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The Impact of Geographical Enablers and Barriers on the Scaling of Grassroots Innovation Initiatives

Part of the Collection: Findings and Recommendations of the Secondary Data Analysis of the SHARED GREEN DEAL SSH Priority Themes

SHARED GREEN DEAL

October 2025

Symke Nieboer • Hendrik Hansmeier • PJ Beers • Sarah Seus • Aniek Hebinck

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Executive summary of recommendations

The European Green Deal aims to catalyse sustainability transitions, inter alia, through grassroots initiatives and niche innovations. The analysis of 24 social experiments, that all represent innovative grassroots initiatives, across Europe reveals a spectrum of scaling successes, from local impacts to national and transnational achievements. The varying degrees of success underscore that local conditions significantly influence outcomes, with a common theme being the need for strong networks and community engagement. In this regard, geography plays a pivotal role in shaping the effectiveness and scalability of grassroots initiatives. The specific contextual factors—such as institutional structures, social networks, and available resources—vary across regions and influence how initiatives' activities are received and adopted, with policies being a central cornerstone to...:

... empower grassroots initiatives as catalysts for systemic change

Grassroots initiatives demonstrate a high potential to create local impact and scale up through replication, partnership-building, and knowledge exchange. Despite their diverse contexts and topics, many achieved notable forms of scaling—locally, translocally, and even nationally—showing their strength as entry points for experimentation and innovation within the green transition.

... recognise initiatives as valuable tools for experimentation and learning

Backed by even limited funding and guidance, grassroots initiatives can successfully replicate or expand their reach, providing valuable surroundings for testing and implementation. In so doing, grassroots initiatives help reveal how innovation diffuses, what institutional barriers exist, and how enabling conditions—such as timely policy windows or engaged communities—can accelerate change.

... foster institutional learning from grassroots initiatives

Grassroots initiatives frequently encounter institutional and policy-related obstacles, especially at the national level, such as rigid procurement systems, conflicting legislation, or lack of coordination between authorities. Embedding grassroots feedback into policymaking helps create more adaptive and supportive governance structures for equitable green transitions.

... enhance citizen participation, particularly among lower-income groups

Limited financial resources and low awareness often restrict the participation of lower-income communities in grassroots projects. However, when empowered, these groups show strong engagement and generate meaningful contributions to sustainability efforts. To unlock their potential, policies must support minimum living standards and actively lower participation barriers, ensuring inclusive engagement in the green transition.

... enable context-sensitive scaling of grassroots initiatives

Geographical conditions—such as physical location, market structures, and institutional landscapes—play a decisive role in whether grassroots initiatives succeed or not. Policies should be designed with flexibility and responsiveness to diverse regional realities, ensuring that grassroots solutions can thrive across different socio-spatial contexts.

... strengthen local governance capacities to address spatial inequalities

Social and spatial inequalities—such as poor mobility infrastructure, limited digital access, and overburdened local administrations—can inhibit citizen participation and local action, particularly in marginalised or fragmented areas. Strengthening local governance through targeted capacity-building, improved infrastructure, and sustained institutional support can address these disparities.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Introducing the project

This report presents findings from ***Cross-topic comparisons, scaling and synthesis***, building upon previous work packages of the project '*Social sciences and Humanities for Achieving a Responsible, Equitable and Desirable Green Deal*' (SHARED GREEN DEAL). The European Green Deal is a programme of policies aimed at overcoming climate change and environmental degradation by transforming the European Union (EU) into a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy. The goal of SHARED GREEN DEAL is to stimulate behavioural, social and cultural change across Europe, aligned with the policy priorities of the Green Deal.

SHARED GREEN DEAL provides Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH) tools to support the implementation of the Green Deal programme. In the past, SSH research on green transitions has focused on changes to either individuals ('micro' phenomena) or systems and collectives ('macro' phenomena). In contrast, SHARED GREEN DEAL focuses on 'middle range' ('meso') changes to bridge these two sets of understandings and priorities (Foulds et al., 2025). Using this innovative 'meso' approach, the project links societal actors to foster knowledge sharing, learn from collective experiences, and feed back into 'macro' policies and governance.

The SHARED GREEN DEAL consortium brings together 22 leading organisations from across Europe, including universities, research institutions, network organisations and businesses. The project is structured around **six priority Green Deal topics: Clean Energy, Circular Economy, Efficient Renovations, Sustainable Mobility, Sustainable Food, and Preserving Biodiversity**. Within these six themes, a total of 24 social experiments (Figure 1.1) were delivered across different EU Member States and affiliated countries between April 2023 - June 2024, working with local municipalities and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) (Table A1.1[1]). These are called 'local partners' and they carried out the social experiments autonomously, with the consortium partners providing initial training and guidance, as well as support whenever needed. Other resources related to the running of and impacts from the social experiments can also be found via www.sharedgreendeal.eu.

1 Further detail about each of the SHARED GREEN DEAL social experiments can be found in the project's Case Study Guides (Kovács et al., 2024).

Figure 1.1. Map of the SHARED GREEN DEAL social experiments (Kovács et al., 2024)

1.2. Introducing the report

This report is based on a secondary analysis of data from the social experiments with the **main objective to identify how Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH) priority themes cut across all six experiment streams**. The SSH priority themes are: (1) Gender and Diversity, (2) Justice, Vulnerabilities and Inequalities, (3) Societal Challenges Post-COVID-19, (4) Governance Agendas, Framings and Conventions, (5) Geographic Differences and Evolutions across Time.

This report focuses on the latter topic by delving into the intricate relationship between geographical context and the transformative potential of grassroots initiatives. Alongside this report, four other reports were published on the respective SSH priority themes.

For the secondary analyses, a variety of data sources, collected within the social experiments, were considered (Table 1.2 below). Table A1.1 and Table A1.2 (in the Appendix) provide an overview of the social experiments streams and summarise the data sources in more detail, respectively.

Table 1.2. Data sources collected from social experiments considered for the secondary analysis[2]

Data source (#DS)	Provided by
#DS1: WP4 Codebooks of interview data with social experiments participants	SGD consortium members (WP4)
#DS2: Monthly survey (WP5 questions)	Local partners
#DS3: Monthly meeting notes (including 12th meeting)	SGD consortium members
#DS4: Final reflective surveys and experiments' journeys (Responsible Research & innovation (RRI) material)	Local partners
#DS5: RRI interviews with consortium partners	SGD consortium members
#DS6: Applications of Local Partners to host social experiments	Local partners
#DS7: Green Deal Topic Webinars	SGD consortium members

Although all data sources were reviewed, not all were equally relevant for all SSH priority themes. For this report, the #DS2 (monthly surveys) and #DS4 (reflective journey documents) were found particularly interesting for exploring geographic differences and evolutions across time.

1.3. Introducing Geographic differences

The European Green Deal has the ambition to set sustainability transitions in motion towards an economy that is fairer and more sustainable. Green transition entails structural changes in how societal systems are organised. Grassroots initiatives and niche innovations (Valve et al., 2025) are assumed to be important for the generation and development of innovative ways of working, social innovations, technological developments and institutional frameworks that pave the way for wider systemic change. This presumes that such grassroots innovations scale in some way, in the sense of growing, replicating, or being institutionally embedded (Lam et al., 2020).

