climate Pact Ambassadors as agents, catalysts and accelerators of the climate action movement, representing different geographical areas and occupations. Their principal task was to stimulate dialogue and raise awareness within communities. Ambassadors were expected to commit to climate action and engage in debates with people in their communities and networks about the options for action (European Commission, 2020a). These discussions were also intended to address why action was urgent, thereby emphasising the urgency of the situation and the responsibility of every individual. By encouraging discussion of why "everyone matters", ambassadors were expected to motivate wider audiences to take meaningful action and to emphasise the crucial role of individual contributions in addressing the climate crisis.

As proposed by the Commission (2020a), Climate Pact Ambassadors were expected to provide examples of conscientious environmental conduct and to bridge divisions, gaps and potential disconnects among civil society, different stakeholders and the European Commission. Their mission was to "lead by example and engage their communities in climate action" and to operate as proactive intermediaries (European Commission, 2020a). With support from the Commission, including recognition, communication materials and networking opportunities for exchanges, ambassadors were expected to expand the reach of their awareness-raising activities across the EU (European Commission, 2020a).

To understand the ambassador mechanism as designed in the Commission Communication, it is first necessary to interpret the semantic dimensions of the concept from our analytical perspective.

The connotations of prestige and authority

One of the broadest meanings of the term “ambassador” is that of a “bearer of messages” (Queller, 2017). The term evokes a sense of prestige and generally refers to individuals who possess the authority and responsibility to represent a particular organisation, cause or objective. This connotation has historical origins in diplomacy, in which ambassadors were individuals entrusted with representing sovereign states. They often came from aristocratic circles and possessed considerable power and influence (Sowerby, 2016, p. 442). These individuals possessed, or were granted, particular forms of authority, responsibility and knowledge. They were entrusted with “cementing alliances” (Sowerby, 2016, p. 442), negotiating on behalf of rulers or governments and carrying out similar functions.

It is important to recognise that this historical meaning is carried into contemporary usage and produces an aura of credibility around individuals selected or appointed as ambassadors. The title signifies that these individuals are more than participants in a particular process or event. They are central figures who “carry the message” of the process or event and “cement alliances” among people and different actors in support of it. Their opinions and actions are attributed considerable weight, lending legitimacy and credibility to the initiative in the eyes of the public.

The word “ambassador” therefore also evokes prestige and is frequently associated with individuals who have been given responsibility for representing and disseminating information concerning a particular cause, process or event. Within different sociopolitical projects, the title creates a particular perception of the credibility of those selected for the role, since they are directly or indirectly entrusted with becoming the face or voice of an initiative. The use of the term gives their participation greater significance. It implies that they

possess greater knowledge, skills and expertise and consequently have a detailed understanding of the issue concerned (Andersson & Ekman, 2009; Nadkarni et al., 2019). The designation communicates that their views and activities possess particular relevance.

A symbol of representation and inclusion

In different sociopolitical projects, the concept of an ambassador is frequently employed as a mechanism of inclusion, especially in representing particular groups that are less visible or marginalised (Mosleh & Marin-Artieda, 2017). By appointing ambassadors as a specific response to the under-representation of particular groups, initiatives appear to advocate diversity and provide a platform for voices that might otherwise remain silenced. Such representation can exert a considerable influence by enabling individuals to speak in their own name and, at least symbolically, as custodians or advocates of a particular community in relation to specific sociopolitical issues and challenges. The title thus promises visibility and recognition and, at least at the declaratory level, seeks to strengthen the position of those frequently excluded from hegemonic discourse.

This is also precisely where criticism arises. Representation through ambassadorship frequently operates primarily at the symbolic or declaratory level, while ambassadors may be selected more because of what they symbolically represent than because of their substantive involvement in the issues concerned. In this context, the ambassador functions as a figure whose role is often more apparent than substantive. This can contribute to the simplification of complex identities and sociopolitical issues, including environmental and climate-related problems and the green policies associated with them.

Cultural and social capital

Ambassadors in sociopolitical projects are frequently perceived as possessing particular forms of cultural and social capital, since they are expected to use their influence, status or connections to strengthen the cause they represent. Through the possession and

display of this capital, their involvement can confer credibility upon the project or subject they represent, especially when they are well known or highly regarded by the general public or within particular local environments.

The selection and activities of European Climate Pact Ambassadors will be presented and interpreted in greater detail below. At this point, however, it is relevant to note, in relation to social capital, that eligible applicants include community leaders or leaders of organisations, associations, informal groups or movements; mayors, parliamentarians, policymakers or other public office holders; representatives of cultural, educational or research institutions; and influencers or opinion leaders (European Union, 2024b). Potential ambassadors must therefore possess particular connections, broader recognition or a visible role in sociopolitical life. This reflects in several respects the power relations and dynamics characteristic of the idea of representation, in which attention and resources are frequently directed towards movements advocated by influential or more visible individuals. Ambassadors thus operate as bridges between a particular objective and the wider public, attracting attention, resources and support through their participation.

How is the ambassador mechanism intended to operate?

As already indicated, the European Climate Pact Ambassador mechanism was designed so that ambassadors would play a key role in promoting climate action in communities and networks throughout the European Union. Ambassadors are individuals committed to “informing, inspiring and supporting climate policy and action in their communities and networks” (European Union, 2024b). In this sense, they operate as individuals who accelerate climate-related policies and concrete activities at different levels of society. The essence of the mechanism lies in involving citizens, organisations and policymakers in order to encourage meaningful and lasting changes intended to address climate change.

Although ambassadors do not officially represent the European Commission, their efforts are aligned with its broader environmental objectives, making them important actors within the EU's green agenda. As the official description states, Pact Ambassadors “act in their personal or professional capacity as representatives of a community or organisation, not on behalf of the European Commission” (European Union, 2024b).

