Science and Public Policy, 2026, **00**, 1–13
DOI: https://doi.org/10.1093/scipol/scaf101
Article

OXFORD

Legitimising an emerging transformer mission: an abductive exploration of energy poverty policy in the Netherlands

Wouter Homans[1,2], Amber Geurts[2,*], Joeri Wesseling[3]

[1]Province of Overijssel, Luttenbergstraat 2, 8012 EE Zwolle, The Netherlands
[2]TNO, Unit ICT, Strategy & Policy, TNO Vector, P.O. Box 96800, 2509 JE The Hague, The Netherlands
[3]Copernicus Institute of Sustainable Development, University of Utrecht, Princetonlaan 8a, 3584 CB Utrecht, The Netherlands

*Corresponding author. TNO, Unit ICT, Strategy & Policy, TNO Vector, P.O. Box 96800, 2509 JE The Hague, The Netherlands.
E-mail: amber.geurts@tno.nl

Missions have the potential to induce transformative change to address complex societal problems. Nevertheless, the dynamics shaping the legitimisation process of emerging missions in policies remain largely unexplored. This article explores how legitimacy is negotiated during the emergence of a transformer mission through an abductive case study of energy poverty in the Netherlands. We conceptualize the emerging mission arena as the coalition of the willing that negotiates the legitimacy of this emerging mission. This legitimisation process is defined by actors' diverging interpretations regarding *what* causes energy poverty and *who* should address it *when*, *why*, *where*, and *how*. To address these contestation points, our case study identifies five coordination strategies aimed at achieving convergence. Finally, our findings suggest that legitimising an emerging mission in policies is difficult due to *transition voids*, which happen when solving the societal problem falls beyond the responsibility and mandate of a singular governmental body, thereby increasing policy coordination costs.

Keywords: mission-oriented innovation policy; public policy; transformer mission; legitimacy; governance; energy poverty; mission formulation; transition void.

1. Introduction

Mission-oriented innovation policy (MIP) has emerged as a third frame of innovation policy, with the potential to address wicked societal problems by providing directionality to innovation through measurable, ambitious, and time-bound objectives (Diercks et al. 2019; Mazzucato 2018; Schot and Steinmueller 2018; Haddad et al. 2022; Hekkert et al. 2020). MIP can be defined as 'a directional policy that starts from the perspective of a societal problem, and focuses on the formulation and implementation of a goal-oriented strategy by acknowledging the degree of wickedness of the underlying societal problem, and the active role of policy in ensuring coordinated action and legitimacy of both problems and innovative solutions across multiple actors' (Wanzenböck et al. 2020: 476). As such, MIP foregrounds contestation issues in the context of high complexity and uncertainty, especially when aiming to create the direction for a societal problem and its underlying solutions (Wiarda et al. 2024; Rittel and Weber 1973). To gain legitimate directionality, it is therefore necessary to develop a holistic and supportive policy strategy and enable policy coordination among fragmented policy mixes (OECD 2021; Geurts et al. 2023). However, the dynamics shaping this legitimisation process of emerging missions remain largely unexplored (Janssen et al. 2021; Wesseling and Meijerhof 2023).

The wicked and uncertain nature of societal problems (Wanzenböck et al. 2020; Wiarda et al. 2024), as well as the fact that any goal framing inherently favours some solutions over others (Azar and Sandén 2011), makes the process of mission legitimisation highly political and contested. Typically, vested actors with strong interests and established agendas dominate the initiation and formulation of missions. These actors favour *accelerator missions* with a narrow or siloed (Science, Technology and Innovation, STI) focus over *transformer missions* that aim for transformative systemic change in multiple dimensions (including societal, organisational, and behavioural changes) (Wittmann et al. 2021a; Wesseling and Meijerhof 2023). Nevertheless, the more stakeholders with more diverging interests and agendas (Geurts et al. 2022) enter the mission initiation process—as is the case with the transformer missions (Wittmann et al. 2021a, b), the more difficult it becomes to address contestation issues and gain legitimacy for the mission (OECD 2021; Geurts et al. 2023). This raises the central issue of how an emerging transformer mission becomes legitimised.

To study the dynamics that influence the initiation and formulation of such a transformer mission and its search for legitimacy, we use the *mission arena* concept, which reflects the collection of actors that deliberately initiate, formulate, and aim to legitimise the mission (Elzinga et al. 2023; Wesseling and Meijerhof 2023). These actors collectively define mission boundaries (Janssen et al. 2023, 2025)—influencing what issues are included and excluded—and mission-supporting instruments. This makes the mission arena a useful concept to explore the legitimation processes of missions.

However, while the mission arena concept is useful, it has so far only been applied to identify systemic barriers of already formed missions and to ex ante assess mission governance

actions in relation to those barriers (Wesseling and Meijerhof 2023; Wiarda et al. 2024). As such, existing research sheds no light on how a mission arena emerges and gains legitimacy. What is more, studying such a mission arena emergence and legitimation requires consideration of the understudied interaction patterns between actors' different beliefs and their normativity regarding the directionality, responsibility, and legitimacy of the emerging mission (Bening et al. 2015; Schlaile et al. 2017). In such a *mission coordination process*, clusters of actors with similar beliefs have been found to influence mission initiation and formulation (Janssen et al. 2023, 2025). Nevertheless, how such coordination mechanisms influence the legitimisation of the mission remains unexplored.

Given existing studies' focus on already formed missions (e.g. Elzinga et al. 2023; Wesseling and Meijerhof 2023; Wiarda et al. 2024) and the profound impact of how missions emerge, this article abductively explores the dynamics shaping the legitimisation process of an emerging transformer mission and aims to identify coordination mechanisms used by the stakeholders to align interests and find a common ground. The mission arena concept is used as a conceptual lens to analyse how actors engage in the formulation and negotiation of the mission, and how coordination mechanisms facilitate the construction of legitimacy.

To answer this research question, we study the case of energy poverty in the Netherlands, around which a transformer mission and support instruments are currently being defined. Energy poverty occurs when a household is forced to reduce its energy consumption to a degree that negatively impacts the health or well-being of the consumer. This is caused by a combination of low income with a high portion of household expenditures spent on energy and/or low energy performance of buildings and appliances (European Commission 2020; Mulder et al. 2023b; Bouzarovski et al. 2025; European Commission 2023). The social, physical, and technological conditions involved in energy poverty indicate the complex, systemic, and multidimensional nature of the problem, with no single solution directionality (Geurts et al. 2023). That is, solutions concern addressing low-income households, the energy performance of buildings, and energy prices in an energy system in transition (Middlemiss 2020; Manjon et al. 2022; Bouzarovski et al. 2025; Varo et al. 2022). The systemic, multidimensional, and frequently invisible nature of the problem requires the coordinated participation of multiple interrelated actors through complex interventions and interactions. Given this complexity and the need for coordinated change across policy levels, energy poverty constitutes a particularly suitable case for analysing how emerging transformer missions are legitimised.

2. Theoretical background

To study actors' attempts to raise a policy problem area to the level of a legitimate MIP, we study how the emerging mission arena, comprising such mission-pioneering stakeholders, attempts to rally support across the policy-making process. In this process of mission legitimisation, actors with different beliefs, for instance regarding their perceptions or prioritisation of problems and solutions that deserve policy action, compete with each other to turn their beliefs and interests into policy (Sabatier 1988; Sabatier and Weible 2007; Cairney 2012; Janssen et al. 2023, 2025). When mission arena actors successfully construct shared meanings, narratives, and problem definitions that resonate with other stakeholders, their claims for MIP appear more natural or morally justified and are more easily accepted. Such discursive and moral legitimacy can be obtained by persuasive framing in public discourse and in deliberative processes (Hajer 1995; Schmidt 2010; Melé and Armengou 2016). Such legitimising strategies need to be employed in the multilevel policy-making environment (Jenkins-Smith and Sabatier 1994) that influences the context for action and can affect the mission arena's dynamics by providing constraints and opportunities (Jenkins-Smith et al. 2018). This further complicates reaching alignment and consensus on the mission within the emerging mission arena.

Sufficient convergence of interests, agendas, and beliefs and the establishment of shared problem–solution perceptions is necessary to legitimise mission action and effectuate MIP in workable steps (Sabatier 1988; Kroll 2019; de Graaff et al. 2023; Janssen et al. 2023). In this context, Janssen et al. (2023, 2025) refer to missions as *boundary objects* across policy levels that are open enough for different interpretations—so different stakeholders may legitimise a mission differently—yet robust enough to maintain a common identity.

