

Master's Thesis

**Climate change mitigation
policymaking and
communication at the local
level: a case study of the Area
and transport plan of the
Arendal region in Norway**

Katrin Vandrecht

Supervisor

Vito Laterza

University of Agder, 2021

Faculty of Social Sciences

Department of Global Development and

Abstract

Climate change mitigation is a collective effort, and different governmental levels must be involved in pursuing it. People in the Nordic counties have a high awareness of climate change, but there is a discrepancy between knowledge and implementation of climate-friendly policies locally. In recent years, Norway has seen the emergence of protest movements opposing restrictive climate change mitigation measures. These parallel and contradictory dimensions challenge and disrupt established forms of policymaking. The urban regions must strike a balance between national climate goals and potential local resistance.

This qualitative case study explores these the socio-political dynamics and challenges of local-regional policymaking in increasingly politicised environments. The theoretical framework is built on three different fields of literature addressing communication, media and the fragmented (online) public sphere; consensual political culture in policymaking processes; and the role of local and rural identities in collaborative regional policymaking. The study examines local-regional strategy planning between four adjacent municipalities and the county using The Regional Area and Transport Plan for Arendal Region in Norway as an example.

This study presents empirical findings from qualitative research project using data from three workshops, one focus group discussion and twenty-one interviews with key municipal and the county administrators and politicians. Based on research data, it shows that local-regional climate change mitigation policymaking was taking place in the presence of several uncertainties: no timeline for the state–region collaboration, a polarising political environment, parallel protest movements and fragmented media coverage. The findings also confirm the important role that communication has in climate change mitigation and local anchoring, challenges the idea of social media venues as platforms for deliberation in policymaking processes, highlights the weaknesses in consensual political decision making and demonstrates the complex role the local/rural identity plays in policymaking processes.

Acknowledgements

My deep gratitude goes to all my fellow research team members and especially to our project leaders Associate Professor Vito Laterza and Professor Alexander Ruser. It has been a privilege being part of this project and learning from you.

I especially thank my supervisor, Associate Professor Vito Laterza. Your *Global Environmental Issues – A Political Ecology Perspective* course was so inspiring and diverse, and your video lectures were so engaging. I also appreciate every comment you made on my thesis and the thoughts you shared with me during the process.

I also would like to thank Professor Kenneth Andresen. Attending your *Communication, Media Development and New Publics* course exposed me to inspiring academic literature and new knowledge, which were most helpful for my thesis writing. Thank you for making each of your lectures so interesting and inspiring.

I am also grateful to every participant in this research work, for accepting our team and me while we were carrying out this research and the related workshops and interviews, and for generously sharing your time and knowledge with us. I want you to know that all your contributions are important and highly appreciated. I am most grateful for the privilege of having accessed your expert knowledge in the most efficient way within such a short period.

Finally, I am grateful to my family and friends for understanding my physical distancing from them not just because of the pandemic but also because of my thesis writing.

Grimstad, June 2021

Katrin Vandrecht

Table of Contents

Abstract	2
Acknowledgements	3
List of Figures	7
Abbreviations	8
1. Introduction.....	9
1.1. Climate Action: from global to local.....	9
1.2. The local context matters	10
1.3. Study object and the context	14
1.4. Problem statement	16
1.5. Research purpose and contribution	17
1.6. Geographical area.....	18
1.7. Research questions	18
1.8. Thesis outline	19
2. Literature Review and Theoretical framework.....	21
2.1. Introduction	21
2.2. Climate change messaging, emotions, and perceptions	22
2.2.1. Framing	25
2.2.2. Bottom-up vs. top-down.....	27
2.3. Political communication and citizen engagement in policymaking process	28
2.3.1. Consensual political culture	28
2.3.2. Public sphere and political deliberation	31
2.3.3. Societal fragmentation.....	34
2.4. Local identities	36
2.4.1. Identity and place	37
2.4.2. Where we live matters – the urban sprawl	39
2.4.3. Place branding	42
3. Methodology	45
3.1. Introduction	45
3.2. Guiding principles for the research	45
3.3. Research strategy.....	47
3.3.1. Ontological considerations	48
3.3.2. Epistemological considerations.....	48