The ambassador position is not permanent. Individuals are recognised as European Climate Pact Ambassadors for a period of one year, with the possibility of renewing their ambassadorship. Calls for applications open periodically. Those who are not ready to apply as ambassadors or who prefer a more flexible form of participation may join as Friends of the Pact. In this more informal capacity, they may participate in climate-related discussions and activities without assuming the formal responsibilities of an ambassador.

To become part of the European Climate Pact Ambassador mechanism, individuals must meet specific eligibility criteria, some of which have already been considered in the preceding section. These criteria are intended to ensure that applicants possess the appropriate capacities and platform to advocate effectively for climate action and disseminate information concerning it. Additional eligibility criteria include holding a valid residence permit issued by an EU Member State and demonstrating a clear commitment to climate action through concrete initiatives (European Union, 2024b).

What role is assigned to ambassadors, and what key activities are they expected to undertake? At the heart of the European Climate Pact Ambassador mechanism is the idea of “leading by example” (European Union, 2024b). Ambassadors are expected to occupy the forefront of climate action and demonstrate their commitment through concrete activities that others can adopt, learn from and use to transform their own conduct in a greener and more sustainable direction. They must demonstrate their commitment to addressing climate change through climate and environmental action, while communicating the urgency of the climate crisis and presenting

solutions in an accessible and comprehensible manner. The mechanism consequently functions as a moral and practical platform for leadership, through which ambassadors use their practices and initiatives to encourage change.

The European Climate Pact Ambassador mechanism encompasses more than individual action and collective mobilisation. Ambassadors are encouraged to cooperate closely with local communities, governments and other stakeholders. This dimension is crucial because it emphasises the need for multilevel cooperation in responding to the complexity of the climate crisis. Ambassadors are expected to function as connectors who link local climate advocates with networks, groups and decision-makers and facilitate discussions among different sectors of society, from local movements to policymakers (European Union, 2024b). Their role is not confined to disseminating information. It also includes producing synergies among different actors capable of influencing broader systemic change. This interconnectedness is intended to ensure that the mechanism encourages broad social engagement and cooperation.

One of the essential characteristics of the European Climate Pact Ambassador mechanism is its focus on inclusion and diversity. At least at the declaratory level, the European Climate Pact seeks to involve people from all sectors of society and to ensure that climate action constitutes a shared endeavour extending across social, economic and geographical boundaries. This orientation is consequently transferred to the ambassador mechanism (European Union, 2024b). Ambassadors are selected from different backgrounds in order to reflect the EU's diversity.

This diversity is expected to ensure that climate action is rooted in the realities of different communities and that ambassadors can adapt their approaches to reach and influence their particular audiences, whether these consist of rural populations, urban activists or young people. The mechanism is thus presented as providing representation across different sectors and as being as inclusive as possible.

To maintain the continuity of the mechanism, ambassadors must fulfil specific requirements. The official framework explicitly specifies what is expected of them (European Union, 2024b). Among other activities, these requirements have included a formal commitment to engage regularly with the Pact community online, share their Pact-related achievements and participate in local, regional and European events. The structure of the mechanism imposes a degree of accountability on ambassadors, since they must complete the required onboarding process, undertake concrete activities, participate in Pact events and report on their work. The Pact also provides training, networking and peer-learning opportunities intended to strengthen their knowledge and capacities. This produces a system of continuous learning and improvement intended to ensure that ambassadors acquire the relevant knowledge and skills and continue to perform their role effectively as experts who make a significant contribution to the realisation of the green agenda.

The European Climate Pact Ambassador mechanism also contains important limitations, since it specifies what ambassadors must not do in their role (European Union, 2024b). Ambassadors may not claim that they work for, represent or speak on behalf of the European Commission or the Climate Pact Secretariat. This is intended to protect the integrity of the position and prevent potential misrepresentations of their work. They must also avoid activities that could be understood as greenwashing, namely deceptive practices that exaggerate their own environmental efforts or those of their organisations. It is additionally emphasised that ambassadors must not act contrary to the values of the Pact (European Union, 2024b).

The European Climate Pact is based on values emphasising collective responsibility and action in relation to climate change. At its foundation are “science, responsibility and commitment” (European Union, 2024a), meaning that it prioritises scientifically grounded action intended to produce measurable and reliable results capable of stimulating broader participation. It is also founded on values such as transparency and the exchange of knowledge and encourages

participants to share information and experience. Ambition and urgency are likewise important values, emphasising the need for rapid and decisive action. Another key value is locally adapted action and impact, meaning that activities should be tailored to and emerge from communities and remain rooted in everyday life. The Pact also values diversity and inclusiveness (European Union, 2024a).

These values function as a framework for “appropriate” conduct, directing the actions of individuals and organisations participating in the Pact (see Fletcher & Cortés-Vázquez, 2020). By emphasising science and responsibility, the Pact reinforces a sense of individual accountability and encourages citizens to internalise expert knowledge and modify their conduct accordingly. The emphasis on transparency and knowledge exchange reflects a governmental technique that ensures continuous visibility and circulation, retaining actors within a network of influence and learning.

The emphasis on urgency and ambition grounds a governmental logic that demands continuous action and innovation and directs the conduct of green citizens towards transformative endeavours. The promotion of local impact and inclusiveness defines appropriate climate action as a general responsibility and normalises the participation of all sectors of society as a moral and civic duty.

The ambassador mechanism also emphasises the importance of transparent communication and knowledge exchange, in accordance with the identification of science as one of its central values. Ambassadors are encouraged to disseminate information about their climate activities within the Pact community and among the wider public. Such transparency contributes to the production of trust and accountability. By openly communicating their achievements and challenges, ambassadors present their engagement to the public as a personal and individual motivation.

Finally, the Pact also provides ambassadors with a platform through which to disseminate their messages. It enables them to participate in Pact events across Europe and to cooperate with experts on

climate-related topics (European Union, 2024b). This exchange of knowledge operates at two levels. It strengthens the influence of ambassadors while simultaneously cultivating a broader sense of community and shared responsibility. The mechanism thus enables continuous dialogue and the exchange of ideas.