Within the public policy literature, the policy coordination process is seen as crucial to establish coherent and legitimate mission-oriented innovation policies (Janssen et al. 2023, 2025). This policy coordination process explains how mission meanings are coordinated across four functional levels of policy development (Larrue 2021), where different types of actors negotiate different aspects of a mission. At the highest *strategic level*, the political debate takes place and high-ranked civil servants prioritise and legitimise issue areas for policies and approaches to address them, including how MIP should be interpreted vis-à-vis other policy approaches and for which issue areas missions need to be formulated (Janssen et al. 2023). One level lower, the *programmatic level* represents the policy level where actors come together around an issue area and are concerned with establishing a vision to address that issue (Janssen et al. 2023, 2025). Dominant policy visions are established by dominant coalitions that prioritise certain policy programmes. Subsequently, at the *implementation level*, actors further develop the envisioned policy programmes or missions into a concrete, efficient, and coherent policy mix (Janssen et al. 2023, 2025). Lastly, actors operating at the *performance level* monitor and evaluate the impact of instruments developed at the implementation level in a goal-oriented way. These instruments target the actors that affect the development, production, and use of innovative mission solutions (Janssen et al. 2020; Baarslag et al. 2024).

Policy coordination mechanisms are then used to describe how mission interpretations may change, while travelling through these different policy levels (Janssen et al. 2023). Janssen et al. (2023, 2025) identify three policy coordination mechanisms that influence the mission. The *convergence–divergence mechanism*, which describes how different actors within each policy level debate and negotiate and (partially) converge or diverge on their interpretations of missions. Whether actors converge or diverge depends on which actors engage in a policy level, what perspectives they bring, and how they work out differences (Cairney 2012; Janssen et al. 2023). Such negotiations mostly occur in situations where none of the actors are satisfied with the status quo, and there is no better alternative than to negotiate agreements (Sabatier and Weible 2007). The *learning mechanism* encompasses processes of

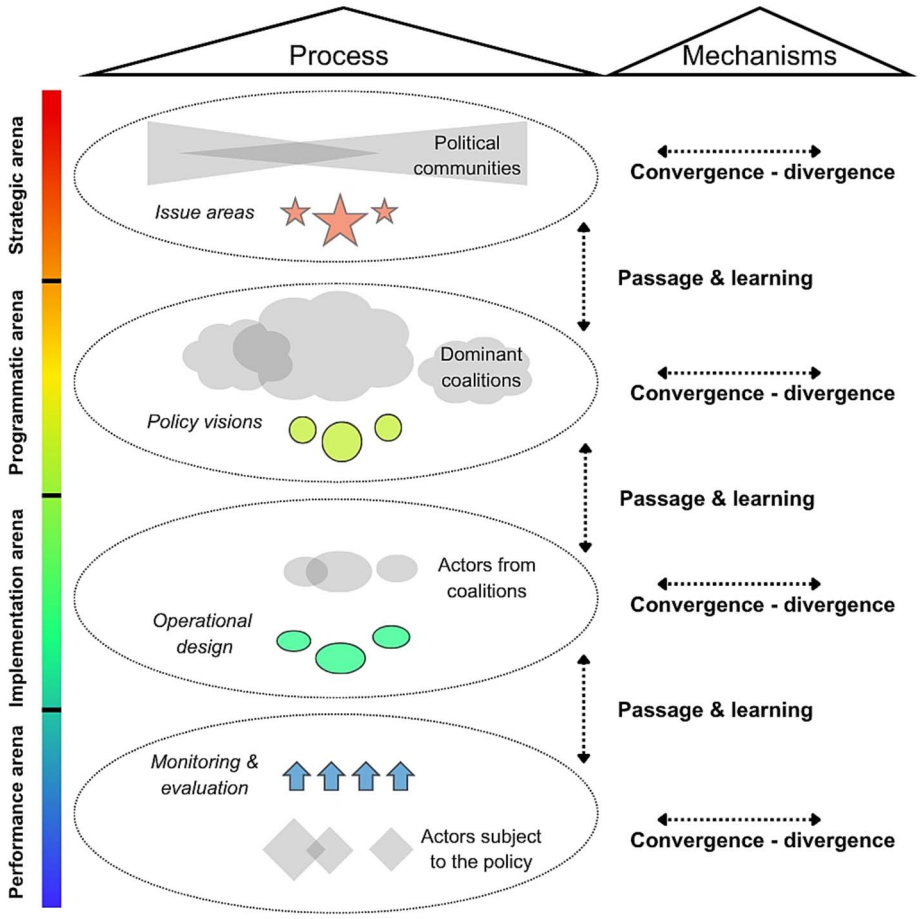

Figure 1. Conceptual framework of legitimising an emerging mission arena across policy levels. Own illustration, inspired by Larrue (2021) and Janssen et al. (2023).

aligning mission interpretations due to interactions between actors both within and across policy levels (Janssen et al. 2023). Such learning may take place since actors are often active in multiple, interconnected policy levels and carry tacit knowledge or expertise (Cairney 2012; Janssen et al. 2023). Finally, the *passage mechanism* occurs at points of passage between levels where mission interpretations are translated from one level to another (Kroll 2019; Janssen et al. 2023). This translation describes how 'prior equilibriums of practice are changed and/or will have to be renegotiated' when policy ambitions pass between levels (Kroll 2019: 638). Key to successfully translating policy strategies into practice are the consistency of articulations within each policy level and the coherence of ambitions between policy levels (Kroll 2019).

Figure 1 visualises our conceptual framework, which provides guidance to explore the legitimisation of an *emerging mission arena* and its MIP. It reflects the policy levels the emerging mission arena engages with and the coordination mechanisms involved in the policy legitimisation process. The four levels are represented in a spectrum, reflecting their stylistic and interconnected nature (Janssen et al. 2023, 2025). Within these levels, the convergence–divergence mechanism takes place through negotiations between actors, while between levels, passage and learning take place.

3. Methods

3.1 Approach

This article aims to abductively develop the conceptual framework to understand the legitimisation of emerging transformer missions. Abductive approaches can refine and develop existing theories and frameworks, through 'systemic combining', a process of going back and forth between empirical observations and potentially relevant concepts (Dubois and Gadde 2002, 2014; Vila-Henninger et al. 2022). Table 1 provides an overview of the different analytical steps.

Table 1. Visualisation of the abductive research design.

Focus	Analytical steps
Initial conceptual framework	1. A preliminary, deductive *assessment of the emerging mission arena* and its context, actors, policies, initiatives, and of the involved actors' strategies
	2. *Exploring the societal problems and corresponding solutions* related to the mission goal at the level of the policy subsystem
Case analysis	3. *Identifying challenges to policy coordination* based on legitimising dynamics
	4. *Identifying strategies* of the mission arena *to deal with policy coordination challenges*
Adapted framework	5. Contrasting the policy coordination challenges and strategies with the conceptual framework, to *adapt the framework* and provide recommendations for effective mission governance

3.2 Case description

The case of the emerging mission arena around energy poverty in the Netherlands is an excellent example of an emerging transformer mission. That is, while *accelerator missions* often

have a narrow or siloed (STI) focus, *transformer missions* aim for transformative systemic change in multiple dimensions (Fisher et al. 2018; Wittmann et al. 2021a; Wesseling and Meijerhof 2023). Energy poverty in the Netherlands constitutes a complex problem with no single solution that is not yet structurally addressed with (mission-oriented) policies due to its multifaceted nature. To develop a long-term strategy or mission to tackle energy poverty, the National Energy Poverty Research Programme (NEPRP) was initiated in 2022 (Ministry of Social Affairs 2023). On a voluntary basis, diverse stakeholders from various (policy) domains could participate in the NEPRP and form an emerging mission arena. By close cooperation and monthly workshops, these stakeholders work together towards a definition of energy poverty and a long-term mission.

The coordination of this emerging mission arena is complicated by the cross-cutting nature of energy poverty over multiple ministries and governmental layers. While the EU has been making progressive efforts to address energy poverty since 2009 (Directive 2009/72/EC), the understanding and recognition of energy poverty remain limited in the Netherlands (Straver et al. 2020; Feenstra et al. 2021). The recent energy crisis, however, prompted abrupt yet short-term and nonstructural measures by the Dutch government to alleviate energy poverty (see e.g. Ministry of Finance 2022; Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations 2022; Ministry of Social Affairs, 2023; Mulder et al. 2023a, a.o.). These measures were initiated by different actors in the NEPRP based on their own respective mandates to address energy poverty in the Netherlands. Hence, the NEPRP poses an interesting case as it is engaged not only in mission formulation but also in the implementation of short-term support measures.

