

Annex 1 – Template Dissertation Report EPS



Joint Dissertation Review

Name of the student:	Manon Heerts
Title of the thesis:	Challenges To Effective Energy Poverty Policy In The Netherlands
Reviewer:	Andrea Noferini

1. KNOWLEDGE AND CONNECTION TO THE FIELD

(relevance of the research question, research objective, literature review):

The main elements of the thesis are combined in an effective and convincing form and the research question is appropriate, pertinent and grounded in a significant and topical issue, such as energy poverty in Europe. Overall, the thesis delivers an excellent engagement with the concerned literatures, such as multilevel governance and public policy analysis. Considering the novelty of the issue (energy poverty) and the multiples angles from which you can address it (social policy, energy transition, decentralization and public utilities), the literature review is consistent and cohesive.

2. ANALYSIS

(methodology, argument, theoretical backing, appropriate work with sources):

The thesis conveys a good understanding of how to design and conduct research. The author combines different qualitative techniques and relies upon an important field-work that includes semi-structured interviews to key actors of the selected policy field. The methodology of the research is fully explained in the thesis and it shows that the author is very familiar with the complexity and the difficulties of academic research. The sample of provinces might have been extended but, considering the nature of this academic exercise, it is more than appropriate. Indeed, being a case-study, the thesis doesn't search for generalization but it focusses in the analysis of the mechanisms that can foster/or hinder effective policymaking on energy poverty in the Netherlands.

3. CONCLUSIONS

(persuasiveness, link between data and conclusions, achievement of research objectives):

Conclusions are aligned with the scientific objectives of the research and they reaffirm some of the findings of the main concerned literatures, especially multilevel governance. In the end, the study is able to identify the main obstacles to effective policymaking on energy poverty in the Netherlands. These obstacles include the lack of a clear task division among different levels of government and a lack of long-term financial support from the central government. The study also finds that social actors such as interest groups and research institutes provide an essential platform to overcome some of these issues by fostering knowledge transfers and sharing best practices.

4. FORMAL ASPECTS AND LANGUAGE

(appropriate language, adherence to academic standards, citation style, layout):

The thesis offers a consistent answer based on an original analysis of relevant sources, primary as well as secondary where appropriate, that advances our understanding of the matter. It is well-structured and shows excellent awareness of the need to account for the audience. Additionally, the thesis demonstrate a full understanding of and compliance with academic conventions, including but not limited to the presentation, referencing and use of footnotes.

5. SUMMARY ASSESSMENT

(strong and weak point of the dissertation, other issues)

The thesis represents an interesting case-study on a relevant and emerging issue in an advanced economic, social and institutional context, such as the Netherlands. In this sense, it can represent an inspiring research for analyzing how to palliate/fight/reduce energy poverty in different scenarios.

As main weak point of the thesis, I would consider the following ones:

a) Of course the methodological choice to focus on provinces, instead than on municipalities, doesn't allow to reconstruct the entire picture of the selected policy problem. Indeed, municipalities do have legal competencies on social affairs (not provinces). However, this kind of methodological choices are typical in several studies on multilevel governance.

b) The main conclusions of the thesis are neither novels nor unknown. Nevertheless, the thesis brings enough evidence for improving the understanding of multilevel dynamics among different levels of governments in the case of new (or more contemporary) problems that are at the intersections of different policy fields.

Grade (A-F)	9 (A)
Date	Signature
26/06/2023	<i>Andrea Noferini</i>