Discourse analysis of the ambassadors: Agents of green citizen empowerment

The dataset²¹ contains written profiles of 839 European Climate Pact Ambassadors from all 27 EU Member States. The countries with the largest numbers of ambassadors are Italy (112), Spain (104) and Germany (68). Other countries with relatively large numbers include France (59), Belgium (57) and Greece (51). Ambassadors also come from smaller EU Member States, including Luxembourg (22), Malta (7), Estonia (7) and Slovenia, which has 10 ambassadors.

Given our thematic orientation, we were primarily interested in how ambassadors address citizens in their profiles and descriptions of their intended work in this role, what roles they assign to citizens, how they position them socio-politically and what kind of relationship they establish between citizens and themselves. Particular attention will also be paid to the areas and problems in which ambassadors intend to intervene and to the solutions they propose.

How citizens are represented

First, ambassadors can be seen to treat citizens as learners who must acquire new knowledge. Citizens are conceived as “learners” who require information and education about climate-related issues and sustainable practices. This is clearly reflected in the discourse used to describe activities associated with the necessary dissemination of knowledge and promotion of awareness. In their profiles, ambassadors present themselves as experts responsible for guiding citizens towards

21 We obtained the dataset on 7 September 2024 from a publicly accessible database on the European Union website (European Union, 2024c).

a better understanding of climate change and sustainable living. Citizens, in turn, are expected to accept this information and acquire new knowledge and skills, and subsequently to conduct themselves accordingly. One ambassador, Lucia Bastarolo, stated, for example: “My goal is to promote EU initiatives and policies and make them accessible to citizens. I want citizens to be aware and motivated to act” (European Union, 2024d).

The articulation of citizens as recipients of knowledge suggests that ambassadors regard them as potentially unaware of or insufficiently informed about key climate issues and European policies. This places citizens in the position of passive recipients of solutions rather than active creators of change. From a governmentality perspective, the quotation reveals an intention to promote the EU’s green initiatives and make them accessible, while treating citizens as participants in a continuous learning process. Individuals are positioned both as recipients of particular environmental and climate policies and as subjects who must continuously educate themselves in order to adapt to evolving EU initiatives (Masschelein et al., 2006). By emphasising awareness and motivation, the ambassador envisages and constructs citizens as continuously engaged learners whose task is to adapt their conduct in response to policy frameworks. This is a model of government that promotes a proactive and informed population, in which continuous learning and adaptation are essential to compliance with, and effective participation in, environmental objectives.

As the analysis also revealed, another way in which ambassadors address citizens in their profiles is by presenting them as partners in environmental and climate action. This representation is largely an alternative to the image of citizens as continuously learning individuals who must constantly expand their knowledge. Although citizens as learners demonstrate a willingness and desire to acquire new knowledge and skills, ambassadors remain the active subjects within this narrative. By contrast, citizens represented as partners in a shared struggle against climate change become agents of action and are presented, in this sense, as almost equal to the ambassadors.

Ambassadors frequently emphasise the importance of cooperation and invite citizens to become more involved in local initiatives or collective efforts. This movement from passive learners to active participants represents a more egalitarian approach, in which ambassadors invite citizens to co-create solutions and act collectively. Sebastian Baumert, an ambassador from Germany, is particularly clear in this respect:

I want to create space for dialogue on environmental issues, to include different perspectives and views in order to develop solutions together. It is particularly important to me to involve senior citizens in order to deepen their understanding of climate change and to make an active contribution to environmental protection themselves (European Union, 2024d).

This involves encouraging an active role for citizens, in this case older citizens, who contribute to the realisation of particular European-level objectives through dialogue and cooperation with others. At the same time, it produces shared responsibility and an idea of collective power. Inés Elvira, a Pact Ambassador from Spain, emphasised that in her role she would “support activities to create alliances among multiple societal stakeholders such as community-led initiatives, activists, the youth and citizens to promote climate and social justice at the heart of the transition” (European Union, 2024d).

By addressing citizens as fellow actors or as links in a chain of stakeholders, ambassadors seek to emphasise the necessity of cooperation. Government over policies and concrete environmental and climate measures is thereby dispersed, while citizens are empowered to undertake tangible action. This definition of citizens as co-creators of change reflects a more active role for the public in climate action, encouraging citizens to move from awareness to direct participation.

From a eco-governmentality perspective, such arguments are framed by a governmental rationality in which power is exercised through experts and leaders rather than through direct control, commands

or legislation. In this case, ambassadors are positioned, or position themselves, as facilitators who enable cooperation among different social actors, including community initiatives, activists and citizens, in order to achieve shared environmental and climate objectives. This governmental strategy decentralises responsibility and enables green citizens to assume an active role in the transition while aligning them with the EU's overarching environmental policies. Through this framing, individuals and groups become self-governing subjects guided by a rationality that leads them to internalise the EU's climate objectives as necessary and desirable and encourages their collective alignment with broader climate policies.

A narrative representing citizens as individual actors is also prominent in ambassadors' descriptions. At least at first sight, this line of argument differs significantly from the preceding one, which primarily emphasises cooperation among actors and the collective dimension of green action. This approach also extends beyond education and cooperation by focusing on empowering individuals to assume personal responsibility for the environment. Within this framework, ambassadors encourage citizens to recognise, identify and understand themselves as autonomous actors who can simultaneously influence their communities and advocate broader change. One ambassador expresses this position in the following terms: "We will encourage individual action, one person at a time, to ensure sustainable living" (European Union, 2024d).

Citizens are presented here as individuals capable of taking small personal steps that, when multiplied, produce a significant effect. As Moloney and Strengers (2014, p. 95) demonstrate, individualised practices must be situated and interpreted within a broader political framework governing responses to environmental problems, a framework dominated by "ecological modernists" and neoliberal economists. Within this framework, environmental and climate problems are presented as "tangible and localised" and as problems that can be addressed through "engagement in simple actions" (Moloney

& Strengers, 2014, p. 95). Another example of this narrative appears in Holger Holland's profile:

According to the credo 'Think global act local', I am convinced that change starts at our own doorsteps and neighbourhoods from where anyone can affect the global situation – from bottom up through all ages and social classes. Strong partnerships are required to fuel our goals and raise awareness for responsibility (European Union, 2024d).