3.3 Data collection

Data collection included desk and document research, interviews, and interactive workshops. A preliminary, deductive assessment of the emerging mission arena and its context, actors, policies, initiatives, and the strategies of the involved actors was constructed using desk research and secondary data sources. The data sources included position papers, policy documents, email exchanges, and archival data of the NEPRP (e.g. news articles, policy briefs, letters to and from parliament, internal documentation). Subsequently, primary data has been collected via participant observations at 8 monthly workshops organised by the NEPRP to define the energy poverty mission. The workshops lasted 2–3 hours, and had eleven to seventeen participants from different governmental organisations and at different policy levels (e.g. national, province, and municipal). Furthermore, eleven semistructured interviews were conducted with representative stakeholders both within (eight) and outside (three) the NEPRP. Interview questions were structured around the policy processes and legitimisation and coordination mechanisms across the policy arena levels.

3.4 Data analysis

Coding of the collected data involved two phases. First, concepts described in the conceptual framework were used deductively as a guideline to code the data. This allowed for a first assessment of the emerging mission arena around energy policy and exploring societal problems and solutions. Second, an inductive approach was used to structure the data into themes that highlight empirical insights overlooked by the conceptual framework. Following Strauss and Corbin (1990), we used open coding to analyse the data. Next, we identified recurrent themes, and organised them in two categories: (1) key contestation points and (2) coordination strategies. This analysis identified four key contestation points that complicate establishing the energy poverty mission arena, and five coordination strategies used to address these contestation points.

4. Findings

4.1 Description of the emerging mission arena

The deductive structural–functional analysis of the emerging mission arena of energy poverty showed that the legitimisation of a political agenda to address energy poverty largely happens across the different policy levels, albeit being most pronounced at the programmatic level (see Fig. 1).

In the *strategic level* for energy poverty, the legitimacy of a mission on energy poverty takes shape through the interplay between politicians from the Dutch parliament and from the EU. While energy poverty has been acknowledged and prioritised by the EU since 2009 (Directive 2009/72/EC), the Dutch government has been rather reluctant to do so (Feenstra et al. 2021) and only recently started prioritising energy poverty as a result of the energy crisis. The policy 'metanarrative' negotiated at this level revolves around the *energy efficiency first principle* to prioritise energy efficiency in policies related to climate goals, which should simultaneously save society significant health and energy costs (EED 2024).

The *programmatic level* encompasses the level where ministries [particularly SZW (Social Affairs & Work), EZK (Economic Affairs & Climate), and BZK (Internal Affairs)] engage in establishing policy goals and impact pathways. The negotiated mission aspects here are the 'policy visions' the respective ministries have regarding how to solve energy poverty. In terms of Dutch MIP, which is part of the policies of the Ministry of Economic Affairs & Climate, the Dutch Topsectors for Knowledge and Innovation (TKIs) are also important stakeholders as these TKIs formulate mission-driven innovation agendas that directly relate to energy poverty, including the missions to (1) 'reduce the burden of disease caused by an unhealthy built environment with 30% by 2040', (2) 'achieve an energy neutral built environment in 2050', and (3) 'reduce health differences between high and low socioeconomic groups with 30% by 2040' (Dutch Government 2019). Despite their strong relation with energy poverty, an interviewee from Topsector A indicated that integrating energy poverty in these missions is challenging, as these missions are the predominantly technology-driven innovation policy visions. Energy poverty, on the contrary, is a wider and more complex societal problem that requires more than solely technological innovation. In addition, more stakeholders could have been invited to the programme. A senior consultant from agency B explains: 'If we make the link with health problems, [the Ministry for Public Health] should be invited. (...) And if we want structural funding, I think [the Ministry for Finance] should be invited too.' Moreover, during the NEPRP workshops, the Ministry of Infrastructure & Water (I&W) was mentioned multiple times as a relevant stakeholder that should be invited when mobility problems are included in the definition of energy poverty. However, inviting more stakeholders would make an already complex topic even more contested.

The *implementation level* can be viewed as the level of specific ministerial departments, provinces, government agencies, and municipalities, which operationalise the policy visions established in the programmatic arena into a policy mix for implementation. Policy mixes that relate to energy poverty, for example, contain instruments like the temporary emergency fund energy provided by the Ministry of Social Affairs (SZW), or the so-called 'SPUK' (national insulation programme), which needs to be implemented as part of the PVGO (programme for sustainable built environment) set out by the Ministry of Internal Affairs (BZK).

A clear governance structure at the *performance level*, which considers goal-oriented monitoring and evaluation of implemented policies, is lacking for energy poverty because the long-term, integral structural policy vision and mission goal to evaluate against is missing at this stage of the mission arena's emergence. A social scientist indicated: 'Ideally, (. . .) you would want an "energy poverty observatory" that structurally gets funding.'

4.2 Exploring the problem–solution space

The lack of legitimacy for designing a Dutch energy poverty mission from the top down led actors to form a 'coalition of the willing' from the bottom up (i.e. the emerging mission arena), where actors participate in the NEPRP workshops on a voluntary basis. The actors include three ministries [Social Affairs & Work (SZW), Economic Affairs & Climate (EZK), and Internal Affairs (BZK)], four Dutch provinces (North Holland, South Holland, Flevoland, and North Brabant), three government agencies [for enterprises (RVO), for municipalities (VNG), and for statistics (CBS)], and two municipalities. The NEPRP workshops were to a large extent committed to delineating the long-term policy scope, vision, and mission by tackling questions such as 'What is energy poverty?', 'What problems are (not) included?', and 'What solutions are (not) included?' (workshop notes).

The three participating ministries that approached energy poverty from a predominantly social (SZW, Social Affairs & Work), technical (BZK, Internal Affairs), or systemic (EZK, Economic Affairs & Climate) point of view largely shaped the scope, vision, and mission on energy poverty. In other words, the problems and solutions related to energy poverty encompass different perceptions due to largely different political mandates. For BZK, for instance, the problem of energy poverty is seen as a 'sustainability of built environment' problem and as such the national insulation programme is seen as the solution that falls within their mandate. For SZW, however, payability of the energy bill is the main concern, which is why they provided the price cap and energy allowance as a solution. Nevertheless, the energy transition and the upcoming changes in the energy system, which fall within the mandate of EZK, largely affect the energy bill.

Figure 2 visualises the problems and solutions discussed during the workshops and inductively structures them on two scales: social *versus* technical and short-term nonstructural *versus* long-term structural. The grey areas illustrate the archetypical mandates of the ministries of SZW (Social Affairs & Work), EZK (Economic Affairs & Climate), and BZK (Internal Affairs). The overlapping mandates in the darkest grey area indicate where the potential lies to develop converging perceptions of a legitimate long-term policy vision and mission on energy poverty.

4.3 Challenges stemming from policy coordination mechanisms: key contestation points

The open coding analysis shows four different points where the interpretation of energy poverty is contested. These 'contestation points' encompass diverging interpretations on aspects of energy poverty (see Fig. 3) that hamper the legitimisation of the emerging mission and its arena.

4.3.1 Contestation point 1: political mandate. The first contestation point is the political mandate of energy poverty. While civil servants serve the public interest, it may be open to different interpretations regarding (1) who is responsible for serving what part of the public interest (*who?*), (2) how high an issue should be on the political agenda in relation to other issues on the agenda, and 3) when or how fast it should be tackled (*when?*). As a senior consultant of agency B explained, civil servants struggle with the question: 'Who is ultimately responsible for what, and where does energy poverty eventually land?' In addition, external factors might influence the interpretation of political mandate. As the same interviewee from agency B explained, energy poverty 'exploded' as a political topic due to the energy crisis, creating a sudden urgency to act. Diverging interpretations regarding *who?* and '*when?* are therefore caused by (1) the openness to multiple perceptions of problem ownership and (2) the volatile perception of urgency due to external influences.

Firstly, an openness to the interpretation of problem ownership arises due to the politically cross-cutting character of energy poverty both horizontally (i.e. multiple policy domains involved) and vertically (i.e. multiple governmental layers involved: municipalities, provinces, and ministries). An energy poverty specialist from research organisation A indicated that energy poverty lacks a governance structure with a division of responsibilities, so a lot is happening but not in a structural way. As a result, energy poverty lies at the interface of the responsibilities and mandates of a wide variety of agencies. Potential sources of convergence could be individual awareness that energy poverty is a societal problem and political motions and election programmes that support energy poverty. For example, a policymaker from Ministry A mentioned: 'I think that serving the public interest, independent of the political coalition, means continuing to address energy poverty.' Besides, a motion that passed the Parliament that calls for research into methods to prevent the increase of energy poverty caused by energy policies (Postma 2023) was seen as a promising source of convergence by the participants of the NEPRP.

Yet, in practice, divergence occurs due to fear of taking responsibility, the prioritisation of other issues and finger-pointing to other policy domains. For example, a policymaker from Ministry C explained: 'What you don't want to do is taking ownership of a problem that could also have been the problem of another ministry. That would cost FTE [full time employees] of your organisation that you cannot use for problems closer to your core business.' This fear of taking responsibility relates to finger-pointing to other policy domains, which could be described as a 'hands-off mentality' where the reflex is not to take ownership of cross-cutting problems.