3.4.	Data Collection.....	49
3.4.1.	Workshops.....	49
3.4.2.	Focus group discussion	50
3.4.3.	Individual semi-structured interviews.....	50
3.4.4.	Transcriptions.....	51
3.4.5.	Documentary analysis	51
3.4.6.	Newspaper, and social media content review.....	52
3.5.	Thematic analysis.....	53
3.6.	Presentation of findings.....	55
3.7.	Limitations.....	56
3.8.	Ethical considerations.....	56
4.	Findings and analysis	58
4.1.	Multiple levels of climate governance	58
4.2.	The context of the ATP collaboration	59
4.3.	The ATP project design.....	61
4.4.	The case municipalities	63
4.4.1.	Municipalities’ size, agency, and motivation.....	66
4.5.	How consensus building worked during the ATP process.....	68
4.5.1.	Consensual policymaking in multi-level network.....	68
4.6.	The ATP communication	73
4.6.1.	The role of traditional and social media	79
4.6.2.	Political lack of ownership.....	82
4.7.	Presence of multiple uncertainties.....	84
4.8.	Local and rural identities.....	85
4.8.1.	Identity matters.....	85
4.8.2.	Who defines where and how we want to live?.....	88
5.	Conclusion.....	91
5.1.	Communication	93
5.1.1.	The importance of communication.....	93
5.1.2.	Social media as an arena for political deliberation.....	94
5.2.	The socio-political dynamics.....	95
5.2.1.	The presence of several uncertainties.....	95

5.2.2.	The increased politization of local and regional planning.....	95
5.2.3.	Consensual political culture, strengths, and weaknesses	96
5.2.4.	Political lack of ownership.....	97
5.3.	Rural identity, market, and climate change mitigation.....	97
5.4.	Policy recommendations	100
5.5.	Recommendations for future research.....	100
List of References.....		106
Appendix		120

List of Figures

Figure 1. Geographical location of the study area	17
Figure 2. General Legal and Strategical Guidelines of the ATP project	27
Figure 3. Coding table example as provided by Bryman (2016, p. 586) with selected initial categories.	29
Figure 4. Example of initial “thematic map” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 90) with codes and main theme.	30
Figure 5. The ATP process 2014 – 2019, events timeline.	60
Figure 6. The ATP cooperation process Figure compiled by the author.	61
Figure 7. Municipality population, housing, and social services statistics.	65
Figure 8. The emission of three GHG gases (CO ₂ , methane (CH ₄), nitrous oxide (N ₂ O) in four ATP municipality shown in four different categories measured in tons of CO ₂ equivalent	65
Figure 9. Municipalities’ motivation and agency in participation of the ATP project.	67
Figure 10. The ATP communication map	73
Figure 11: The circle of different factors impacting the communication.	77

Abbreviations

ATP - Regional areal- og transportplan for arendalsregionen / the Area and Transport Plan for the Arendal Region

CC – County Council of Agder County

CG – County Governor of Agder County (the government representative in the region)

GDPR - the General Data Protection Regulation and Personal Data Act

GHG – Greenhouse gases

ICT – Information and Communication Technology

IPCC - Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

NPRA – The Norwegian Public Roads Administration

NPT – National Transport Plan

UN – United Nations

UNFCCC – United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

1. Introduction

1.1. Climate Action: from global to local

The paradox of climate change mitigation policymaking is that even though most of us agree on what needs to be achieved, we disagree on how to get there. It seems that the challenge lies in the process of *policymaking*. This study dealt particularly with the challenge of regional climate change mitigation policymaking, which must strike a balance between the international and national climate goals on one hand and the potential public resistance to the proposed policy measures on the other hand.