The analysis of representations of citizens further revealed that ambassadors address them as present or, even more prominently, future leaders. This discourse gives meaning to citizens as agents of change positioned at the forefront of the green transition. Maria Jose Rodriguez Palomeque emphasised in this context that she would focus on “using writing and advocacy as key tools to motivate climate action among the new generation of leaders”. Bruno Vieira focused particularly on young people: “We can never forget that the students of the present are the leaders of the future and by spreading awareness now we are helping to create better leaders” (European Union, 2024d).

Ambassadors therefore position citizens as existing and potential leaders in different contexts and at different levels and encourage them to become advocates of climate action. Within this framework, ambassadors understand their own role as one of cultivating citizen-leaders who can inspire and mobilise others. This narrative corresponds to the idea of decentralised government, which must necessarily involve leaders possessing the knowledge, skills and will required to bring about green change. This conception of citizens as leaders implies more than inclusion and participation as the equivalents of other actors. Citizens themselves are expected to initiate action and inspire others. It is in this context that statements such as that of Matthew Baldacchino must also be read: “I want to show that anyone can take the first step towards embracing the power of environmental and climate action” (European Union, 2024d).

Substantive areas, problems and proposed solutions

Although the preceding interpretation of perceptions and representations of green citizens has already partly indicated the solutions offered by ambassadors, the following discussion provides further reflection on the environmental and climate-related areas and problems that they address and the solutions they propose.

- Awareness-raising and education

One of the central problems addressed by ambassadors is the lack of awareness and education concerning environmental and climate problems and possible ways of resolving them. Many ambassadors consider the public's lack of knowledge about climate change to be a significant obstacle to progress. The fact that as many as 740 of the 839 ambassadors selected "climate education & awareness raising" as one of their thematic areas (European Union, 2024d) indicates that this is regarded as one of the principal priorities and as an area requiring urgent action. Susanne Ramharter from Austria was particularly explicit about people's lack of knowledge: "I view the climate crisis as the number one issue threatening our planet and humanity, and am frustrated by the lack of knowledge (and apathy) of the inhabitants in our community and region" (European Union, 2024d). Marine Cornelis from Italy likewise highlights people's lack of awareness: "I have noticed that people are not aware of the simple actions they can implement to reduce their environmental footprint" (European Union, 2024d).

The solutions proposed in this area usually involve community awareness-raising and education. Ambassadors seek to make complex climate-related issues more accessible to citizens through conversations, debates, educational activities and everyday action. Mostafa Abbas, an ambassador from Germany, states: "The young generation must be taught the significance of conservation, the value of a sustainable future, and the need to make responsible decisions. Environmental education must be promoted in our institutions, workplaces, and communities" (European Union, 2024d).

This discourse emphasises the conviction that empowering citizens through education is crucial to addressing climate change. Ambassadors frequently perceive themselves as catalysts for the dissemination of knowledge, indicating their belief that the public's current level of understanding is insufficient to produce meaningful change.

Circular economy and sustainable consumption

Another key theme in ambassadors' discourse is the promotion of the circular economy and sustainable consumption. Many ambassadors identify excessive consumption and the linear economy as principal problems contributing to environmental degradation. One of the more explicit statements concerning excessive consumerism comes from the Bulgarian ambassador Raya Lecheva: "We live in a dusty air, we drink dirty water, we produce too much waste. We have to care because of us and our children. We should know more about the problems to solve them together" (European Union, 2024d). Pierre Leonard from Belgium highlighted the problem of the currently dominant economic model by referring to "the limits of our current linear model" and the need "to move to a different model that is more respectful of our planet and its resources" (European Union, 2024d).

A process of simplification can be observed in narratives identifying problems associated with consumerism and the economic model. From our perspective, the simplified identification and analysis of environmental problems is a key characteristic of contemporary green government. Reducing the complexity of ecological issues to more readily comprehensible frameworks or categories makes them more manageable and facilitates the incorporation of environmental government into everyday life. By rationalising the scope and complexity of processes and data, authorities can promote solutions consistent with prevailing, proposed or already established climate policies while making these issues more accessible to the public. This form of government rests on a rationality that encourages individuals and communities to adopt green identities and practices

and transforms them into self-regulating subjects who contribute to the achievement of environmental objectives, in this case those established at the European or EU level.

What solutions do ambassadors propose for problems associated with consumption, ways of life and the linear economic model? They predominantly offer solutions concerning people and their conduct and activities. Ambassadors propose measures such as advocating sustainable products, supporting local economies and encouraging consumers to make environmentally informed choices. Karolina Barišauskienė, for example, stated: “Nowadays, the ever-increasing popularity of ‘clothing swapping’ and reuse is one of the best ways to combat the rampant consumerism that fast fashion imposes on us” (European Union, 2024d). Anaëlle Barthel presents the issue in more general terms: “Today, it is about changing the way we live, consume, use our resources on earth. I want to accompany people from all generations, and prove that there are many solutions out there, if we give ourselves the possibilities to consider our future as sustainable” (European Union, 2024d). Perhaps the most revealing proposed solution is offered by Gittermarie Johansen:

I want to hold polluting companies and corporations accountable for their climate impact. Through consumer awareness content and lectures, I want to create comprehensive materials that will make it easier for individuals to navigate sustainability and assist in creating a set of tools that make understanding the impact of products around us simpler (European Union, 2024d).

The ambassadors’ statements reveal a subtle shift in the attribution of responsibility for environmental problems. Initially, ambassadors assign blame to companies and corporations that pollute the environment and hold them responsible for their climate impacts, reflecting a conventional criticism of industrial actors within environmental discourse. The emphasis, however, quickly shifts towards solutions directed at individual conduct, as ambassadors stress the importance of consumer awareness and education.