Secondly, fluctuations in the perception of urgency arise as crises, obligations from the EU, and political pressure shape how energy poverty moves on the political agenda over time. Sudden convergence regarding this perception of urgency took

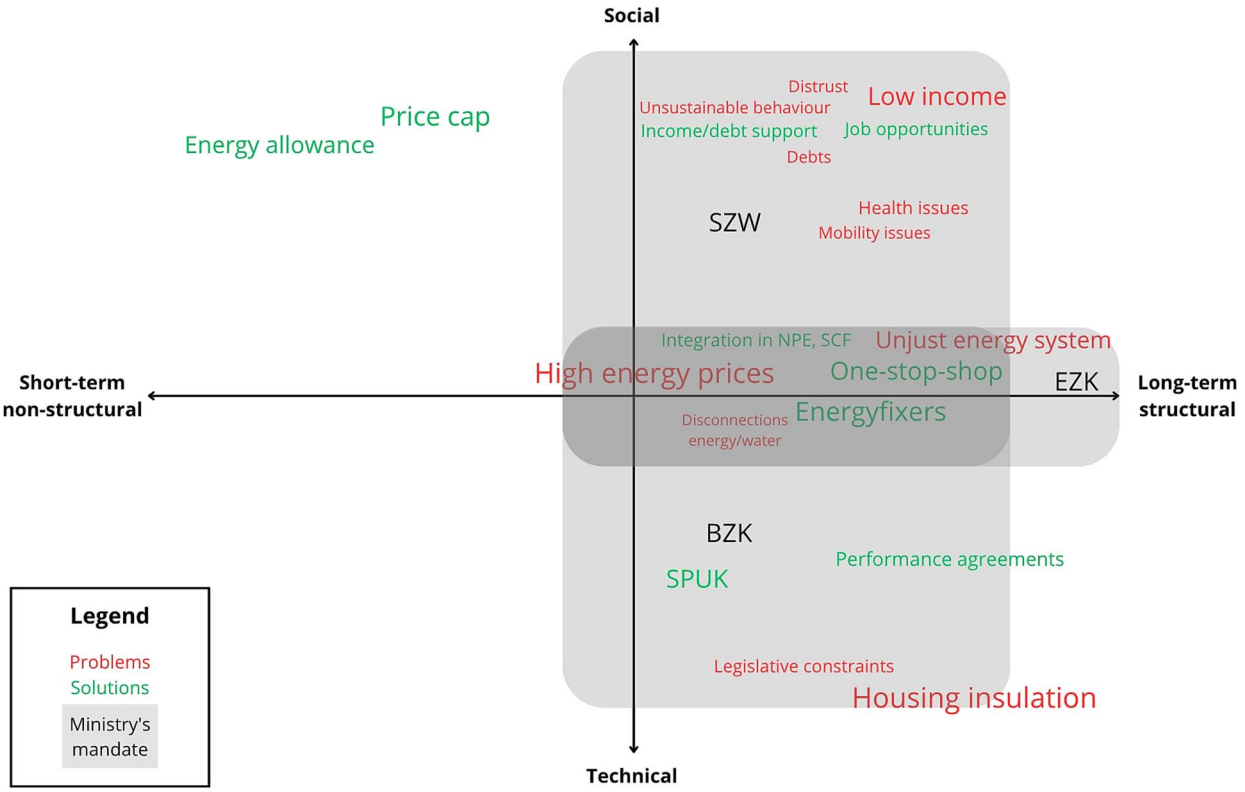

Figure 2. Inductively established matrix of problem–solution space of energy poverty. Grey areas illustrate the typical mandates of the Ministry of Social Affairs & Work (SZW), Internal Affairs (BZK), and Economic Affairs & Climate Policy (EZK).

place due to the energy crisis. A project leader from Ministry B explained: 'It took me no effort to advocate for energy poverty in my ministry, as my minister was already invited to three talk shows to talk about the implications of the energy crisis.' Also, directives from the EU to report about energy poverty became stricter, an energy poverty specialist from research organisation A explained. Still, when the current urgency is over the attention to energy poverty could decline, an interviewee from agency B indicated. As a policymaker from Ministry A also indicated: 'Current policy measures are designed as crisis measures, so it is not structural.' Moreover, a policymaker from province A indicated that municipalities experience short-term political pressure to directly spend the 'SPUK' subsidies to alleviate energy poverty, which prevents them from focusing on more well-considered, structural, and long-term policy.

4.3.2 Contestation point 2: rationale for government intervention. The second contestation point concerns the rationale for government intervention, where diverging interpretations occur as a result of different rationales with regard to (1) why government intervention should take place (*why?*) and (2) where government intervention should take place (*where?*). Based on our data, we distinguish three rationales for government intervention, representing dominant policy perspectives that cause diverging interpretations regarding *why?* and *where?*.

The first rationale, which we define as *regulate the system*, represents the view that energy poverty arises from market mechanisms leading to high energy prices and providing insufficient incentives for investing in housing insulation. Proponents of this view argue that the role of the government is to better regulate the market through measures such as price incentives and taxes, allowing the market mechanism to eventually address the issue. For instance, an interviewee from Ministry C explained that within that ministry 'Intervening in the market with the price cap on energy was perceived as very inconvenient. (. . .) The conviction here is: the market determines the price. (. . .) High prices are the result of the Russian invasion and not of our policies.'

The second rationale, which we define as *reform the system*, relates to the role of the government in addressing deficiencies within the structural components of the system. Interviewees supporting this rationale mainly mentioned hard and soft institutions as constraining factors in tackling energy poverty. For example, a project leader from agency A referred to limitations in legislation (hard institution) as 'systemic pains', citing examples such as constraining tax regulations in a project where people could donate energy to other people in need and difficulties in insulating cavity walls due to the protected status of bats. An example of a soft institution mentioned by interviewees is the lack of proactivity in the dominant culture within civil organisations, as well as a lack of capacity and resources. Consequently, this rationale legitimises government intervention aimed at systemic reforms to solve energy poverty.

The third rationale, which we define as *transform the system*, emphasises the need for the government to coordinate a comprehensive transformation of the system. Interviewees that support this rationale mentioned the lack of coordination by the government as an important limiting factor in tackling energy poverty. As an energy poverty specialist from research organisation A explained, 'Responsibilities are distributed over multiple ministries, causing a sense of lack of urgency.'