Climate change mitigation is a collective effort, and different governmental levels must be involved in pursuing it. International laws have put growing pressure and responsibility on national governments to address climate change through their national policies and legislation in accordance with international agreements such as, *inter alia*, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (hereinafter UNFCCC) (United Nations, 1994) and the Paris Agreement (United Nations, 2015). National governments in turn put pressure on local governments since many policy measures must be implemented locally (Ministry of Transport, 2017). Local and regional contributions to climate change mitigation and adaptation are therefore essential as municipal politicians and administrators are the main experts in the local knowledge and conditions. Cities and municipalities' motivation to engage in climate change politics has increased as the consequences of climate change affect them directly. This acts as a motivator for regional authorities to facilitate new forms of climate change mitigation policymaking and to extend their collaboration in this area (Haarstad, 2016; Flyen, Hauge, Almås, & Godbolt, 2018).

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released its alarming report of a 1.5 °C (IPCC, 2018). The same report also brought out several policymaking perspectives that would need to be addressed in local and regional planning. To reduce the impact of climate change, the IPCC report states, *inter alia*, that transport-related climate change mitigation policies must be more ambitious and that “structural changes that avoid or shift transport activity are [...] important” (IPCC, 2018, chapter 2.4.3.3.). The report further claims that urban planning can reduce the GHG emissions caused by urban transport by 20–50% (Chapter 2.5.1.).

While knowledge about local context is important in efficient climate change mitigation policymaking and implementation, the central government's role here is equally important. Giest and Howlett (2013) found that “those networks that target a specific region and are supported by government – especially in the European context – have the most benefits for climate change mitigation” (p. 342). As an example, infrastructural investments that strengthen the public transport and require extensive funds, are something that municipalities or cities often lack (Ministry of Transport, 2017). There are positive examples of this from earlier region–state partnership projects from Drammen in Norway, where the transport system was restructured; an important aspect in this process was local understanding and acceptance (Tørnblad, Westskog, & Rose, 2014). However, the related knowledge needs to be continuously updated as political and technological changes happen rapidly in society, and the factors that were not present in earlier studies may impact and shape people's views and political decision-making today (Ministry of Transport, 2021; Ryghaug & Næss, 2012).

Some IPCC policy measures suggest that the transport sector should aim to reduce the need for transport and should shift towards more efficient solutions engaging the housing sector in policy planning (IPCC, 2018; chapter 2.4.3.3). The IPCC-proposed actions coincide with the Norwegian climate strategies (The Ministry of Climate and Environment, 2009; The Ministry of Environment, 2012; The Ministry of Climate and Environment, 2017; Aust-Agder County Municipality, 2019a). This demonstrates how the global and the local are connected through the science communication and political processes.

1.2. The local context matters

Although previous studies have addressed various aspects linked to climate change, there is a continuous need to understand what it takes to implement climate-friendly policies locally. A growing number of studies focus on identifying the role that communication and participation play in this process (Lyytimäki, et al., 2013) or the context-specific indicators that determine the successful implementation of climate change mitigation measures (Tørnblad et. al., 2014). Hence, motivation for the current study were the interest in climate communication, the local context, actors' motivations and agency and the challenges and solutions in the environmental policymaking processes.

Policy measures, however, cannot be implemented without the trust and acceptance of the local citizens, whose everyday lives will be affected by such measures. How, then, should local and regional authorities communicate, inspire cooperation in and facilitate positive climate action? What is the most efficient way to collaborate on these sector-specific issues, and how does the local way of life impact these efforts? Issues connected to the environment and climate change are no longer only matters of politics or science; they have become increasingly prominent in public debates, new networks have emerged and social media has offered readily accessible platforms that interest groups can use to voice their messages (Castells, 2012; Dahlgren, 2009). There have been several parallel but contradicting communication processes, signalling concern for the environment through civic initiatives such as The Norwegian Grandparents' Climate Campaign (Besteforeldrenes Klimaaksjon, n.d.), the youth movement Fridays for Future and Extinction Rebellion (Extinction Rebellion, n.d.) or grassroot movements such as the yellow vests in France (Boyer, Delemotte, Gauthier, Rollet, & Schmutz, 2020) and the anti-toll road movement in Norway (Wanvik & Haarstad, 2021). As seen, the impact of climate change and mitigation measures are addressed by various actors and through (sometimes) contradicting messages.