2 A more detailed version can be found in Table A1.2, in the Appendix.

Previous research has established that grassroots initiatives and experimentation play a pivotal role in sustainability transitions. Such collaborative initiatives that involve multiple stakeholders, including public sectors, private companies, academia, civil society, and intermediaries – facilitate various learning processes that eventually contribute to system or transformative innovation (Sengers et al., 2019; Lam et al., 2020). In this regard, grassroots initiatives nurture networks, enable social learning, articulate shared expectations, and empower innovative solutions while protecting them from dominant selection mechanisms. Grassroots initiatives and their experimentation thus allow for deepening understanding of specific contexts, broadening insights from similar initiatives, and scaling innovations by engaging frontrunners, that is, motivated and capable individuals, who drive change across organisational boundaries (Roebke et al., 2022; Hermans et al., 2016).

As such, grassroots initiatives can initiate significant systemic change by effectively scaling up innovative solutions and activities. However, while there may be a general framework for engaging in experimentation, the specific context of each initiative is crucial. Usually, grassroots initiatives are closely linked to the niche level as a designated local site ('protected space') for initiating transformative change at the regime level (Coenen et al., 2010).

Against this background, the aim of this study is to investigate how the geographical context influences the transformative potential of the SHARED GREEN DEAL European social experiments. Following Loorbach et al. (2020) the study thus generates more empirical insights into the geographical context factors that induce or prevent sustainability-related grassroots initiatives' ideas, activities and objects from diffusing translocally and becoming transformative innovations.

We analyse how grassroots initiatives make use of and build on the EU Green Deal framing to pursue their sustainability actions. Here we focus on how the 'legacy' of policy gets translated or inscribed and taken up across different scales and geographies (Diercks 2019; Waylen et al., 2015). In this, we see the initiatives in the SHARED GREEN DEAL as potential transformative innovations, allowing us to explore how these place-based innovations link to the European Green Deal and could diffuse across Europe (Loorbach et al., 2020).

We recognise transformative potential as some measure of success in terms of the extent to which initiatives manage to scale. According to the typology of Lam et al. (2020), a scaling success would be either when the same / a similar initiative is transferred to the same / similar context (amplifying out) or when the grassroots initiatives even change rules and values (amplifying beyond). The latter in particular represents scaling successes in the narrower sense, because it represents a change of regime-related institutional conditions, which is a hallmark of transformative change.

2. Conceptual and methodological approach

In this section, we start by introducing the conceptual background on (geographical) scaling and relevant context-sensitive enablers and barriers to these mechanisms. After that we give a short overview of the methodological underpinnings, including data and the analytical approach.

2.1. Conceptual lens

Lam et al. (2020) have shown how scaling (they speak of amplification) has been a topic of research across various fields of scientific inquiry, including Social Innovations Research (Westley et al., 2006; Wittmayer et al., 2019), Social-Ecological Innovations research (Kok & Veldkamp, 2011; Walker et al., 2006) and Socio-Technical Transitions research (Grin et al., 2010; Loorbach et al., 2017). Building on various frameworks from within these fields, Lam et al. compiled various types of scaling:

Growing: When an initiative engages more people and/or spreads across a larger geographical space;

Replication: When one initiative is replicated in a different location;

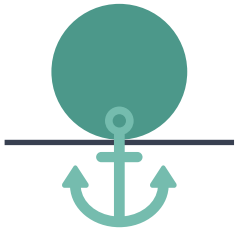
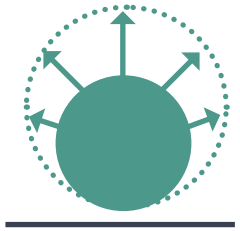
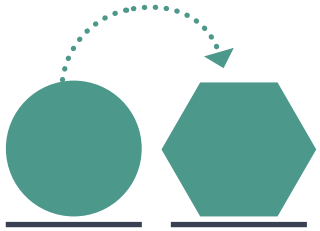
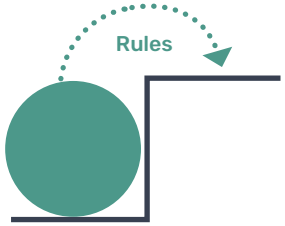
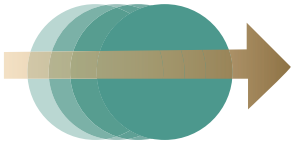
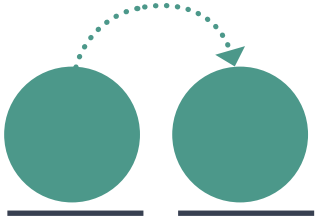
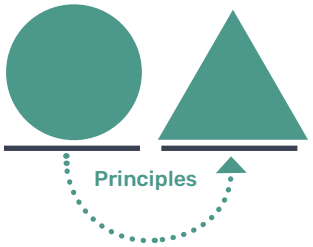
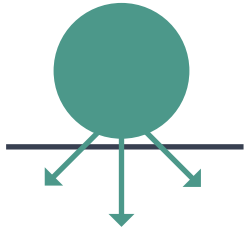
Transferring: When a similar initiative is conducted in the same context;

Spreading: When a similar initiative is conducted in a different context;

Scaling up: When aspects of a grassroots initiative come to result in changing values and rules in the wider system; and

Scaling deep: When the initiative locally changes people's values, norms and beliefs.

Table 2.1. The different types of scaling or amplification from Lam et al. (2020)

Amplifying within an initiative	**Amplifying out an initiative**		**Amplifying beyond an initiative**
Doing the same initiative longer or faster	Doing the same initiative (dependent on original initiative)	Doing a similar initiative (independent)	Changing rules and values
 **Stabilising**	 **Growing** in similar context	 **Transferring** in similar context	 **Scaling up**
 **Speeding up**	 **Replicating** in dissimilar context	 **Spreading** in dissimilar context	 **Scaling deep**

How grassroots initiatives contribute to sustainability transitions, in other words, how they scale, strongly depends on geographical contexts and spatial settings, influenced by factors such as institutional structures, social networks, available resources, and the roles of various actors (Coenen et al., 2012; Hansen and Coenen 2015; Loorbach et al., 2020). A spatial perspective to sustainability transitions can help explore the diversity of transition processes across Europe in terms of their institutional conditions, associated stakeholders, and available resources. These diverse conditions ultimately shape the directionality of transition processes, shaping (enabling and/or confining) what particular development paths can and are followed (Pel et al., 2020).

Literature on regional change and sustainability transitions suggests that barriers and enablers of scaling may fall into various systemic dimensions, such as:

- Social conditions
- Institutional setting
- Actors and networks
- Market conditions
- Physical characteristics

Social conditions refer to the fact that space, especially in geographical transition studies, is seen as socially constructed (Hansen and Coenen, 2015). This means that social interactions between actors influence partnerships and collaboration. Human behaviour, that is, economic transactions, political activities, etc., is socially embedded (Granovetter, 1985), with spatial proximity being central to the exchange relationships in initiatives (Tani et al., 2021).

Institutional structures, both formal (rules, regulations, etc.) and informal (norms, values, etc.), are seen as localised contextual factors that explain spatial variation of initiatives sustainability activities. Localised institutions thus can impede or enhance scaling processes and transformative change (Hansmeier and Kroll, 2024; Köhler et al. 2019).