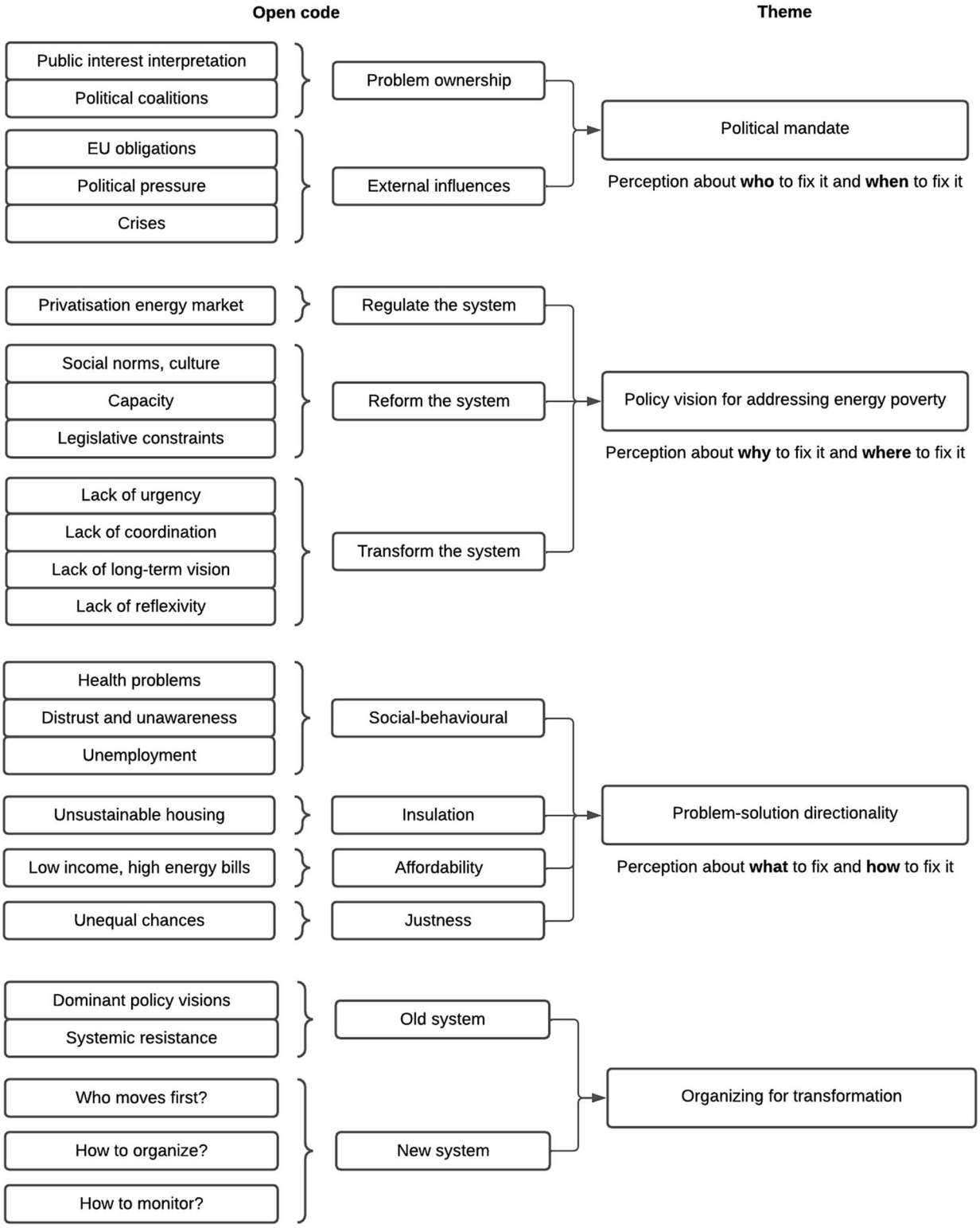

Figure 3. Four points of contestation during the policy coordination process.

In addition, 'thinking in siloes' within the government and the 'absence of a long-term vision' were identified as major constraints. A policymaker from province A expressed that the lack of a coherent long-term vision by the government frustrates regional authorities. A programme director from Topsector A indicated that 'the transition to MIP has never really been carried through' and advocates for more transformative policy visions within the government. Therefore, this rationale legitimises government intervention to target 'transformation failures' and take a proactive role in leading the transformation by formulating and coordinating clear visions.

4.3.3 Contestation point 3: problem–solution directionality. A third point of contestation is about problem–solution directionality. Divergence occurs due to different perceptions about (1) what causes energy poverty (*what?*) and (2) how energy poverty should be addressed (*how?*). We distinguish four categories of directionality based on the interviews and participant observations. Noteworthy is that these are not necessarily distinct or exclusive categories, but rather coexisting categories where actors may have different perceptions of causality and priority. The categories are therefore not mutually exclusive but indicate the different perceptions of directionality that legitimise different sequences of policy actions.

The first category concerns *social–behavioural* problem–solution directionality. Problems such as distrust in the government, debts, and unemployment were mentioned as factors that induce energy poverty. In turn, energy poverty may cause health problems, such as asthma, and social problems, such as stress, maintaining and inducing other problems. This view on the problem legitimises solutions to, for example, structurally employ people on welfare (Dutch: *in de bijstand*) within energy-fix organisations, making them so-called energy fixers who visit homes to address energy issues as well as other social issues. This would both tackle unemployment and create more trust and awareness as such energy fixers fulfil a social role 'behind the front door'.

A second category emphasises a *(un-)sustainable housing* problem–solution directionality. Unsustainable houses due to bad insulation were mentioned by many interviewees as the primary cause of energy poverty. For example, a project leader from Ministry B explained: 'The first question is: to what extent does better insulation already solve the problem [energy poverty]? A next question is what we should do additionally for social security. (. . .) With better insulation, you simultaneously tackle health issues.' This view on the problem therefore prioritises solutions that improve the energy quality of houses. As a senior consultant from agency B explains: 'One cannot solve poverty, but one can solve energy poverty, by making sure people live in houses with minimal energy use. In that case, people are also less susceptible to energy price fluctuations.'

A third category is *affordability* problem–solution directionality. As a junior assistant professor from research organisation B indicates, 'Ultimately, energy poverty is simply poverty. It all comes down to a lack of money. And the part that goes to energy bills, that you could refer to as "energy poverty".' This view legitimises solutions that ensure the affordability of energy. The energy allowance and national price cap on energy are excellent examples of such solutions. A project leader from Ministry B expresses a frustration in this context, since 'such temporary measures do not structurally solve the problem.' A programme director of Topsector A explains: 'It is just a stopgap measure [Dutch: *lapmiddel*]. Giving people money temporarily when the problem arises, but not investing in a structural solution to improve the housing.'

A last category encompasses a *justness* problem–solution directionality. This encompasses the inequality in costs and benefits between higher and lower socioeconomic groups within the energy system. A senior consultant from agency B explains that currently, people with money can get subsidies in the energy transition, while people without money cannot. Yet, both people pay the taxes to fund the subsidy. 'To put it bluntly, people who cannot afford pay for people who can afford.' Consequently, solutions that promote equality are legitimised and prioritised.

4.3.4 Contestation point 4: organising for transformation. Since the emerging mission for energy poverty aims for transformative change, a final contestation point arises: organising for transformation. This contestation point centres around the dichotomy between the resistances to change from the 'old system' on the one hand and the challenges to organise the 'new system' on the other hand.

Resistances to change from the 'old system' stem from vested dominant policy visions and systemic resistances to change. In current MIP, for example, interviewees indicate a dominant technology-centred rather than human-centred starting point. For example, a programme director from Topsector A explains: 'The dominant approach to the heat transition is "ensuring as many connections as possible". Possibly, a human-oriented approach with room for diversity would establish a way more robust result.' The same interviewee indicates that the types of projects that target energy poverty often fall by the wayside in the current system of subsidies and regulations. While they target multiple problems simultaneously, they typically score lower on, for example, providing concrete evidence of CO_2 reductions. A senior consultant from agency B indicates already having struggled for 15 years with the ignorance of energy poverty projects because the 'return on investment is too low'. Moreover, many interviewees indicated resistances to the use of the term 'energy poverty' within their organisation. 'Energy poverty does not exist' and 'Energy poverty is just poverty' were frequently cited objections.

Challenges to organising 'the new system' focus on questions of how to do so. For instance, one of the questions asked is how to organise the transformation. A policymaker from Ministry C speaks about 'interfering public interests', referring to conflicting situations where solutions for energy poverty contradict other public interests. For example, lowering the energy prices also reduces price incentives to discourage the consumption of fossil fuels. In this context, a consultant from research organisation A advocates that solutions should go 'beyond the nexus' of existing policy measures: 'Structural circles of poverty are maintained. (. . .) It [energy poverty] is about both the heat transition and the energy transition and the transportation transition. (. . .) We must be cautious not to address energy poverty with a single policy framework.'

4.4 Policy coordination strategies based on policy coordination mechanisms

Achieving convergence regarding the identified contestation points helps to overcome the coordination challenges. Based on our data, five different policy coordination strategies to tackle these contestation points (i.e. achieve convergence) and legitimise the emerging transformer mission for energy poverty are identified.

A first strategy is *providing hard evidence*. By focusing on new research and acquiring objective information, factual knowledge should overcome contestation regarding the political mandate and problem–solution directionality. During the NEPRP workshops, examples of 'hard evidence' that were discussed involve information on the effectiveness of policy measures, monitoring what households have been visited by energy fixers and doing scenario calculations (e.g. on the effect

of EU-ETS II on energy poverty). Consequently, contestation about political mandate is targeted through articulating the problem and increasing the political pressure. This tackles the *when* question. For example, a project leader from Ministry C explains: 'I already get questions frequently: "But energy poverty is over because energy prices have declined, right?" (. . .) That is why I insist on doing calculations on the effectiveness of policy measures in those [NEPRP] workshops.' Also the contestation about problem–solution directionality is targeted by providing more insight into the causes of the problem and the effectiveness of the solutions. This tackles the *what* and *how* questions. The passage mechanism is used here, since the hard evidence is communicated to other policy arenas through research or policy documents that act as boundary object carriers.

A second strategy is *providing soft evidence*. The difference with the former strategy is that soft evidence focuses more on stories and conversations instead of quantitative data. During the NEPRP workshops, the discussion came up that personal stories about energy poverty are perhaps even more convincing than numbers. This was experienced by the participants themselves, since an energy-poor person was invited to share their story some workshops earlier. The aim of providing 'soft evidence' is for other stakeholders to reflect on and become aware about the importance of collectively solving energy poverty. As a programme director of Topsector A explains: 'We thought about calculating how missions score on societal indicators. However, then it becomes an absolute story while it is actually a relative story, where it is very fruitful to facilitate the conversation.' In line with this, a senior consultant from agency B indicates that the human component is key to make the energy transition a success, highlighting the role of energy poverty experts as 'influencers' who share stories on LinkedIn. Personally, this interviewee had created a podcast about energy poverty to create awareness and share personal stories of energy-poor people. Such stories, a consultant from research organisation A explains, induce the thought that it is abnormal to live in a draughty, mouldy house in the Netherlands. Consequently, this strategy targets contestation about political mandate (*who* and *when*), the role of the government (*why*), and the problem of energy poverty (*what*). It uses both the passage mechanism through boundary object carriers such LinkedIn posts and the learning mechanism through conversations and interactions between actors operating in different policy arenas.