Energy efficiency and renewable energy sources

Energy efficiency and the promotion of renewable energy sources are also central themes among the ambassadors. In this context, they frequently identify high energy consumption and dependence on fossil fuels as principal issues that must be addressed if the green transition is to be realised. Nataša Tramišak, an ambassador from Croatia, observes in this regard: “Climate changes are impacting our lives more than ever and more actions need to be taken as we want improvement of our living conditions in harmony with nature” (European Union, 2024d).

Mirbek Bekboliev, an ambassador from Germany, identifies a more specific energy-related problem: “The main issue that I have confronted in practice was incorrect approaches on planning energy efficient buildings” (European Union, 2024d). Addressing the problems of the currently dominant economic model, Pierre Leonard, an ambassador from Belgium, similarly characterises it through its linearity and argues for a different model that is “more respectful of our planet and its resources” (European Union, 2024d). In response to the problems identified, ambassadors propose a variety of practices and forms of action. Individualised action is especially prominent, as illustrated by Christian Thalacker-Heldenstein:

My mission is to set an inspiring example by transitioning my historic-designated home to solar energy, doubling my fossil-fuel-free kilometers through cargo biking, advocating for community solar and improved cycling infrastructure in Luxembourg, and supporting sustainable agriculture (European Union, 2024d).

This is another statement emphasising personal responsibility and local cooperation. It proposes a model of energy transition grounded in changes to individual conduct. The ambassador’s “inspiring example” should be understood as an invitation for others to adopt similar conduct. This form of encouragement through example is situated within a framework of green government that positions

individuals as key actors in the transition towards renewable energy sources and emphasises personal and community-based solutions within the broader framework of sustainable energy policies.

The statement by Mostafa Abbas, an ambassador from Germany, should also be understood in this context: “In every aspect of our existence, we must transition to pure and renewable energy sources, reduce our carbon footprint, and adopt sustainable practices. We are at a historical crossroads. Today’s choices will shape tomorrow’s world” (European Union, 2024d).

Alongside these individual practices, another characteristic of the solutions offered in relation to energy and the economy is the introduction of the circular economy. Cinzia De Marzo from Belgium emphasises that achieving climate neutrality requires “investing in new sustainable business models, skills and change behaviour in all sectors, with more innovative, resilient, circular and responsible approach” (European Union, 2024d). The circular economy appears as an alternative, and ambassadors construct a narrative in which it represents one of the key solutions to the problems of the existing economic model.

The fundamental logic of the circular economy is that, unlike the linear economy of making, using and discarding, it seeks to “keep resources in use for as long as possible, extract the maximum value from them whilst in use, then recover and regenerate products and materials at the end of each service life” (Wrap, as cited in Hobson, 2022). Hobson (2022), however, demonstrates that although the circular economy is widely accepted as a solution to the inefficient exploitation of resources, it can be critically examined and understood as a particular form of government that seeks to shape social conduct through the prism of consumption. By framing individuals as “user-consumers”, the circular economy reinforces the existing logic (Hobson, 2022; Valenzuela & Böhm, 2017). It may accelerate resource use rather than reduce it and maintain a top-down model of government in which citizens are primarily and continually addressed as consumers. At the same time, it fails to involve them as potential

participants in the actual and radical transformation of production and social values.

Another proposed solution in the fields of energy and economic transformation concerns the use of new technologies. Joachim John, an ambassador from Belgium, states, for example: “My main activity as an Ambassador will be the education of young scientists and to enable the energy transition from fossil fuels to renewables by novel technology development” (European Union, 2024d). Stephanie Bretonniere from France is similarly convinced of the power of technology: “I wholeheartedly believe in the untapped potential of technology, science, and the compelling insights from neuroscience when applied to both business strategies and individual behaviours” (European Union, 2024d).

Ambassadors frequently rely on technological solutionism (Morozov, 2014). This is the idea that technology in its various dimensions will provide the best solutions to practically all environmental and climate problems. It can be criticised as an excessively simplified and depoliticised approach to addressing climate change and questions of sustainable development (see Sætra, 2023). When ambassadors focus primarily on technological and technical solutions such as solar panels, electric vehicles and smart energy systems, they perpetuate the logic that innovation and technology can solve environmental problems without substantial changes to the underlying social, political and economic structures that produce environmental problems and climate change in the first place.

· Biodiversity and environmental degradation

The final broad theme concerns the different ways in which ambassadors address biodiversity and environmental degradation. The causes they identify are heterogeneous, although they are largely presented as consequences of “our way of life”. This is effectively summarised by Klára Matoušková: “Everyday chemicals in personal care products, food and food contact materials, and in fabric and household items, microplastics and plastic additives, all take a toll on our health and

the living environment while translating into climate change, and deteriorated sustainability and degraded biodiversity” (European Union, 2024d). It is particularly important to recognise that these problems are also treated as interconnected. Marcos Marchionno Rebeiro emphasises this point: “The climate emergency, the damage and devastation of ecosystems, the loss of biodiversity, global pollution in all its forms, and the continued disregard for planetary boundaries are closely interrelated and are putting the planet at risk” (European Union, 2024d).

As a consequence of the identified problems of pollution and declining biodiversity, the very existence of the human species is presented as being in danger. In this context, Mia Canestrini from Italy warned: “In the end, we are among the most vulnerable species due to our lifestyle, economies and growth rate” (European Union, 2024d). Irrespective of the threat to human beings and the perceived and actual destruction of the environment, Volker Daumer from Germany also highlighted the problem of insufficient action: “The current measures for protecting the climate, biodiversity, and forest, marine, and soil resources, are far from sufficient” (European Union, 2024d).