Actors and networks are a third influential factor, as they generate knowledge and influence power dynamics within initiatives and experiments. Since geographical proximity facilitates diffusion and exchange processes, actor networks are often locally or regionally constituted (Coenen et al. 2012; Hansmeier and Kroll, 2024). In this regard, the role of agency, that is, intentional, purposive and meaningful actions that are seen as essential for developing sustainability-oriented (grassroots) activities in regions, has recently been increasingly emphasised in the literature (Grillitsch et al., 2023).

The role of market conditions is another place-specific factor of sustainability transitions, as the demand side and end-users are central to market creation which is facilitated by geographical proximity (Hansen &Coenen, 2015).

Finally, physical conditions, i.e. local natural resources, which favour certain practices or technological developments (such as renewable energies), also play a role. Moreover, the natural environment (mountains, insularity, peripherality, etc.) may facilitate or impede interactions between actors and thus influences scaling activities (Capasso et al., 2019; Hansen & Coenen, 2015).

2.2. Methodology

We compare how 23 (as 1 set of data was missing from 1 experiment) different grassroots initiatives covering the breadth of the EU Green Deal ambitions scale, and how these scaling processes are informed by specific local geographic conditions, across diverse territorial contexts. In so doing, we seek to answer the question:

How do geographical enablers and barriers of grassroots innovation initiatives influence their scaling?

Given the conceptual background, our main research question was divided into several sub-questions:

1. What scaling successes, and what type of scaling successes did the grassroots initiatives achieve?
2. How were geographical barriers and enablers related to scaling successes of the grassroots initiatives?
3. Do scaling processes differ spatially, and if so, how? (How do regional, national and international scaling differ?)
4. Do scaling processes differ geographically (in terms of type of scaling success and associated enablers and barriers), and if so, how?

To shed light on the research questions, a qualitative analysis framework was employed to draw conclusions from the analysed initiatives. This inductive approach enabled the identification of overarching structures and relations in scaling processes, providing valuable insights beyond idiosyncratic cases. The subject of the analyses are the 23 grassroots initiatives conducted as part of the SHARED GREEN DEAL project between spring 2023 and spring 2024.

The initiatives we studied were selected through a call process in which they were invited to carry out a social experiment in the SHARED GREEN DEAL project. In return for a grant for €22.000, they answered a series of surveys and wrote reports about their experiment journeys. Of these, four each relate to a total of six different streams: Clean Energy, Circular Economy, Efficient Renovations, Sustainable Mobility, Sustainable Food, and Preserving Biodiversity.

In addition to this thematic grouping, the initiatives differed in terms of location (Northern, Southern, Eastern and Western Europe), with both rural and urban regions included in the sample (see Table 1.1). Given the initiatives' heterogeneity in terms of geography, topic, actor structures, institutional settings, and so forth – with the commonality of being related to a specific sustainability stream – the study distils broader patterns instead of micro-dynamics at the initiative level.

The empirical analyses are based on primary data sources. Each initiative was asked to regularly complete (approx. every two months) a survey to report their progress. These had a focus on changes, revelations, challenges and successes experienced during the experiments. In addition, they wrote 'journey documents' in which they reflected on their achievements and lessons learnt along the way. These documents summarise the objectives, the involved participants, results and learnings, and provide an outlook on possible future developments after the end of the experiments.

We adopted an inductive coding approach. As a first step, we developed five categories of codes concerning the identifier of each experiment, influencing geographical context factors, the spatial level, transition dynamics and the (scaling) successes and failures of the initiative. We then developed differentiating codes for each category to classify statements and information of the surveys and experiment journey. Table 2.2 contains the respective descriptions of the codes.

After revising and refining the codes in several rounds to generate a fine-grained grid of analysis, we used the ATLAS.ti software to code the text data. In this regard, we always assigned identifier and scale codes to the codes concerning the dimensions, outcomes and transition dynamics, to have relevant background information on the respective geographical context. The coding approach involved two people each coding half of the material and then checking each other's results to ensure a quality check.

Table 2.2. Overview of the used codes with their category, name and a description of the code.

Category	Name	Description
Identifier	e.g. EBiSITolmin	Consists of a region code (N, S, E, W), a theme abbreviation (e.g. En for Energy, Bi for Biodiversity, Ec for Circular Economy, Fo for Food, Mo for Mobility, Re for Renovations), a country code (e.g. PL for Poland), and the city name
Dimensions	Social conditions	Refers to economic activities, cultural characteristics, administration
	Actors and networks	Refers to actors (individuals or organisations) from policy, business, science, intermediary and societal domains as well as their network relationships
	Policy and institutional setting	Refers to implicit or explicit rules that guide actor behaviour and that affect the experiment's viability
	Market	Refers to market conditions such as demand, resource availability, value chains, etc.
	Physical conditions	Refers to a specific geographical place, landscape or site where activities occur
Scale	Local	Immediate experiments or local context
	Regional	Wider, often provincial level, usually with a larger geographical diversity and different administrative layer
	National	Interactions and relationships with the national level
	International	Interactions and relationships across the country border
	Translocal	Interactions and relationships that occur across different geographical areas
Outcome	Success	Concerning achievements and successes directly related to the experiment's activities
	Scaling Success	Success that goes beyond the context of the experiment and is based on an influence outside of the experiment
	Failure	Unsuccessful outcomes or results directly related to the initiatives' activities
Transition dynamics	Enablers	Factors that facilitate the success
	Barriers	Obstacle / hindrance that prevents initiatives' activities

3. Main findings

The results section is structured as follows. First, we summarise the main stories of scaling successes with a specific focus on the respective spatial scales. Second, we elaborate on the different types of scaling of initiatives – distinguishing between scaling in, scaling out and scaling beyond mechanisms – before we, third, describe geographical barriers and enabling dynamics on scaling concerning the five dimensions mentioned in Table 2.2.

3.1. Stories of scaling successes

Within the data collected of the 23 grassroots initiatives we identified stories of scaling successes at local, translocal, regional, and national scales. Although sometimes of similar nature, the successes were influenced by different factors ranging from favourable timing with broader policy shifts to effective networking and knowledge exchange. Not all initiatives managed to achieve scaling success; neither increasing their impact by involving more people or places (amplifying out) nor by changing rules or values to reach higher institutional levels (amplifying beyond). This highlights the variability of outcomes and the influence of contextual factors. However, all initiatives, enabled us to draw lessons about barriers and enabling dynamics to scaling, which we discuss in the next section.

3.1.1. Scaling successes of initiatives at the local scale

Several initiatives successfully scaled beyond the context of the experiment itself but within their local context. For example, the biodiversity initiative in Stockholm (Sweden) had a highly successful event which became a yearly event, and the initiatives on biodiversity in Athens (Greece) and Kilfinane (Ireland) generated extensive sharing of outcomes and knowledge among different communities, friends, family, and other local actors. This was driven by the novelty of the topic in the social setting and the deep connections built with knowledgeable local stakeholders.

Apart from sharing outcomes and knowledge, new partnerships have been created with different initiatives. The sustainable food initiative in Košice (Slovakia), for example, built strong relations with the local administration by meeting with them and bringing together the right perspectives relevant for their topic, public procurement and school meals. Likely, they will collaborate in the future. In the circular economy initiative in Ljubljana (Slovenia), the increase in awareness and engagement regarding the benefits and implementation of circular practices among local businesses and the broader community was a central success, along with heightened networking and collaboration among participants. And the initiative on mobility in Sofia (Bulgaria) was able to develop new partnerships with local schools, NGOs and local authorities by bringing together a diverse group of actors, with the support of local school coordinators and enthusiasm of the kids, school leaders and administrators.