A third strategy is *formulating visions*. This entails efforts to articulate long-term policy goals or future visions on energy poverty in policy documents. In the workshops, the NEPRP strongly focused on formulating a definition of energy poverty as a first step of defining a long-term vision and strategy on energy poverty. A social scientist from research organisation A explains: 'We need a lawful definition of energy poverty, that is step one. (. . .) It would be very helpful in making energy poverty policy, since you can then refer to that legal definition.' Besides, an important product of the NEPRP was a letter to the Parliament on April 25 2024, providing an update on the developments of the programme and introducing a future definition of energy poverty (Dutch Government 2024). This tackles contestation by articulating the problem (*what* question) and its urgency (*when* question). The passage mechanism is used for coordination through boundary object carriers such as vision documents.

Fourthly, *forming an advocacy coalition* is a strategy of the emerging mission arena to achieve convergence. This has been important ever since the NEPRP's instalment, which started with workshops with local policymakers and implementors about energy poverty. As a social scientist of research organisation A explains: 'At some stage (. . .) we thought about the question how to ask attention for this [energy poverty]. (. . .) Eventually, multiple ministries got interested and realised they had a role to play in energy poverty too.' Another interviewee, who has been involved in energy poverty policy since the start, highlights the importance of 'bringing multiple fields of influence together' in designing policies for energy poverty. In this light, multiple interviewees stressed the importance of addressing energy poverty through interdisciplinary projects where actors from different backgrounds come together in an advocacy coalition. Such coalitions tackle contestation by enabling convergence on actors' belief systems, which relates to all contestation regarding the questions *who*, *when*, *why*, *where*, *what*, and *how*. The learning mechanism is used here through interactions between stakeholders and the formation of networks.

A last strategy of the emerging mission arena is *advocating for transformative policy visions*. This relates to the resistances to transformative change of the old system. In this light, the emerging mission arena profits from a paradigm shift in policy-making towards a more holistic, broader societal perspective. A policy advisor from province B explains: 'The awareness is rising that thinking in policy siloes is becoming outdated. (. . .) For transformative challenges, that [way of thinking] will not bring us further. (. . .) Therefore, I believe it is important to speak of climate and energy justice in the broad perspective.' A programme director from Topsector A also argues: 'Let us seize the energy transition to make a better world and break dominant power concentrations.' In the workshops, this strategy takes shape through challenging participants to actively discuss the long-term strategy on energy poverty within their respective organisations during the runtime of the NEPRP. Being policymakers or policy implementers themselves, participants take energy poverty into account in the design and implementation of new policies at their respective ministries. In this context, a social scientist from research organisation A referred to the participants of the NEPRP as 'catalysts of energy poverty in their own organisation'. Here, the learning mechanism is used for coordinating questions of *who*, *when*, *why*, and *where*, representing contestation about political mandate and the rationale for government intervention.

5. Discussion and conclusion

Through an empirical, abductive case study of the emerging mission arena of energy poverty, we have explored the legitimisation dynamics of an emerging mission, and identified the coordination strategies used to shape these processes. In Fig. 4, we present an adapted framework that abductively incorporates our findings to better study mission emergence and legitimisation.

Based on our findings, we identified four contestation points where the emerging mission for energy poverty is contested due to actors' diverging interpretations of different aspects of the emerging mission, which need to be addressed to legitimise the mission. These contestation points occurred in different policy arenas, where different

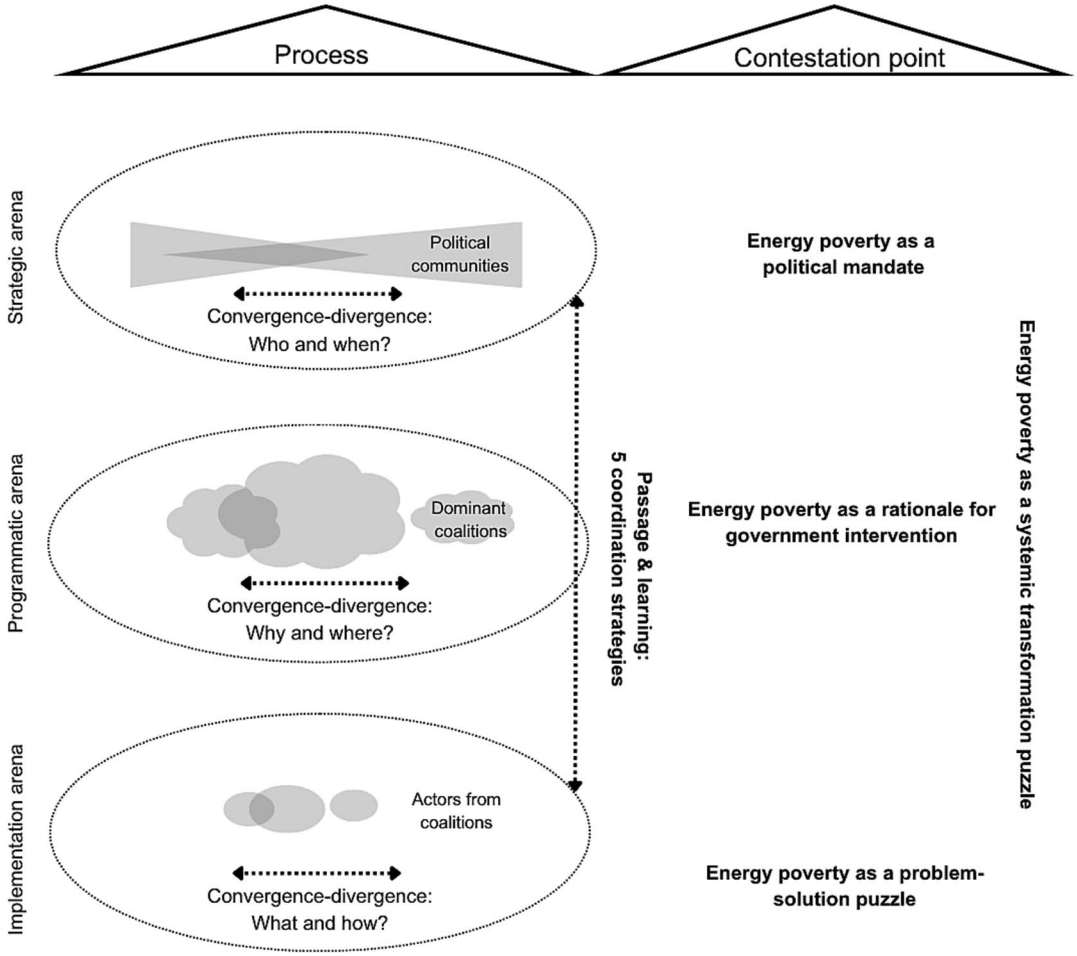

Figure 4. Contestation points and coordination strategies of the policy coordination process for energy poverty.

aspects of the emerging mission are negotiated. At the strategic arena, the political mandate for energy poverty was contested. Here, actors diverged in their perception of problem ownership (*who?*) and prioritisation of energy poverty (*when?*). This inhibited problem ownership and the prioritisation of energy poverty on the political agenda, against other issues to be tackled. At the programmatic arena, the rationale for government intervention was contested. This impaired decision-making on questions of what role the government has in solving energy poverty (*why?*) and the view on where government intervention should take place (*where?*). In the implementation arena, the problem–solution directionality was contested. This concerns questions about what energy poverty entails (*what?*) and what policy measures are effective in solving it (*how?*). This hampered the development of structural policy measures to achieve the mission goal. Because of all these open questions, we did not observe any governance structure in the performance arena, which requires a clear and broad mission goal to monitor and evaluate against. In all three arenas, 'old' policy visions and system characteristics dominate that resist change. As a result, a lack of support towards a 'new' transformative policy rationale is created. The combination of these four contestation points inhibited the legitimacy attributed to the emerging mission for energy poverty.

To achieve legitimacy for the emerging transformer mission on energy poverty, mission governance encompassed coordination efforts to tackle these contestation points. By assessing the efforts of the emerging mission arena to counter the contestations, we identified five coordination strategies, based on the passage and learning mechanisms, which were used to govern and legitimise the emerging mission, including (1) providing hard evidence, (2) providing soft evidence, (3) formulating visions, (4) forming an advocacy coalition, and (5) advocating for transformative policy visions. These strategies are aimed at achieving convergence in the debate of mission aspects.