The above examples leave no question that climate change mitigation policymaking has become an increasingly contested topic regionally and locally as it often involves measures that affect people's everyday lives, such as restrictions in car use and housing development and in taxation, to name a few (Ministry of Transport, 2017). To reduce the regional GHG emissions, mitigating actions need to be taken locally. The Norwegian government has already set ambitious climate change mitigation goals in its earlier strategies, such as cutting GHG emissions by 30% by 2020 and achieving carbon neutrality by 2030 (Ministry of Environment, 2012).

In fact, the total cut in Norway by the end of 2019 was 2.3% whilst the emissions from the oil and gas industry and from the road traffic have increased by over 70% and over 14%, respectively, compared to the 1990 level (Statistics Norway, 2020). At the same time, the emissions from road traffic have shown a downward trend of 7% from 2018 to 2019 (Statistics Norway, 2020), which can be partly explained by the government incentives on electric vehicles (EVs). EVs are exempted from paying VAT and road tolls and have been allowed to use the transit lanes for buses (Aasness & Odeck, 2015; Norsk elbilforening, 2021). These incentives have worked as the EV sales in Norway have increased every year, accounting for more than 50% of the new vehicles sold in Norway in 2020 (Norsk

elbilforening, 2021). Conversely, the sale of petroleum products has gradually decreased of late (Statistics Norway, 2021). The foregoing numbers demonstrate that the government's climate change mitigation policies have had an impact, but the desired GHG reduction level has remained unattainable. Therefore, more effort must be put into the policy development processes.

Climate change mitigation policies often use incentivising or restrictive measures. Incentives, as seen above, can change people's behaviour over time. The same is expected from restrictive climate change mitigation policy measures. In this context, I explore herein the dynamics in Norway's national–regional policy development in the transport sector and the specific infrastructure projects for urban regions as envisioned in the National Transport Plan (NTP) (Ministry of Transport, 2017) and the challenges that the urban regions face in implementing these. One of the most controversial restrictive policy measures in the NTP is the establishment of toll roads (*bomring*) in densely populated and heavily trafficked urban regions that have faced severe challenges in mobility (Ministry of Transport, 2017).

Road tolls are fees established on public roads or in urban areas (Veglova, 1963, § 27) and paid by drivers passing a road toll booth. The revenues from the fees collected (*bompenger*) can be used, for instance, to repay large road or public transport projects or to reduce car traffic in cities (Veglova, 1963).

The current Norwegian transport strategy for 2018–2029 has outlined the extended use of road tolls in the nine largest urban regions in the country as part of the overall goals to increase mobility and reduce GHG emissions (Ministry of Transport, 2017). The NTP does not provide a legal definition of 'urban region' (*by region/byområdet*), but in the context of the NTP and the current research it is understood as the region's largest city and its adjacent municipalities or towns that have agreed to cooperate with the government to collectively solve the region's traffic challenges. The NTP cooperation model for urban regions sets a precondition: the participant region must finance 50% of the transport development projects that will ensure zero growth in private car use and increase mobility by investing in more sustainable transportation. Funds for these investments will be collected via road tolls and government allocations (Ministry of Transport, 2017). The national policy strategy therefore inclines towards state and regions' co-financing mechanisms, where the precondition for the region is to achieve a political consensus within and between the municipalities to enter into such co-financing agreement with the government. When this is achieved, the region and the

government will negotiate and sign what is called an urban growth agreement (*Byvekstavtale*) . The costs of the climate-friendly transport projects in these agreements will be divided among the state, county, municipalities, and citizens (Kristiansand kommune, n.d.).

The implementation of restrictive policy measures, however, has been proven to be challenging. Although rich scientific knowledge about the environmental consequences of climate change has been available for several decades, the progress from science to policymaking and implementation has been slow. Several studies that have been carried out in Nordic counties have found that people have a relatively high awareness of climate change but there is a discrepancy between knowledge and the motivation to implement or accept policy measures that force changes (Lyytimäki et al., 2013; Granberg & Elander, 2007; Gustavsson & Elander, 2012; Flyen et al., 2018). One of the motivations of the current study was to understand the seeming disconnectedness between the general knowledge of climate change and the persistent struggle in implementing climate change mitigation measures. The policies, as described above, are understandably not only about the climate; they also regulate practical aspects of our everyday lives. How can research help policymakers develop better practices for climate change mitigation policymaking and find solutions that will not go into conflict with our everyday lives?