> *"Our team managed to make good partnerships not only with the schools participating in the project but also with NGOs and local authorities. ..., and we noticed that it was a worthy*

> *experience not only for the kids but also for the schoolteachers and administrations.*" [Sustainable Mobility, Hungary, Local Partner, #DS4]

Furthermore, multiple examples exist where initiatives developed local networks, platforms or hubs. Within the food initiative in Cella Monte (Italy), a change-maker network was created to foster collaboration between local actors. The momentum generated by EU policy discussions also spilled over into citizen discourse, which helped the initiative to gain traction. However, this was challenged by restrictive local legislation.

> "*The main achievement of the LOCoMOS project was the creation of a new changemaker network in an area where the cooperation between farmers and citizens needed to flourish. ... The network is still active and we are currently working on new projects ...*" [Sustainable Food, Italy, Local Partner, #DS4]

In Ljubljana (Slovenia), with the circular economy initiative, a Local Accelerator Hub Platform was developed, due to successful collaboration, that increased awareness and engagement and increased networking and collaboration among participants with local businesses and the broader community. And in Essex (United Kingdom), one of the initiatives on clean energy, a local energy info hub was established that the community will continue to use. There is a discussion to use this info hub for other services, such as health, in the future. The initiative on sustainable renovation in Vilnius (Lithuania) was appointed as an administrator for energy efficiency by the Vilnius city municipality, which increases their influence and role.

3.1.2. Scaling success of initiative at the regional scale

One of the scaling stories from France is a success on the regional scale, where the circular economy initiative in Val de Marne developed a regional repair service managed by the initiative, due to bringing together a diverse group of regional players and new partnerships. Similarly, the biodiversity initiative in Kilfinane (Ireland) highlighted that they fostered interactions among various communities in the region.

> "*The social experiment has created interactions between different communities in our region that may have never occurred without this project. This is particularly true for participants from the target groups, for whom the project has provided not only a social outlet, but an interest in biodiversity.*" [Preserving Biodiversity, Ireland, Local Partner, #DS4]

3.1.3. Scaling successes of initiatives at the translocal scale

In many cases, outcomes, knowledge, and experiences of initiatives were shared among actors beyond the local context. For instance, the clean energy initiative in Granada (Spain), and sustainable renovation initiatives in Vilnius (Lithuania) and Zaragoza (Spain), benefitted from funding from higher scales (national or international), which facilitated sharing activities and collaboration with other local projects and municipalities. Within the food initiative in Wageningen (Netherlands), such exchange led to integration of the outcomes and learnings into the work of other projects. Some initiatives, such as the mobility initiative in Kaunas (Lithuania), saw schools and the local administration adopt and scale up the experiment elsewhere. This was driven by a combination of actors who valued the co-creation process and the feeling of urgency due to a lack of knowledge.

In case of the mobility initiative in Braga (Portugal), the biodiversity initiative in Stockholm (Sweden) and the initiative in Athens (Greece) on biodiversity, local administrations indicated to plan reproduce the initiative in other local places or on different topics due to successful implementation, valuing

the co-creation process, enthusiasm and growing administrative support. Although for the mobility initiative in Braga (Portugal) there was initial scepticism and limited national policies on the topic, concerns about climate change due to experienced heatwaves did probably contribute to the success:

> "*The experiment showed a new way of approaching and solving mobility-related problems. The methodology adopted will be replicated in other projects in the city. These results are also reflected in the subsequent requests from schools ... to continue the project in other schools in the municipality.*" [Sustainable Mobility, Portugal, Local Partner, #DS4]

3.1.4. Scaling successes of initiatives at the national scale

At the national level, the food initiative in Stockholm (Sweden) gained legitimacy and was scaled up into a national platform despite barriers such as a lack of national ambition and parallel competition with other initiatives. Additionally, the community's efforts even reached national parliament members, showing how strong grassroots engagement can elevate local work to national visibility. Within the circular economy initiative in Cyprus, a national platform was developed to exchange knowledge among sector stakeholders, and the initiative began collaborating more closely with government actors to support policymaking and implementation.

3.1.5. Scaling of initiative beyond the national scale

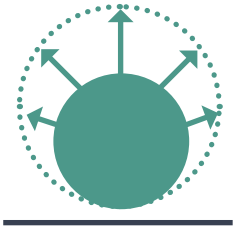
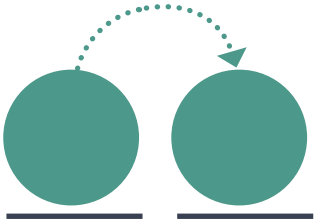
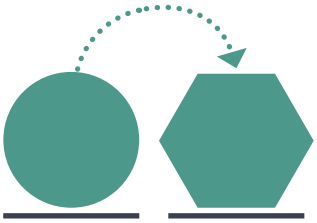
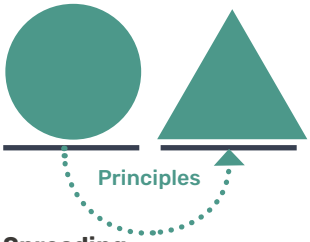
A notable transnational example comes from the circular economy initiative in Ljubljana (Slovenia), where successful regional collaboration and municipal support helped establish a circular economy hub focused on transnational textile governance. The initiative is fulfilling the role of the coordinator of the cross-cutting priority circular economy and thus made many new connections and opened up many opportunities for collaborations and new projects within the Alpine region and broader.

3.2. Different types of scaling of initiatives

3.2.1. Successes of scaling out

Apart from the scale and the influence of geographical dimensions of the success stories, different typologies of scaling can be recognised in these stories. Using the typology of scaling or amplification processes as described by Lam et al. (2020), an overview of the scaling stories from scaling or *amplifying out* can be found in Table 3.2. From the 23 analysis initiatives, a scaling success was identified in 17 initiatives. In this table, the category *amplifying within and amplifying beyond* (Lam et al. 2020) have been left out. The category of *amplifying within* has no connection to the context of the grassroots initiatives (and therefore no connection to the geographical dimensions important for this research) and was thus left out. Regarding the category *amplifying beyond*, no success stories were identified that fit this category, as the initiatives were only analysed over a one-year period, and this category is presumed to require a longer timeframe for assessment. However, in section 3.2.2, a brief reflection is provided on the categories *amplifying within* and *amplifying beyond*, as discussed by Lam et al. (2020).