5.1 Theoretical contributions

The current literature on MIP lacks insights into how actors influence the mission formulation process (Janssen et al. 2020; Wanzenböck et al. 2020), how a mission arena emerges (Hekkert et al. 2020; Wesseling and Meijerhof 2023), and how a contested mission gains legitimacy (Elzinga et al. 2023; Weber and Rohracher 2012). Contributing to these gaps, this research provides an innovative view on the dynamics that shape the legitimisation of an emerging mission. The in-depth case study of energy poverty makes an empirical contribution to the literature on MIP and policy coordination. On top of that, our study makes three theoretical contributions.

First, we introduce the concept of the *emerging mission arena* to study—*ex durante*—the yet underexplored dynamics of a mission that is still being negotiated: in our case a

Table 2. Comparison between the mission arena and the emerging mission arena.

Features	Mission arena	Emerging mission arena
Stakeholders involved	Established group of stakeholders	'Coalition of the willing'
Concern	Governing a mission within group of stakeholders	Enabling governance of an emerging mission among coalition of the willing
Focus	Implementing broad range of innovations to achieve the mission goal	Identifying contestation points to legitimise the mission
Legitimacy	Achieving the mission goal by measuring progress	Achieving convergence on mission via coordination strategies
In the context of the	Overall MIS performance	Performance of MIS at various policy levels

'coalition of the willing' bottom-up attempts to initiate a formal mission in an established national MIP programme. This coalition aimed to identify and address contestation points to legitimise the mission. This required coordinating strategies across various policy levels. Table 2 provides an overview of the key differences between the mission arena on the one hand and the emerging mission arena on the other hand.

Second, by focusing on the largely neglected topic of how an emerging mission is legitimised by a bottom-up coalition of the willing, our study has identified four important contestation points that need to be addressed before a mission can be formalised. These contestation points go beyond merely considering the actors in a mission arena, what perspectives they bring, and how they work out differences (Cairney 2012; Janssen et al. 2023). Instead, our findings indicate that actors within the emerging mission arena need to address diverging interpretations regarding *what* causes the societal problem to occur, and *who* should address it *when*, *why*, *where*, and *how*. This provides a deeper understanding of the convergence–divergence mechanisms (Janssen et al. 2023) that shape and legitimise the mission. Furthermore, our findings have identified five possible coordination strategies to achieve convergence on these diverging interpretations of actors, based on the passage and learning coordination mechanisms (Janssen et al. 2023).

Finally, our particular use case on energy poverty also extends discussions regarding the characteristics of transformer missions (Larrue 2021; Wittman et al. 2021a; Wesseling and Meijerhof 2023). The case of energy poverty can be identified as a complex, problem-driven ('type 2') transformer mission due to its cross-sectoral nature involving a diverse problem–solution space, a wide range of stakeholders, and requiring high coordination (Wittmann et al. 2021a, b). More specifically, and in line with other studies (Braams et al. 2024), we find that governmental representatives are reluctant to take responsibility for such a transformer mission as the problem is far larger than their ministry or governmental agency is strictly speaking responsible for. As a result, transformer missions risk lack of adequate implementation due to what we term here a 'transition void,' i.e. the recognition that the capacity of different stakeholders to act collectively is limited by inadequate modes of organisation and coordination (within and outside organisations), insufficient mandates, and incomplete understandings. These transition voids often keep the barriers to collective action, needed to legitimise the mission, in place. We highlight the concept of transition voids because they emerged directly from our empirical findings and relate closely to our research question on how coordination dynamics shape mission legitimacy. By foregrounding this concept, we contribute to the literature on mission-oriented innovation policy and mission governance (e.g. Wittmann et al. 2021a; Wesseling and Meijerhof 2023) by offering a conceptual explanation for how transformer missions may struggle to gain traction during their emerging phase.

5.2 Policy implications

As a first policy recommendation, the heuristic of the emerging mission arena can help policymakers dealing with contested societal problems. When dealing with contested societal problems, policymakers could set up an emerging mission arena to provide a platform for negotiation and coordination among diverse actors connected to the societal problem. To remedy a transition void, policymakers need to interact with various actors simultaneously, although this increases transactions costs and complicates answering questions regarding *who*, *when*, *why*, *where*, *what*, and *how* the societal problem can be solved. To create an effective coalition of the willing, voluntary participation of stakeholders, cross-sectoral collaborations, and an independent facilitator are key. Such collaborations can be stimulated by highlighting multiple problem–solution framings and the potential benefits of collaboratively addressing the problem via long-term, structural policy. The emerging mission arena is likely to face the identified contestation points, which can be addressed using the coordination strategies. This will help policymakers gain legitimacy for the mission among the stakeholders.

5.3 Limitations and future research

This study is based on a single in-depth case and draws primarily on qualitative data, which may introduce interpretive bias despite triangulation through interviews, workshops, and document analysis. Future research could strengthen empirical robustness through mixed-method approaches and explore comparative cases (e.g. Spain, France, Italy) across national contexts to enhance the generalizability of findings. Such studies could further examine how different institutional settings facilitate the emergence and legitimisation of transformer missions. Finally, future research could also deepen our understanding of the policy coordination strategies, and how they are used, and how they interact with each other, yielding what effects. This is important as the emerging mission arena was still emerging at the end of our data collection.

Conflict of interest

None declared.

Funding

None declared.

Data availability

The data underlying this article will be shared on reasonable request to the corresponding author.

References

Azar, C., and Sandén, B. A. (2011) 'The Elusive Quest for Technology-Neutral Policies', *Environmental Innovation and Societal Transitions*, **1**: 135–9.

Baarslag, V., Geurts, A., and van der Zee, F. (2024) 'Realising Societal Challenges: towards Challenge-Led Monitoring and Evaluation', *fteval Journal for Research and Technology Policy Evaluation*, **55**: 1–22.

Bening, C. R., Blum, N. U., and Schmidt, T. S. (2015) 'The Need to Increase the Policy Relevance of the Functional Approach to Technological Innovation Systems (TIS)', *Environmental Innovation and Societal Transitions*, **16**: 73–5.

Bouzarovski, S., Cedano-Villavicencio, K. G., Delina, L. L. et al. (2025) 'Reframing how we Talk about 'Energy Poverty'', *Nature Energy*, 1–5.

Braams, R. B. et al. (2024) 'Institutional Conditions for Governments Working on Sustainability Transitions', *Science & Public Policy*, **51**: 836–849. https://doi.org/10.1093/scipol/scae028/7685864.

Cairney, P. (2012) *Understanding Public Policy*. Bloomsbury: Macmillan Education UK.

de Graaff, S., Wanzenböck, I., and Frenken, K. (2025). The Politics of Directionality in Innovation Policy through the Lens of Policy Process Frameworks. *Science and Public Policy*, **52**: 418–432.

Diercks, G., Larsen, H., and Steward, F. (2019) 'Transformative Innovation Policy: Addressing Variety in an Emerging Policy Paradigm', *Research Policy*, **48**: 880–94.

Directive 2009/72/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 July 2009 Concerning Common Rules for the Internal Market in Electricity and Repealing Directive 2003/54/EC [2009], OJ L 211/55.

Dubois, A., and Gadde, L.-E. (2002) 'Systematic Combining: an Abductive Approach to Case Research', *Journal of Business Research*, **55**: 553–60.

Dubois, A., and Gadde, L. E. (2014) 'Systematic Combining—a Decade Later', *Journal of Business Research*, **67**: 1277–84.

Dutch Government. (2019) 'Missies voor de Toekomst Missiegedreven Topsectoren- en Innovatiebeleid', https://www.topsectoren.nl/binaries/topsectoren/documenten/publicaties/2019-publicaties/september-2019/23-09-19/factsheet-missies-voor-de-toekomst/Factsheet+Missies+voor+de+Toekomst.pdf, accessed March 2024.

Dutch Government. (2024) 'Tussentijdse Update Interdepartementale Aanpak Van Energiearmoede', https://www.tweedekamer.nl/downloads/document?id=2024D17352, accessed May 2024.

EED. (2024) 'The Correlation between Energy Efficiency and Health', https://www.ca-eed.eu/ia_document/energy-renovation-energy-poverty-and-health/.

Elzinga, R. et al. (2023) 'Assessing Mission-Specific Innovation Systems: towards an Analytical Framework', *Environmental Innovation and Societal Transitions*, **48**: 100745.

European Commission. (2020) 'Commission Recommendation (EU) 2020/1563 of 14 October 2020 on Energy Poverty', http://data.europa.eu/eli/reco/2020/1563/oj, accessed May 2024.

European Commission. (2023) 'Energy Poverty', https://energy.ec.europa.eu/topics/markets-and-consumers/energy-consumer-rights/energy-poverty_en, accessed May 2024.

Feenstra, M. et al. (2021) 'Humanising the Energy Transition: towards a National Policy on Energy Poverty in the Netherlands', *Frontiers in Sustainable Cities*, **3**, 1–11.