In response to the pressing problems of environmental degradation and biodiversity loss, ambassadors primarily propose using existing instruments and mechanisms that emphasise the importance of green government at the European level. Their principal approaches include awareness-raising campaigns, educational activities and public-engagement initiatives intended to encourage action among citizens and other actors (European Union, 2024d). In their profiles, ambassadors establish a narrative in which they seek to educate communities about the importance of preserving natural habitats, reducing pollution and adopting sustainable practices. This forms part of a European-level regime of green government that combines policy mechanisms while establishing, at the micro level, a framework of possible and permissible responses to ecological challenges.

The encouragement of a “connection with nature” can be identified as a particularly specific solution emerging in the context of environmental degradation and the destruction of biodiversity. Anna Marija Firere, an ambassador from Latvia, calls upon all citizens, particularly young people, “to connect more to nature to gain a deep understanding of natural systems and their importance to sustain our everyday lives” (European Union, 2024d).

Another example of connecting with and understanding nature or the environment is provided by the Hungarian ambassador Ivánné Lendvai, who emphasised that in her role she wished to work with others “to protect the values of our Earth” (European Union, 2024d). This discourse personifies nature: nature is attributed human characteristics and, as such, is understood to possess particular values. The connection and attachment to nature are articulated particularly clearly by Jim Stoppelenburg, an ambassador from the Netherlands: “My message is clear: our existence depends on the balance of nature. By fostering a personal connection between individuals and the environment, I believe I can spark a movement to protect our planet” (European Union, 2024d).

From our perspective, it is necessary to recognise the particular character of these ambassadors’ articulations, which are characteristic of contemporary environmental and sustainability discourses. As de Burgh-Woodman and King (2013) also observe, nature is positioned as a counterweight to the complexity and alienation of the modern way of life. The ambassadors’ statements thus reflect a desire to reconnect with nature as a means of responding to contemporary existential and green questions, with nature symbolising a simpler and more authentic way of being.

Whereas some ambassadors exhibit faith in technology and the progress that it promises, others produce a narrative in which modern life, with its growing dependence on technology and structured systems, creates a longing for authenticity and harmony with nature. The ambassadors’ encouragement of a personal connection with the environment indicates that, as in Romantic thought, nature continues

to function as a defence against the pressures of urbanisation and technological progress and represents a timeless refuge and a path towards resolving environmental and climate-related problems (de Burgh-Woodman & King, 2013).

The romanticised view of nature and the environment presented by European Climate Pact Ambassadors is benign and does not threaten existing green policies at the European level. By emphasising a personal connection with nature, this narrative complements the EU's complex environmental policies. Among other effects, it offers citizens a simplified articulation and thereby helps strengthen public support for green policies without directly engaging with their more technical or complex dimensions.

This discourse redirects attention from complex policies towards individual responsibility and presents nature as something that is relatively easy to imagine and understand. By calling on citizens to connect with nature, ambassadors also construct the idea of the "green citizen". This image encourages individuals to perceive themselves as part of the solution and to align their personal conduct with the EU's broader climate agenda. Such citizens are more likely to support and participate in EU green initiatives because they can identify, or at least identify more readily, with the values of sustainability and environmental protection. This symbolism helps ensure that citizens remain engaged with and supportive of green policies, producing citizens who are more willing to align themselves with the objectives of the European Green Deal and other EU climate measures.

CONCLUSION

At present, the European Union's green agenda appears to be undergoing a significant political rearticulation. Narratives concerning the urgency of climate action and the opportunity for Europe to become a leading global force in developing and implementing environmentally and climate-friendly solutions have not disappeared, but they are increasingly articulated through the priorities of competitiveness, industrial development, energy affordability and economic security. The European Union's green orientation therefore continues to persist, supported by binding climate objectives and an extensive legislative framework, although it is less frequently presented as an autonomous political project and is increasingly subordinated to the objective of strengthening European industry and economic competitiveness. As this study has demonstrated, the path leading to the establishment of this green orientation was a long one.

Through a genealogical perspective, we sought to trace the historical formation of the environmental and climate agenda at the European level as a particular political and economic foundation for contemporary articulations of green citizenship in the European Union. It critically examined how environmental government developed from what might be described as a marginal concern into a comprehensive governmental regime that, in many respects, grounds and directly defines both institutional frameworks and individual subjectivities in the contemporary European Union. Through a

genealogical analysis extending from the Treaty of Rome to the European Green Deal and the European Climate Pact, we critically documented and interpreted both hegemonic and more marginal articulations of particular forms of ecological government. These forms became fundamentally intertwined with the emergence of specific frameworks of knowledge, frequently presented in “scientific” form, and with discursive-material regimes of environmentally and socially sustainable green policies.

The analysis demonstrated that the environment entered European integration as a specific field of government through the “side door”. Initially, it was incorporated into the logic of economic coordination, public health protection and the removal of barriers to trade. We identified this initial codification as exceptionally significant because nature, as an object of intervention, became intelligible and materialised for European government as something measurable and manageable, something that could be continuously framed, directed and problematised in the Foucauldian sense. Nature or the environment therefore became a technical problem requiring expert knowledge, standardised indicators and regulatory coordination. Even within this framework, the citizens of European states were gradually recognised as active actors, primarily as consumers and beneficiaries whose well-being could be optimised by harmonising rules and eliminating distortions of competition. The genealogical significance of this early phase lies in observing the establishment of a discursive field within which “environmental concerns” were translated into the language of risk, efficiency and market functionality. This created the conditions for subsequent supranational interventions that increasingly constituted nature as an object of government and the population as a subject that had to be considered and directed in particular ways.

From the 1970s onwards, especially following the Stockholm Conference, the Paris Summit and the first Environmental Action Programmes, environmental policy within European integration moved from implicit treatment towards increasingly explicit articu-

lation. The precautionary, preventive and “polluter pays” principles became important normative centres of European government. We deliberately use the plural here to emphasise the heterogeneity rather than the uniformity of the field of environmental intervention. At the same time, the Court of Justice of the European Communities enabled legal consolidation through an expanded interpretation of the competences of the European Communities. During this period, what we defined as a triangle of eco-governmental rationality took shape: legal codification legitimising intervention; scientific and technical knowledge defining the semantic dimensions of the environment as an object of intervention and establishing measurement protocols; and economic justification internalising environmental costs within the calculations of individual and corporate actors. It is also crucial that citizens were increasingly articulated as potential participatory subjects. Nevertheless, they continued to be addressed primarily as the recipients of particular standards and measures rather than as co-creators of environmental policy.