Norway has witnessed growing mobilisation against road tolls in recent years, culminating in the period prior to the local government elections in 2019. Road tolls have often been described as unjust (*usosiale*), and the movement against them has been increasingly politicised (Raa et al., 2018; Demokratene, n.d.). Restrictive measures such as road tolls have triggered public frustration, online and offline mobilisation and the rise of new populist movements (Wanvik & Haarstad, 2021; Folkeaksjonen Nei til mer bompenger, 2021), and some recently established far-right parties have included anti-road toll statements in their party programs (Demokratene, n.d.). The political groupings in recent years have established several branches in other regions in Norway, demonstrating strong actor motivation and agency. Regional green policies, such as the implementation of regional transport plans and implementation of road tolls, have become increasingly contested at the local level. Why is this happening?

Larger cities such as Stavanger and Bergen in Norway experienced fast citizen mobilisation, where slogans such as ‘Enough is enough’ (*Nok er nok*) were used and traffic flow to the city centres was hindered with ‘Drive slowly’ (*Kjør-sakte*) campaigns (Evensen et al., 2018;

Magnus et al., 2018). The reactions in Norway bear some strong similarities with the yellow vest movement (*les 'Gilets jaunes'*) in France in 2018. The latter was a direct response to the French government's decision to raise the fuel tax on diesel. A recent geographic study that analysed Facebook data from the early days of the yellow vest movement showed that Facebook played an important role in the decentralised mobilisation against the government measure (Boyer et. al., 2020). The research demonstrated that protest movement had a stronger positive correlation with socioeconomic aspects (e.g. unemployment and inequalities) than with the number of people who owned a diesel vehicle in the mobilised regions. According to the same research, online mobilisation was also positively correlated with offline mobilisation (Boyer et. al., 2020).

The above examples show the influential role that digital platforms play in political protest movements, and their ability to interrupt established forms of policymaking. The established political parties in several cities in Norway distanced themselves from or postponed the implementation of the road toll policy before the local elections (Tjørholm, 2019).

Significantly, the same political change of direction took place in the Arendal region, which at that time was not yet covered by the government's road toll policy (Ditlefsen, Sundsdal, & Skår, 2019) despite the fact that it had been working towards a new regional strategy since 2014 and was initially open to discussing toll roads as a possible financing mechanism to solve the regional traffic challenges (Aust-Agder County Municipality, 2019b; Strand et al., 2017).

1.3. Study object and the context

The *object* of this study was to analyse the current regional policymaking and communication practices in Norway seen in the context of the national climate change mitigation policy for the urban regions. The Norwegian government's incentives for urban regions' transport packages and the growing protest movements against toll roads have formed the outer ends of the wider context of the case, the *subject*, that I have chosen to investigate: *areal og transportplan for arendalsregionen* (the Area and transport plan for the Arendal region), commonly referred to as ATP (Aust-Agder County Municipality, 2019a).

The ATP was a collaboration initiative of the four neighbouring municipalities of Arendal, Grimstad, Tvedestrand and Froland, which together form what is called the Arendal region (*Arendalsregionen*), named after the region's largest city, Arendal (Aust-Agder County Municipality, 2019b). The purpose of this multi-level collaboration was to work out a regional strategy for transport and housing to tackle the projected demographic growth in the region and to lower the regional GHG emissions (Aust-Agder County Municipality, 2019a). One possible outcome of such collaboration was to be included in the next NTP and sign the urban growth agreement, meaning establishing a toll ring around two larger cities: Arendal and Grimstad. The revenues from such establishment were supposed to finance sustainable infrastructure projects. The collaboration lacked political support, however, and resulted in adopting a regional strategy without suggested financing measures (road tolls).