Geurts, A. et al. (2022) 'Tensions in Multilateral Coopetition: Findings from the Disrupted Music Industry', *Industrial Marketing Management*, **105**: 532–547.

Geurts, A. et al. (2023) *Energiearmoede versnipperd over beleidsdomeinen en overheden*, https://www.binnenlandsbestuur.nl/ruimte-en-milieu/tno/energiearmoede-versnipperd-over-beleidsdomeinen-en-overheden, accessed April 2024.

Haddad, C. R., Nakić, V., Bergek, A., and Hellsmark, H. (2022). Transformative innovation policy: A systematic review. Environmental Innovation and Societal Transitions, **43**: 14–40. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eist.2022.03.002.

Hajer, M. A. (1995) *The Politics of Environmental Discourse: Ecological Modernization and the Policy Process*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hekkert, M. P., Janssen, M. J., Wesseling, J. H. et al. (2020) 'Mission-Oriented Innovation Systems', *Environmental Innovation and Societal Transitions*, **34**: 76–9.

Janssen, M. J. et al. (2021) 'The Promises and Premises of Mission-Oriented Innovation Policy—a Reflection and Ways Forward', *Science and Public Policy*, **48**: 438–444.

Janssen, M. J. et al. (2023) 'Missions as Boundary Objects for Transformative Change: Understanding Coordination across Policy, Research, and Stakeholder Communities', *Science and Public Policy*, **50**: 398–415.

Janssen, M. J. et al. (2025) 'MissionsasaBoundaryObjectinUmbrellaFrameworks:theCaseoftheDutchMission-OrientedTopSectorandInnovationPolicy', in Edler, J. et al., (eds.) *Transformative Mission-Oriented Innovation Policies*, Cheltenham: Edgar Elgar Publishing, pp. 53–76.

Janssen, M., Hekkert, M. P., and Frenken, K. (2020) 'Missiegedreven Innovatiebeleid: Een Nieuw Perspectief op Vernieuwing en Vergroening', https://dspace.library.uu.nl/bitstream/handle/1874/415684/missiegedreven_innovatiebeleid_groene_industriepolitiek_website.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y, accessed May 2024.

Jenkins-Smith, H. C., and Sabatier, P. A. (1994) 'Evaluating the Advocacy Coalition Framework', *Journal of Public Policy*, **14**: 175–203.

Jenkins-Smith, H. C. et al. (2018) 'The Advocacy Coalition Framework: an Overview of the Research Program', in Weible, C. M., and Sabatier, P. A., (eds.) *Theories of the Policy Process*, 4th edn. pp. 135–72. New York: Routledge.

Kroll, H. (2019) 'How to Evaluate Innovation Strategies with a Transformative Ambition? A Proposal for a Structured, Process-Based Approach', *Science and Public Policy*, **46**: 635–47.

Larrue, P. (2021) *The Design and Implementation of Mission-Oriented Innovation Policies*. OECD Science, Technology and Industry Policy Papers, No. 100, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/3f6c76a4-en.

Manjon, M.-J., Merino, A., and Cairns, I. (2022) 'Business as Not Usual: a Systematic Literature Review of Social Entrepreneurship, Social Innovation, and Energy Poverty to Accelerate the Just Energy Transition', *Energy Research & Social Science*, **90**: 102624.

Mazzucato, M. (2018) 'Mission-Oriented Innovation Policies: Challenges and Opportunities', *Industrial and Corporate Change*, **27**: 803–15.

Melé, D., and Armengou, J. (2016) 'Moral Legitimacy in Controversial Projects and its Relationship with Social License to Operate: a Case Study', *Journal of Business Ethics*, **136**: 729–42.

Middlemiss, L. (2020) 'Energy Poverty: Understanding and Addressing Systemic Inequalities', *Inequality and Energy: How Extremes of Wealth and Poverty in High Income Countries Affect CO2 Emissions and Access to Energy*, 99–114. https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-817674-0.00005-9.

Ministry of Finance. (2022) 'Bijlage 2: Overzicht Energiemaatregelen', The Hague: Rijksoverheid. https://www.rijksfinancien.nl/najaarsnota/2022/1531229, accessed April 2024.

Ministry of Social Affairs. (2023) '*Eerste voortgangsrapportage Aanpak geldzorgen, armoede en schulden*'. The Hague: Rijksoverheid.

Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (2022) 'Nationaal Isolatieprogramma', https://open.overheid.nl/documenten/ronl-a5cd77601450cc785896d67a48b883fbcfc3cf4c/pdf, accessed May 2024.

Mulder, P., Batenburg, A., and Dalla Longa, F. (2023a) *Energiearmoede in Nederland*, The Hague: TNO 2023 P10210.

Mulder, P., Dalla Longa, F., and Straver, K. (2023b) 'Energy Poverty in the Netherlands at the National and Local Level: a Multi-Dimensional Spatial Analysis', *Energy Research & Social Science*, **96**: 102892.

OECD (2021) ''The Design and Implementation of Mission-Oriented Innovation Policies', in *OECD Science, Technology and Industry Policy Papers, 100*. OECD Science, Technology and Industry Policy Papers, No. 100, OECD Publishing, Paris. https://doi.org/10.1787/3f6c76a4-en.

Postma, W. (2023) 'Nr. 1324 MOTIE VAN HET LID POSTMA', https://www.tweedekamer.nl/downloads/document?id=2023D50749, accessed May 2024.

Rittel, H. W. J., and Weber, M. M. (1973) 'Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning', *Policy Sciences*, **4**: 155–69.

Sabatier, P. A. (1988) 'An Advocacy Coalition Framework of Policy Change and the Role of Policy-Oriented Learning Therein', *Policy Sciences*, **21**: 129–68.

Sabatier, P. A., and Weible, M. W. (2007) *The Advocacy Coalition Framework: Innovations and Clarifications*. New York: Routledge.

Schlaile, M. et al. (2017) 'Innovation Systems for Transformations towards Sustainability? Taking the Normative Dimension Seriously', *Sustainability*, **9**: 2253.

Schmidt, V. A. (2010) 'Taking Ideas and Discourse Seriously: Explaining Change through Discursive Institutionalism as the Fourth 'New Institutionalism'', *European Political Science Review*, **2**: 1–25.

Schot, J., and Steinmueller, W. E. (2018) 'Three Frames for Innovation Policy: R&D, Systems of Innovation and Transformative Change', *Research Policy*, **47**: 1554–67.

Strauss, A. L., and Corbin, J. (1990) *Basics of Qualitative Research*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Straver, K. et al. (2020) 'Energy Poverty and the Energy Transition', https://www.tno.nl/en/about-tno/news/2020/11/energy-poverty-and-the-energy-transition/?utm_medium=socialandutm_source=linkedinandutm_campaign=reach-tno-systeemintegratie-2020, accessed May 2024.

Varo, A. et al. (2022) 'Addressing Energy Poverty through Technological and Governance Innovation', *Energy, Sustainability and Society*, **12**: 49.

Vila-Henninger, L. et al. (2022) 'Abductive Coding: Theory Building and Qualitative (Re)Analysis', *Sociological Methods & Research*, **53**: 968–1001.

Wanzenböck, I. et al. (2020) 'A Framework for Mission-Oriented Innovation Policy: Alternative Pathways through the Problem–Solution Space', *Science and Public Policy*, **47**: 474–489.

Weber, K. M., and Rohracher, H. (2012) 'Legitimizing Research, Technology and Innovation Policies for Transformative Change: Combining Insights from Innovation Systems and Multi-Level Perspective in a Comprehensive 'Failures' Framework', *Research Policy*, **41**: 1037–47.

Wesseling, J., and Meijerhof, N. (2023) 'Towards a Mission-Oriented Innovation Systems (MIS) Approach, Application for Dutch Sustainable Maritime Shipping', *PLOS Sustainability and Transformation*, **2**: e0000075.

Wiarda, M. et al. (2024) 'Responsible Mission Governance: an Integrative Framework and Research Agenda', *Environmental Innovation and Societal Transitions*, **50**: 100820. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eist.2024.100820.

Wittmann, F. et al. (2021a) *From Mission Definition to Implementation: Conceptualizing Mission-Oriented Policies as a Multi-stage Translation Process*, Fraunhofer ISI Discussion Papers Innovation Systems and Policy Analysis, No. 71, Fraunhofer-Institut für System- und Innovationsforschung ISI, Karlsruhe, https://doi.org/10.24406/publica-fhg-301289.

Wittmann, F. et al. (2021b) 'Governing Varieties of Mission-Oriented Innovation Policies: a New Typology', *Science and Public Policy*, **48**: 727–38.

Science and Public Policy, 2026, 00, 1–13
DOI: https://doi.org/10.1093/scipol/scaf101
Article