Table 3.2. Examples of amplification within the grassroots initiatives sorted by amplification type (Lam et al., 2020)

Categories		Processes	Grassroots initiative successes of Scaling
Amplifying out the initiative	Doing the same initiative (dependent on original initiative)	 **Growing** in similar context	Yearly event: biodiversity initiative Stockholm (Sweden) Extensive knowledge sharing: biodiversity initiatives Athens (Greece) & Kilfinane (Ireland) New partnerships: food initiative Košice (Slovakia) & mobility initiative Sofia (Bulgaria) Change maker network: food initiative Cella Monte (Italy) Local accelerator hub & circular economy hub: circular economy initiative Ljubljana (Slovenia) Energy info hub: clean energy initiative Essex (United Kingdom) Regional repair service: circular economy initiative Val de Marne (France) Implementation and repetition by school(s): mobility initiative Kaunas (Lithuania) Repetition of experiment: biodiversity initiative Stockholm (Sweden) Scaled up to national platform: food initiative Stockholm (Sweden) Development national platform: circular economy initiative Nicosia-Limassol-Larnaca (Cyprus)
		 **Replicating** in dissimilar context	Replication in other schools: mobility initiative Braga (Portugal) Replication in other districts: biodiversity initiative Stockholm (Sweden) Repetition of initiative on a different topic: biodiversity initiative Athens (Greece)
	Doing a similar initiative (independent)	 **Transferring** in similar context	Knowledge and outcomes sharing: clean energy initiative Granada (Spain) & sustainable renovation initiatives Vilnius (Lithuania) and Zaragoza (Spain) Integration of outcomes in other projects: food initiative Wageningen (Netherlands)
		 **Spreading** in dissimilar context	Methodology will be used in other projects: mobility initiative Braga (Portugal)

3.2.2. Successes of amplifying within and future potential of amplifying beyond

As stated not all initiatives demonstrated success stories of scaling outside their original context, analysis of the 23 initiatives revealed that 6 did not achieve scaling success. However, these initiatives did exhibit successes that contributed to stabilizing and potentially accelerating their processes, aligning with the *amplifying within* category described by Lam et al. (2020). Although these achievements are not considered scaling stories—since they occurred within the context of the initiatives themselves—we would like to briefly highlight some of these internal successes that exemplify *amplifying within*. Almost all initiatives increased their networks which helps to stabilise the initiatives, this was also the case for initiatives without any scaling success such as circular economy initiative in Santo Tirso (Portugal), biodiversity initiative in Tolmin (Slovenia), clean energy initiative in Belchatow (Poland) and the initiatives on sustainable renovation in Louisburgh (Ireland) and Nógrád (Hungary). In the case of Nógrád they were able to reach vulnerable groups (see also the report on SSH priority theme Justice, Vulnerabilities and Inequalities (Bharucha, 2025), in this collection):

> "*... the other biggest achievement is that we have managed to explore the specificities related to the issue of energy poverty and vulnerability as well as being a member of a marginalised group. We could identify the difficulties and challenges they face and the types of information and support they need to make their homes more energy efficient.*" [Efficient Renovations, Hungary, Local Partner, #DS4]

So, even though these initiatives did not scale there were other successes and breakthroughs.

> "*What worked well was cooperation with our local partner: Yes for Bełchatów, a one-person NGO... Thanks to them we managed to attract many participants. The result was also an empowerment of our local partner... raising awareness of the local community around energy transition and its social aspects.*" [Clean Energy, Poland, Local Partner, #DS4]

For the category of *amplifying beyond* we did identify future potential success stories that were close to but not sufficiently aligned to this category. One example showing this potential was the food initiative in Stockholm (Sweden) where the initiative was scaled up into a national platform to find pathways that will feedback into the Swedish Innovation Agency. As an initiative they are actively trying to influence policy makers in the city of Stockholm with their policy brief with a vision and action points for the food environment of Stockholm. Therefore, this initiative is on its way to scaling up beyond the initiative by changing the rules which would in time, place them in the category of *amplifying beyond*. Similarly, the circular economy initiative in Cyprus developed a national platform assisting relevant authorities with policy making and implementation. Although also not changing the rules yet, this initiative also seems to have an influence that might lead to changes in rules in the future.

Quite some success stories from the initiatives linked to changing values, which connects to *scaling deep* which is also part of the *amplifying beyond* category. One example is the mobility initiative in Kaunas (Lithuania), which highlighted "*tangible shifts in travel behaviour among some teachers and students*" (DS4). Another example is the biodiversity initiative in Stockholm (Sweden), where administrators from the Environment and Health Administration emphasized the importance of working collaboratively with citizens, rather than merely working for them. However, the initiatives did not explicitly state that they had changed values, and the data only hinted towards it, indicating that these successes were not radical enough to fully qualify for this category.

3.3. Geographical barriers and enabling dynamics on scaling

In the pursuit of scaling grassroots innovation initiatives, understanding the geographical context is important. Geographical dimensions play a dual role, acting both as a barrier and as enabler in the scaling of these initiatives. This section delves into the connection of geography and grassroots innovation, exploring how social conditions, policies and institutional setting, actors and networks, market and physical conditions can either hinder or facilitate scaling.

3.3.1. Geographical barriers

Social conditions

In different initiatives the social conditions have been experienced as hindering their successes. Most of these barriers relate to the lack of awareness or confidence within parts of the community. The clean energy initiative in Granada (Spain) pointed out that misinformation, inconsistent information, and too much information creates different views on topics like climate change, which makes it hard for the initiative to get the community involved. Likewise, the food initiative in Košice (Slovakia) spoke of a lack of awareness on their topic that resulted in low engagement. The initiative on clean energy in Granada (Spain) also identified that a low income or the increase of prices are hindering action of citizens. The biodiversity initiative in Kilfinan**e** (Ireland) recognised these barriers:

> "*Isolated community members require support and encouragement to participate and with continued support, they can play a valuable role in group activities, however they do require additional support to build up both their own confidence, and a network of contacts, friends, and* acquaintances." [Preserving Biodiversity, Ireland, Local Partner, #DS4]

This was experienced specifically through a poor public transport system which made it hard to get people physically present for which the initiative adjusted locations. Another barrier that was identified relating to social context conditions of the initiative was the large difference in approaches of schools and municipalities with which the mobility initiative struggled in Kaunas (Lithuania).

Policies and institutional settings

Policies and institutional settings can act as barriers in multiple ways, either directly affecting the focus area of initiatives or impeding scaling efforts. The barriers of policies are mainly experienced at the national level as the food initiative in Stockholm (Sweden), mobility initiative in Braga (Portugal), sustainable renovation initiative in Zaragoza (Spain) and the circular economy initiative in Nicosia-Limasso-Larnaca (Cyprus), all struggled with (a lack of) national policies.

> "*It has been eye-opening to us how the Swedish minister of agriculture dismisses the recommendations as being non-scientific and instead advocates for a non-reduction in meat consumption*" [Sustainable Food, Sweden, Local Partner, #DS2]

Other initiatives felt the barriers on a more local level where the food initiative in Cella Monte (Italy) was struggling with conflicting local legislation and the sustainable renovation initiative in Zaragoza (Spain) with local policies that aren't holistic or helpful for vulnerable neighbourhoods

and renters. Additionally, the food initiative in Košice (Slovakia) was feeling hindered with local institutional settings on the procurement system and the clean energy initiative in Essex (United Kingdom) felt the bureaucracy of local institutional settings as slowing down the action. Another barrier that can be identified from the institutional settings is high work pressure of local administrators "*we have tried to work with the public administration, and they are very willing to work with us within the experiment, but they seem to be so overworked that their participation is very intense, but very occasional*" (#DS2), as mentioned by the sustainable renovations initiative in Zaragoza (Spain).