The ATP process was formally initiated and led by the Aust-Agder County Municipality (*Aust-Agder Fylkeskommune*), a directly elected regional governing body. Hence, three governmental levels were involved in the process: the state, region, and municipalities. Such networks, where multiple governmental levels are involved, also called multi-level networks (Flyen et al., 2018, p. 61; Giest & Howlett, 2013), have become increasingly relevant in Sweden (Granberg & Elander, 2007) and Norway in addressing climate change and regional traffic challenges (Regjeringen, 2018).

County Municipality of Aust-Agder was the official name of the county before the regional reform, which entered into force on January 1, 2020, by which Aust-Agder County was merged with West Agder County and resulting merged county was named Agder County. The county municipality in the context of this study refers to the former Aust-Agder County Municipality prior to the structural change in 2020 (Regjeringen, 2019). The ATP for the Arendal region indicates both the policymaking *process* in 2014–2019 and the final document: the overall regional *strategy*, which together formed the core of my case study. Both of them will henceforth be referred to as ATP depending on the context.

The study was carried out in the context where the ATP project work had been finalised and the participating municipalities and the county had adopted the overall regional strategy in June 2019 but failed to reach a political consensus on the financing mechanism (road tolls). The latter automatically meant that the Arendal region lost its further opportunity to start negotiations with the national government on joining the government's stimulus package for

local public transport projects. Hence, this study was a retrospective look at the process seen through the eyes of the participating administrators and politicians.

Although the current study was retrospective and the Arendal region did not implement any financing mechanism for the overall regional strategy it had adopted, the topic remains relevant. In its revised NTP for 2022–2033, the Norwegian government has established a new subsidy program for climate- and environment-friendly urban development for five medium-sized urban regions, including the Arendal region (Ministry of Transport, 2021). This means that it will once again be up to the local politicians to reach a consensus about the state–region’s co-financing mechanisms, the goal towards which they worked through the ATP project until 2019.

1.4. Problem statement

To achieve the international and national climate goals, different governmental levels should be involved in pursuing them. Efficient multi-level policymaking that aims to target these goals increasingly requires more coordination and communication. To succeed in implementing climate-friendly policies, we must also succeed in policymaking processes that will consider broader public engagement, knowledge building and new forms of political communication.

However, climate change mitigation is becoming an increasingly contested topic not only nationally but also in local and regional politics and policymaking. Recent years have seen the emergence of parallel protest movements: those opposing climate change mitigation measures on one hand (Boyer et al., 2020; Wanvik & Haarstad, 2021) and those demanding urgent climate action on the other hand (Besteforeldrenes Klimaaksjon, n.d.; Fridays for Future, n.d.; Extinction Rebellion, n.d.). Can policymakers assume that those who do not publicly oppose restrictive policy measures form ‘the silent majority’?

We see digital communication platforms actively being used for and contributing to broad political engagement across the online–offline divide (Castells, 2012; Boyer et al., 2020; Wanvik & Haarstad, 2021). These processes challenge the established forms of political communication and participation practices. Has the proliferation of social media platforms made these platforms the new *public sphere* in political communication (Dahlgren, 2009;

Segaard, 2017)? This is one of the questions that social science research needs to engage with more to critically examine the current policymaking and public communication practices to understand the impact of the new social realities and provide policy-relevant knowledge to improve the current practices.

In this study, I aimed to explore the challenges faced by established forms of policymaking and communication in the rapidly changing and fragmented media landscape. To do this, I needed to understand the impacts of various climate communication messages and the local political culture and identity. In that context, I chose to examine three different fields of literature:

- climate change messaging, emotions and perceptions (Nisbet, 2009; O'Neill & Nicholson-Cole, 2009; Ryghaug & Næss, 2012; Stoknes, 2014);
- political communication, public sphere, and consensual political culture (Habermas, 1989, 1996, 2006; Lijphart, 1999; Segaard, 2017; Dahlgren, 2005, 2009, 2018; Krick & Holst, 2018) and
- the role of the local and rural identities in collaborative regional policymaking (Lysgård, 2001; Gustavsson & Elander, 2012; Haugen & Lysgård, 2006).