The Single European Act (1987) and the rise of sustainable development discourse, particularly following the Brundtland Report and the Rio Summit, marked a transition from coordination towards the formation of a regime. In this context, it can be emphasised that the Single European Act introduced particular reforms to the adoption of measures at the European level, including qualified majority voting and a strengthened role for Parliament, as well as a specific chapter on the environment. At the same time, sustainability discourse became increasingly prominent at the global level, providing an additional legitimising moment that naturalised the integration of economic and environmental objectives. From the perspective of eco-governmentality, we understood the establishment of these constellations as an expansion of the biopolitical exercise of power. The life of the population, including health, exposure to environmental risks and access to a clean environment, increasingly became an object of intervention at the European level. Through the concepts of competitiveness, innovation and growth, these interventions were

increasingly articulated through an economistic rationality. Nature was progressively understood as a system that could be standardised, monitored and optimised through appropriate policy instruments. Citizens were gradually treated as bearers of responsibility who were expected to contribute to shared environmental objectives through changes in conduct and to understand themselves as partners in a common European project.

The Maastricht Treaty, to pause at another important point in the establishment of the EU, consolidated a particular process through which environmental policies and associated issues moved from the margins towards the centre of the European integration project. It incorporated the objective of sustainable and non-inflationary growth respecting the environment, codified central environmental principles, including precautionary and preventive action and the “polluter pays” principle, and modified the procedures through which environmental measures were adopted. The explicit incorporation of sustainable development among the Union’s principal objectives was subsequently achieved through the Amsterdam Treaty. The important fact that EU citizenship was legally established for the first time must certainly not be neglected. From our perspective, this dual codification of environmental commitments and citizenship is relevant to the establishment of a new space or system of government in which the well-being of the population, economic competitiveness and environmental quality were incorporated into a specifically configured matrix for the exercise of power. As citizens became legal subjects possessing rights and duties and were positioned in relation to new domains of government, they were constituted in relation to policy as participants in political processes, as consumers whose choices mattered, and as recipients of measures through which they themselves were expected to adjust their conduct in ways corresponding to established environmental and climate objectives.

From the 1990s onwards, our genealogical perspective identified numerous heterogeneous processes and formal-legal codifications. These included new EU treaties and strategic documents, as well

as the continued adoption of Environmental Action Programmes, through which the paradigm of neoliberal government expanded relatively rapidly into environmental domains. This was visible, for example, in the Fifth Environmental Action Programme. Even more relevant for our purposes was the Sixth Environmental Action Programme, which, to the best of our knowledge, was one of the first EU-level frameworks to introduce an explicitly green discourse. From the beginning of the twenty-first century, a more pronounced narrative of “green” consumption, technology and lifestyles therefore emerged. Citizens were explicitly positioned as agents of behavioural change, while sustainability was defined as an economic opportunity associated with innovation and growth.

The Lisbon Strategy also played a crucial role. It situated environmental protection within, and in this context subordinated it more explicitly to, competitiveness and “translated” sustainability into a governmental regime grounded in a rationality characterised by target-setting, comparison and evidence-based optimisation. The White Paper on European Governance institutionalised a discourse of openness, partnership and civil society involvement and formalised participatory mechanisms that, from an eco-governmentality perspective, operated as technologies of co-optation and normalisation. Responsibility was dispersed and potential conflicts were muted through the establishment, at least in principle, of structures for consultation.

Specific broader global conditions, as well as circumstances particular to the European context, created the space for the adoption of the European Green Deal and the European Climate Pact, which were analysed in Chapters 4 and 5. The critical examination of the Green Deal demonstrated how the areas in which green policies were expected to operate expanded. Understanding this expansion is essential to recognising the idea and political strategy of continuously extending the field of government in the name of environmental and climate policies and positioning citizens in a dual role: as beneficiaries of improved environmental quality and as active agents of the green transition.

By employing key discursive forms such as participation, trust, a just transition and inclusion, the Green Deal established a relationship between governmental institutions and the population in which responsibility for the success of policy was transferred even more extensively, although subtly, to citizens. It must be emphasised that this transfer was not new, since similar practices had already been continually produced at the European level. It is nevertheless important to recognise that the framework through which responsibility was transferred and an increasingly extensive role was attributed to EU citizens became progressively more structured and, it may be argued, more invasive. Citizens' activities, support and lifestyle changes were presented as beneficial and as necessary conditions for the effective operation of the Deal. This is a paradigmatic example of governing through encouragement, motivation and self-regulation. Participation became a technology of government: it produced an impression of openness while legitimising predetermined objectives and frameworks and calling on citizens to follow the EU institutions in realising the Green Deal.

The central concern of our analysis of the European Green Deal and the European Climate Pact was the positioning of EU citizens and the governmental techniques and strategies through which the EU seeks to shape their conduct and behaviour. In this respect, we found that information and the provision or dissemination of knowledge are of exceptional importance, as they are in many other central policy domains. One of the premises of the EU-level governmental regime is that only citizens who possess an appropriate understanding of complex environmental policies are capable of participating meaningfully. This expectation established knowledge and access to information as preconditions for legitimate participation. From an eco-governmentality perspective, this must also be understood as the construction of a particular hierarchy of participation: those possessing more resources, more time and better education are treated as "more suitable" participating citizens and are understood as the "driving force" of progress.

The discourse of a just and inclusive transition within the European Green Deal addressed this differentiation and hierarchy to a certain extent through measures intended to increase citizens' levels of information and knowledge. These may be described as compensatory measures that do not amount to structural adaptations or transformations capable of addressing the underlying problems associated with climate change and the environment.