Actors and networks

Lack of coordination or collaboration with local actors and the community was noted as a challenge in several initiatives, affecting scaling potential even when there was a clear need or shared goals. For the mobility initiative in Kaunas (Lithuania), the challenge was to foster collaboration between municipalities and schools. In a same vein, the food initiative in Stockholm (Sweden) faced difficulties in finding synergies with related initiatives. This was due to similar projects running concurrently, advocating for comparable goals, and hosting events in the same week, which sometimes led to a sense of competition. Therefore, there is a pressing need from the food initiative to identify synergies and establish effective ways to collaborate. Other initiatives like the sustainable renovation initiative in Zaragoza (Spain), mobility initiative in Sofia (Bulgaria), circular economy initiative in Val de Marne (France), and clean energy initiatives in Granada (Spain) and Essex (United Kingdom), had a hard time to get the community, or the right actors involved and engaged within the initiatives.

Market conditions

Although sparser in the data, market conditions were also experienced as hindering by the circular economy initiative in Cyprus. The initiative stressed that "*the local market requires solutions which are tailored to the needs and constrains of the local context, adjusted to the specific conditions of the construction industry*" (DS4) which currently is withholding favourable market conditions for the initiative. Additionally, they stated that "b*usinesses and industry lack awareness of tools and methods to innovate in a structured manner*" (DS4) and at the same time there is a lack of market surveillance and effective policies for the industry to implement circular business models. And as Cyprus is a small market within a constrained island system, it faces barriers such as the inability to build economies of scale, along with the lack of availability and high cost of circular products and technologies. The latter one can also be identified as a barrier from the physical characteristics dimension. Another barrier connected to the physical characteristics was not identified.

3.3.2. Geographical enabling dynamics

Social conditions

Different social conditions can have a positive effect on the scaling of the grassroots innovation initiatives. Where a lack of knowledge earlier was stated as a barrier, paradoxically, a lack of prior knowledge or ineffective education on the topic sometimes became an enabler, as seen in the sustainable renovation initiative in Vilnius (Lithuania), mobility initiative in Kaunas (Lithuania) and

Braga (Portugal). The lack of knowledge sparked curiosity, created a sense of urgency and resulted in a high learning curve that drew attention and enthusiasm

Another felt influence from the social conditions were current events that have a lasting effect on people and makes when a topic is seen as important. The sustainable renovations initiative in Vilnius (Lithuania) spoke about accidents that happened in non-renovated multi apartment buildings in Lithuania, which resulted in emphasising the need of the renovation of old apartment buildings in the whole country. Another example came from the mobility initiative in Braga (Portugal) where the local community is experiencing heat waves which are influencing the concerns on climate change.

For the food initiative in Cella Monte (Italy) the increasing attention of citizens in the food system, like local produced foods and local markets, healthy food was seen as an enabler. In Sofia (Bulgaria) within the mobility initiative, they noticed how children influenced their parents and thus their family's behaviour related to mobility.

Other social conditions that were retrieved from the data as enabling dynamics were more on resources. Where the circular economy initiative in Cyprus talked about having a common space to interact and exchange know-how to utilise next current best practices and research results. Another resource was funding which was experienced as an enabler for the clean energy initiative in Granada (Spain) to improve their practices and adapt to local needs. In Braga (Portugal) the initiative on mobility stressed how creative methods had shown to be an important tool to create awareness.

Policies and institutional setting

Policies and institutional setting were mostly identified as barriers. However, some initiatives discussed how policies and the institutional settings could also work as enabling dynamics. As stated in the last section, barriers with policies were mainly on the national level, while on the local level policies are more often seen as enabling dynamics. Where local policies were under review or in the process of being updated, such as in the food initiative in Cella Monte (Italy) and mobility initiatives in Kaunas (Lithuania) and Braga (Portugal), it created windows of opportunity for scaling. The support from municipality and the interaction with public authorities was also seen as key success factor or enriching by the clean energy initiative in Granada (Spain), food initiative in Košice (Slovakia), mobility initiative in Kaunas (Lithuania), and circular economy in Cyprus and Ljubljana (Slovenia).

> "*Our organisation's long-term experience with diverse target groups, knowledge of the topic, and support from the municipality's education department were key success factors.*" [Sustainable Mobility, Lithuania, Local Partner, #DS4]

At the same time, the co-creation approaches from the initiatives helped demonstrate the value of community engagement to policymakers to encouraging future adoption as mentioned by the biodiversity initiative in Stockholm (Sweden), food initiative in Cella Monte (Italy) and mobility initiative in Braga (Portugal). Another enabling dynamic that was identified was where policies and institutional settings are subject in the process of change or updated in the food initiative in Cella Monte (Italy) and mobility initiatives in Kaunas (Lithuania) and Braga (Portugal).

A final enabling dynamics was mentioned by the clean energy initiative in Essex where they saw that although the community might not trust politicians, they do trust council officers.

> "*We [organisers from the Environment and health administration] learned how important it is to work together WITH citizens, rather than just working FOR them, as a city organization,*

when dealing with biodiversity, especially in an area like the one we chose for the experiment." [Preserving Biodiversity, Sweden, Local Partner, #DS4]

Actors and networks

The interactions with actors and networks beyond the initiative's immediate context played a crucial role in scaling grassroots innovation initiatives. These interactions helped give initiatives legitimacy, making it possible to engage with administrative and governmental stakeholders leading to formal recognition or further support, which was clear in the Biodiversity and Food initiatives in Stockholm (Sweden), the sustainability renovation initiative in Zaragoza (Spain), the circular economy initiative in Ljubljana (Slovenia) and the mobility initiatives in Braga (Portugal) and Sofia (Bulgaria).

> "*We believe that some of the successes of the project are not only due to our work, but that the framework established through the renovation grants, the publicity linked to them and the work carried out at the same time by the Federation of Neighbourhood Associations of Zaragoza have helped considerably.*" [Efficient Renovations, Spain, Local Partner, #DS4]

In the sustainable renovation initiative in Vilnius (Lithuania), the circular economy initiative in Ljubljana (Slovenia) and the clean energy initiative in Granda (Spain) interacting with local actors and networks, a wide range of sectors, and going to physical locations additionally helped to create awareness and increase knowledge.

> "*Key learnings from the experiment included the critical role of collaborative impact, where multi-stakeholder engagement proved vital for fostering innovation and addressing sustainability challenges collectively.*" [Circular Economy, Slovenia, Local Partner, #DS4]

Like the biodiversity initiative in Kilfinane (Ireland) and the food initiative in Wageningen (Netherlands), many initiatives believe that the created networks and communities will remain due to the formed connections and relationships and will lead to monitoring administrations, in the case of the food initiative in Stockholm (Sweden), exchanging knowledge for the initiative on biodiversity in Athens (Greece), empowerment of the community as stated by the clean energy initiative in Granada (Spain) and leads to new projects for the food initiative in Cella Monte (Italy).

> "*Some of the people participating in the workshops felt 'alone,' not understood about their worries about energy, and this experience have 'empowered' them finding some other equals that think as themselves.*" [Clean Energy, Spain, Local Partner, #DS2]

> "*We were surprised to see how much strength can actually come 'from below.'*" [Sustainable Food, Italy, Local Partner, #DS4]

Market conditions

Market conditions also contributed significantly to the success of these initiatives. Businesses were eager to participate in events, showcase their products, and share expertise, as seen in the sustainable renovation initiative in Vilnius (Lithuania). The development of hubs, networks, and platforms provided valuable mediums for businesses to exchange ideas and best practices, which was highly appreciated, as stated by the circular economy initiative in Cyprus. In Cyprus they also noticed that companies recognise the advantages of transitioning to circular practices and were keen to incorporate them into their processes, further supporting the initiatives' goals. Lastly, the collaboration with businesses proved vital for the clean energy initiative in Granada.

> *"The experiment has effectively facilitated valuable networking opportunities for stakeholders within the construction industry which was highly appreciated by participants and hub members."* [Circular Economy, Cyprus, Local Partner, #DS4]

Physical location

Additionally, the physical location of initiatives played an enabling role. Visiting local places with experts connected people to their environment and initiatives, enhancing their knowledge and understanding. This dynamic was evident in biodiversity initiative in Athens (Greece) and Kilfinane (Ireland), where local engagement fostered a deeper connection to the community and its sustainability efforts. These enabling dynamics collectively contributed to the scaling of grassroots innovation initiatives, ensuring their lasting impact and fostering new projects and collaborations.

4. Learning points and recommendations for policy and governance

Section 4 provides a summary of the main learning points and policy/governance recommendations. Starting with more general observations on the initiatives' activities and respective enablers and barriers to scaling, the section concludes with overarching recommendations for sustainability-oriented political action.

4.1. Supporting grassroots initiatives goes beyond the initiative itself

Almost all grassroots initiatives, despite their different set-ups, contents and contexts were able to achieve some measure of scaling success. In a small number of cases this was 'limited' to the initiative itself – scaling *deep* – where the SHARED GREEN DEAL project's support helped communities to further develop their own objectives. However, it is especially interesting that so many initiatives exhibited signs of some type of scaling.

We found 11 examples of initiatives growing in some way or another. Some through being repeated in a similar context, others by scaling up to national levels, and again others by attaining a higher level of continuity, such as through yearly events. Three initiatives scaled on or even beyond national scales, and eight exhibited signs of translocal scaling. Furthermore, we witnessed six examples of how initiatives replicated, transferred and spread.

Given how different these initiatives were in terms of set-up, content and context, it is rather striking that they were quite similar in terms of scaling success. This suggests that supporting grassroots initiatives – somewhat irrespective of the type of support given – has a relatively high probability to result in impacts beyond the level of the initiative itself. As a policy recommendation, it appears that grassroots initiatives should be seen as potential catalysts for systemic change.

4.2. Enablers and barriers to scaling

Policies and institutional settings in general were identified primarily as a barrier to scaling, perhaps not surprisingly: with our grassroots in general having a rather transformative ambition, it stood to reason that they would soon encounter institutional limits. Still, it was striking that many initiatives recognised opportunities to influence their local policy context, whereas national level contexts were seen as much further outside their influence. Also, policy makers were seen as more accessible than politicians in this regard.

Actors and networks were able to provide opportunities to quite a few initiatives. By engaging like-minded actors in adjacent fields or neighbourhoods, or with different societal roles, initiatives

were able to increase their legitimacy, which in turn enabled them to better engage with local administrations.

Market conditions and *physical location* featured in a relatively small number of initiatives, sometimes as barriers, sometimes as enablers. It is beyond the purposes of this writing to draw any lessons from this small number of findings.

The findings about enablers and barriers are indicative of three lessons:

1. Grassroots initiatives greatly benefit from, but also need somewhat favourable social conditions, with local citizens having sufficient resources and knowledge to recognise initiatives' added value and to be able to participate in terms of resources. Misinformation and lack of money are detrimental to grassroots initiatives.
2. Improving their own networks can help grassroots initiatives to increase their legitimacy and organise broader support. It may sometimes be difficult to find the 'right' people, and in rare cases similar initiatives might end up competing with each other, but in most cases a good network as an asset to the legitimacy and power of an initiative.
3. Grassroots initiatives are bound to meet institutional barriers sooner or later. At local levels, they might succeed in finding a policy maker willing to lend their ear (despite lack of time) to help the initiative prosper, but on national levels it is much harder for grassroots initiatives to get government support for dealing with institutional barriers.

These three lessons together suggest that grassroots initiatives may be especially effective for experimentation in favourable social settings, to learn about policy potential of social innovations as developed by the initiatives. We conclude that grassroots initiatives can act as a valuable resource for policy experimentation and learning.

4.3. Policy recommendations

Grassroots initiatives have a clear local impact and a high probability to result in wider impacts and scaling. In the context of the SHARED GREEN DEAL project, such impact is bound to align with EU green transition goals. From a policy perspective, we see supporting grassroots initiatives as an important policy instrument, even an addition to the transition-oriented policy mix that enables experimentation and learning about policy goals. *We recommend to more regularly use supporting grassroots initiatives as a policy instrument to experiment with and learn from social innovations.*

The institutional barriers that grassroots initiatives meet should be regarded as an important source of learning about what stands in the way of a just and equitable green transition. Policy needs to acknowledge that taking away such barriers is beyond the power of grassroots initiatives. *We recommend that learning from grassroots initiatives is institutionalised as part of green transition policies, in order to identify detrimental institutional barriers and to be able to take these away and create more favourable and climate-friendly institutional settings.*

In order to thrive, grassroots initiatives need citizen participation. Especially among lower income groups / neighbourhoods with low socio-economic status, citizen concerns about livelihood and wellbeing disempower their ability to participate. *We recommend that EU member states strive for a healthy minimum level of citizen affluence and resources that enables them to engage in grassroots initiatives as part of their EU citizenhood.*

The barriers and enablers that we identified do appear to play a decisive role in whether grassroots initiatives succeed or not. We recommend that *policies should be designed with flexibility and*

responsiveness to diverse regional realities, ensuring that grassroots solutions can thrive across different socio-spatial contexts. In that vein, it should also be noted that social and spatial inequalities—such as poor mobility infrastructure, limited digital access, and overburdened local administrations—can inhibit citizen participation and local action, particularly in marginalised or fragmented areas. *We recommend that local governance be strengthened through targeted capacity-building, improved infrastructure, and sustained institutional support can address these disparities.*

5. Conclusions

We sought to answer the question of *how geographical enablers and barriers of grassroots innovation initiatives influence their scaling.* We learned that many grassroots initiatives, when supported with some funding and concrete advise for conducting their activities, manage to scale, by growing, replicating, repeating, and spreading. Some even scale to national and international levels. Supporting grassroots initiatives can therefore be considered as a type of policy instrument, that especially can work in early phases of transition, where experimentation with (social) innovations is important, both in and of itself, and as a source of learning about institutional barriers to and enablers for wider green transitions.

Institutional settings usually feature as limits to grassroots initiatives, with some exceptions at the local level. Grassroots initiatives offer an opportunity to policy for learning about these limits, which we assume to hold for green transition in general as well. This is not to say that grassroots initiatives are themselves able to effectively deal with such barriers, but they do represent a powerful experience base for detecting detect institutional barriers that may be unexpected, unintended, and hard to identify from the confines of the policymaker's workplace.

A wider policy implication resides in what function grassroots initiatives might fulfill. Based on our findings, we expect that grassroots initiatives would be particularly useful as a means to experiment with social innovations that have clear public advantages, for instance in terms of sustainability, but that are beyond the grasp of current policy to be implemented as such. This is especially the case for policy challenges that defy purely incremental solutions aimed at futher optimisation. In those cases, the grassroots initiative can be seen as a site of experimentation that can inform future policy making.