In considering the principal research questions posed in this monograph concerning the articulation of green citizenship at the EU level, it is appropriate to emphasise one of its central narratives: the citizen as consumer. The consumer is positioned as a principal agent of change. By choosing sustainable purchases, using energy rationally and recycling or separating waste conscientiously, individuals are expected to contribute actively to shared environmental objectives. It is important to recognise that the consumer is understood primarily and hegemonically as an individual. Within capitalist organisation, the consumer is presupposed as a central element of sociopolitical, cultural and economic formations. Within liberal ideology, the consumer is consistently presumed to be a decision-making subject who makes "autonomous" choices and is therefore also an important element of the European Green Deal.

By positioning the citizen-consumer at the centre of responses to climate and environmental problems, political responsibility is transferred from the domain of collective action to that of individual lifestyle. This provides a clear example of what we have described as a technology of responsibilisation. Moral and environmental responsibility are translated into market terms: individuals are encouraged to implement green measures through self-discipline and consumer choices. As already noted, this transformation of the political into the personal and the collective into the individual is a contemporary form of green government at the European level that operates primarily through the formation of subjectivities. It produces a "green citizen" who cares for the environment while acting within established economic and institutional structures.

The European Climate Pact, examined in Chapter 5, is particularly relevant to our analysis. Within the European Green Deal, it constitutes the framework established by the EU specifically to address citizens and involve them in different activities through which the EU seeks to strengthen the legitimacy of its measures in this field. It is necessary, however, to emphasise that the Pact operates as more than an accompanying communication strategy. It functions as a governmental apparatus of mobilisation that connects articulations of environmental and climate crisis, risk and justice. In doing so, it establishes the urgency of action, produces temporal pressure and imposes an ethical obligation upon EU citizens to “actually” act.

By framing the participation of EU citizens as the only reasonable and moral path forward, the Pact presented non-participation as a threat to the success of the transition. Our analysis demonstrated that this involved the engineering of green civic subjectivities and the coordinates of their conduct. Knowledge platforms, local initiatives, digital tools and social roles, including ambassadors, young people and communities, were organised as governmental technologies that transformed the population into collectives of green actors. In this context, power was actualised and enacted through encouragement, standardisation and coordination. The previously discussed emphasis on information and knowledge was also significant because it structured problems through what, in Foucauldian terms, can be described as a power/knowledge matrix. Infrastructure enabled the “correct” forms of action, incentives directed choices and indicators measured success.

Climate Pact Ambassadors proved to be a particularly interesting and relevant mechanism of eco-governmentality within this governmental regime. Through a wide range of publications, online profiles, events and similar activities, ambassadors were continually presented as the “promoters” of the Green Deal in everyday life. They were bearers of knowledge and cultural capital whose central declared purpose was to connect European institutions, local communities and individuals. Exemplary conduct, awareness-raising,

event organisation and networking were exceptionally important elements of the ambassador mechanism.

These ambassador mechanisms functioned as techniques that extended beyond “promotional” activity and constituted an apparatus of subjectivation. What does this mean? Above all, it means producing informed, responsible and enterprising green citizens who are offered a particular range or repertoire of activities that is, in practice, a repertoire of permitted and measurable forms of action. In this context, power operates towards securing a particular form of participation and establishing the responsibility of its bearers, namely citizens, through platforms of knowledge, values and soft incentives. In Foucauldian language, ambassadors perform a pastoral function. In their profiles, they demonstrate care for others, while their central intention in assuming the ambassadorial role is to devote themselves to the green community. At the same time, as we have demonstrated, they filter and standardise citizens’ conduct in particular ways in order to maintain the alignment of green action with EU objectives.

Ultimately, we may conclude that EU green citizenship operates according to a logic of duality: it simultaneously empowers and normalises, includes and disciplines, enables and restricts. It constitutes an important formation of contemporary green government in which citizens receive a certain degree of recognition for their activities and are enabled to participate in events, online platforms and other spaces through which they gain opportunities to engage and express their views. Civil society organisations, local communities and individual citizens have acquired unprecedented visibility, channels and instruments for participation. In a certain sense, we may also speak of the dissemination of knowledge through the platforms already discussed and through other participatory tools and instruments for monitoring forms of environmental engagement.

When these constellations and possibilities are read through eco-governmentality as an analytics of power, however, the new mechanisms, policies and strategies directed towards European green

citizenship must be understood as mediating and consolidating a particular governmental rationality and normalising it through the materialisation of associated practices. The dimensions through which green citizenship is strengthened coexist with normalising functions and make those functions possible. The same platforms that “democratise” knowledge also standardise what counts as a legitimate environmental concern and an appropriate form of action. The same participatory mechanisms that strengthen citizens’ voices predetermine the scope of permissible demands and acceptable solutions. The emphasis on individual agency and responsibility, through which citizens are recognised as active subjects, perpetuates existing relations among actors and dominant or hegemonic green solutions. The same technologies that enable monitoring and transparency produce data that allow increasingly precise calibration of conduct and interventions. Green citizenship therefore incorporates the idea of individuals’ political capacity to intervene while simultaneously operating as a governmental technology that is predetermined in many respects.

An important conclusion is that heterogeneous policies and governmental mechanisms directed towards green citizenship operate at the EU level and are characterised by the duality described above. This duality must necessarily be understood in the context of new forms of power as productive. Green citizenship is closely connected to the production of particular subjects, truths, desires and practices. The green citizen in the EU is not forced into environmental responsibility. Through complex assemblages of narratives, discourses, infrastructures, incentives and micro-practices, the citizen is directed towards recognising their position as someone who “must and wants to” act sustainably. This does not mean that citizens possess a false consciousness. Rather, regimes of power always produce subjects who experience themselves as autonomous actors making free choices, while their autonomy is simultaneously grounded in and conditioned by governmental technologies that are themselves underpinned by particular rationalities.

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