In terms of research, it would be interesting to further study the grassroots initiative as a policy instrument. What is the associated type of governance? What type of policy problem is it fit for? And how can we implement ways of learning and monitoring to better leverage the benefits of grassroots initiatives for public policy?

In the end, the question implied by grassroots initiatives in general is one of what it means to be an EU citizen and how to enjoy a meaningful EU citizenship. We see grassroots initiatives as a potentially important and empowering source of citizenship that is worthy of supporting in and of itself.

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Appendix

Table A1.1. Social experiments profiles

#	Priority area (thematic stream)	Approach	Target group	Place of social experiment	Local partner organisation	Context (rural/urban)*
1	**Clean Energy**	**Community visioning**	Policymakers, businesses, local communities	Granada, Spain	Local authority (Diputación de Granada)	mix
				Bełchatów, Poland	NGO (Polish Green Network)	mix
				Jaywick, UK	Local authority (Essex County Council)	rural
				Ærø, Marstal, Denmark	NGO (Fonden Motorfabrikken Marstal and Blue Innovators)	rural
2	**Circular Economy**	**Local accelerator hubs**	Local businesses, academics, authorities, and NGOs	Santo Tirso, Portugal	Local authority (Municipality of Santo Tirso)	urban
				Val-de-Marne, France	NGO (Val de Marne en Transition)	urban
				Nicosia/Limassol/Larnaca, Cyprus	National authority (Cyprus Organization for Standardization)	mix
				Ljubljana, Slovenia	Local authority (Technology Park Ljubljana)	urban
3	**Efficient Renovations**	**Knowledge networks on energy renovation and eco-home-tours**	Under-represented and marginalised groups and renovation professionals (40-60% women)	Zaragoza, Spain	NGO (ECODES Zaragoza)	urban
				Nógrád County, Hungary	NGO (Habitat for Humanity Hungary)	rural
				Vilnius, Lithuania	Local authority (Let's Renovate the City Vilnius)	urban
				Louisburgh, Mayo County, Ireland	Regional authority (Mayo County Council Louisburgh)	rural
4	**Sustainable Mobility**	**School mobility labs**	Per experiment 30 young people (aged 10-16) and 5 to 10 stakeholders such as teachers, parents, and school administrators	Braga, Portugal	Local authority (Municipality of Braga)	urban
				Galway, Ireland	NGO (Am Meitheal Rothar Ireland)	urban
				Panevėžys, Lithuania	NGO (ECAT Lithuania)	urban
				Sofia, Bulgaria	NGO (Sofia Development Association Bulgaria)	urban
5	**Sustainable Food**	**Local food Assemblies**	Young people aged 18-35 years	Stockholm, Sweden	NGO (REFORMATEN)	urban
				Cella Monte, Italy	NGO (ASFODELO)	rural
				Košice, Slovakia	NGO (Klíma ťa potrebuje)	mix
				Wageningen, Netherlands	NGO (Gemeente Wageningen)	mix
6	**Preserving Biodiversity**	**Study Circles**	Diverse group of 10-15 adults per Study Circle (ensure diversity in age, gender, occupation and social vulnerability)	Tolmin, Slovenia	NGO (Posoški razvojni center)	rural
				Amaroussion, Greece	Local authority (Municipality of Amaroussion)	urban
				Kilfinane, Ireland	NGO (Ballyhoura Development CLG)	rural
				Stockholm, Sweden	Local authority (Environment and Health Department of the Municipality of Stockholm)	urban

**Note: Rural/urban is based on* European Commission (2014), A harmonised definition of Cities and Rural Areas: The new Degree of Urbanisation.

Table A1.2. Data sources collected from social experiments considered for the secondary analysis

Data source (#DS)	Provided by	Comment / Description
#DS1: WP4 Codebooks of interview data with social experiments participants[3]	SGD consortium members (WP4)	Interviews were conducted by local partners with a variety of participants in social experiments (respecting representative selection criteria), then transcribed and analysed by consortium members. The analysis was guided by specific codes relevant for SSH priority themes - defined ahead - and organized per social experiment stream (Circular Economy, Clean Energy, Efficient Renovation, Sustainable Food, Sustainable Mobility, Preserving Biodiversity), resulting in six codebooks. Per stream, 10 interviews of approx. 30-60 min. were conducted (240 in total).
#DS2: Monthly survey (WP5 questions)	Local partners	At the end of each month, local partners filled in a monthly survey about the ongoing experiments that was prepared by the consortium partners, directed already towards SSH priority themes. (288 surveys in total).
#DS3: Monthly meeting notes (including 12th meeting)	SGD consortium members	Consortium members met with the local partners of each experiment monthly and took note of the developments and progress in the social experiments. For each experiment, the 12th meeting note summarizes all meetings of the past 12 months and reflects on the whole process.
#DS4: Final reflective surveys and experiments' journeys (Responsible Research & innovation (RRI) material)	Local partners	Local partners were given an extensive reflection survey, that included a narrative /qualitative part in which they were asked to reflect and describe the journey of their experiments (24 surveys and 24 experiment journey files (reflections by local partners).
#DS5: RRI interviews with consortium partners	SGD consortium members	The team of WP 6 - Impact evaluation and RRI integration conducted interviews with respective consortium members of each experiment's stream. (6 interviews in total).
#DS6: Applications of Local Partners to host social experiments	Local partners	Shared Green Deal's call for application to host social experiments in the six Green Deal priorities areas received 344 applications in which the candidate organizations (NGO's, association, local authorities (municipalities) detailed how they would conduct the experiments and assure qualitative criteria (i.e. inclusive approach) and commit to previous training provided by the project.
#DS7: Green Deal Topic Webinars	SGD consortium members	Project partners held webinars on each Green Deal priority topic, describing the respective social experiment journeys (https://sharedgreendeal.eu/multimedia/playlist-local-actions-shared-green-deal).

3 Due to the nature of the qualitative data, openly sharing full datasets would risk compromising participant anonymity. However, anonymised interview transcripts for #DS1 and for each of the six experiment streams are available and can be accessed at the Zenodo platform, community SHARED GREEN DEAL. For **Circular Economy**: SHARED GREEN DEAL. (2025). Interviews with SHARED GREEN DEAL Experiment Participants – Circular Economy [Data set]. Zenodo. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15387249; for **Clean Energy**: SHARED GREEN DEAL. (2025). Interviews with SHARED GREEN DEAL Experiment Participants - Clean Energy [Data set]. Zenodo. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15274546; for **Efficient Renovations**: SHARED GREEN DEAL. (2025). Interviews with SHARED GREEN DEAL Experiment Participants - Efficient Renovations [Data set]. Zenodo. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15076033; for **Sustainable Food**: SHARED GREEN DEAL. (2025). Interviews with SHARED GREEN DEAL Experiment Participants - Sustainable Food [Data set]. Zenodo. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15387236; for **Sustainable Mobility**: SHARED GREEN DEAL. (2025). Interviews with SHARED GREEN DEAL Experiment Participants - Sustainable Mobility [Data set]. Zenodo. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15325897; for **Preserving Biodiversity**: SHARED GREEN DEAL. (2025). Interviews with SHARED GREEN DEAL Experiment Participants - Preserving Biodiversity [Data set]. Zenodo. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15076035.

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ICLEI Local Governments for Sustainability EUROPE

alda European Association for Local Democracy

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