1.5. Research purpose and contribution

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to understand the challenges in the current multi-level policymaking and communication processes that aim to target the international and national climate change mitigation goals. The study explores established forms of policymaking and communication from the perspectives of the local and regional practitioners using the Regional area and transport plan for Arendal region in Norway as an example.

This study aimed to contribute to the critical knowledge needed to advance efficient and mutual climate communication locally and regionally, and to provide policy-relevant knowledge to improve the local and regional collaborative policymaking in targeting international and national climate change mitigation goals.

1.6. Geographical area

The geographical area of the research was determined by the outside borders of the municipalities participating in the ATP project, the area commonly named the Arendal region (see Figure 1), consisting of four neighbouring municipalities: Arendal, Grimstad, Tvedestrand and Froland. Figure 1 shows the geographical area of the ATP collaboration, where Grimstad, Arendal and Tvedestrand are the coastal municipalities and Froland is the inland municipality.

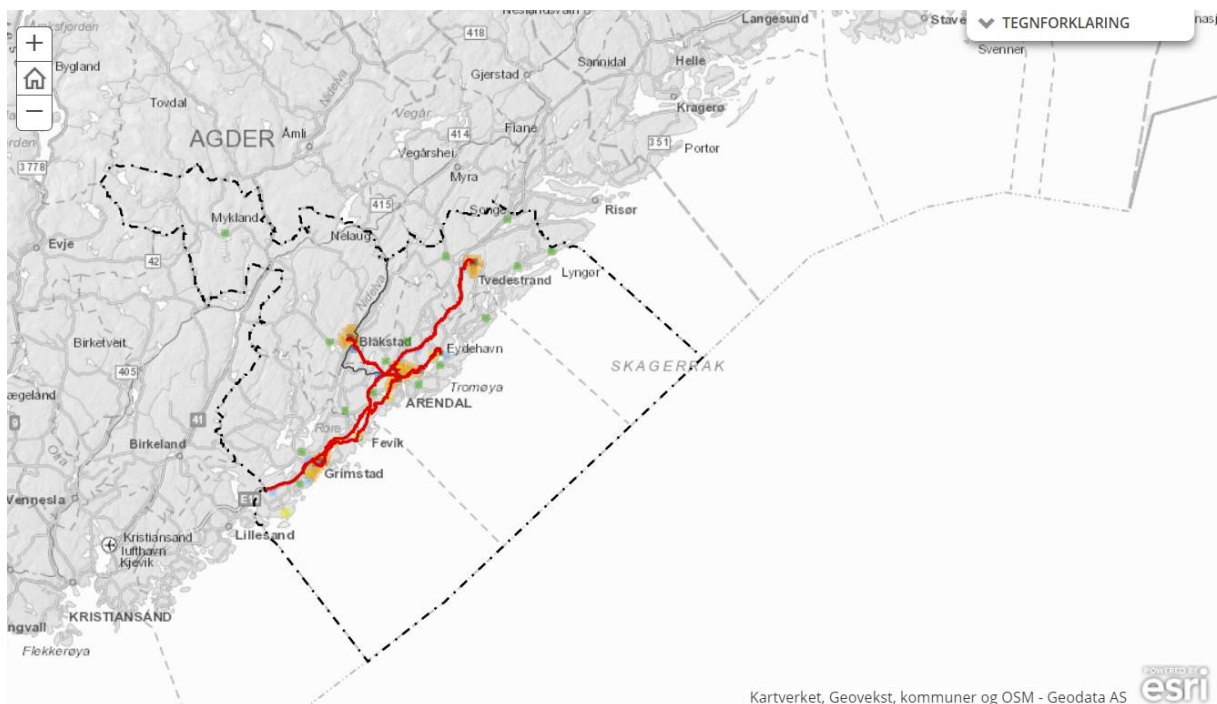


Figure 1. Geographical location of the study area. The black line marks the outer border of the ATP municipalities. Source: <https://agderfk.maps.arcgis.com/home/index.html>

1.7. Research questions

The research initially had two main themes: analysis of communication practices and the process of collaborative policymaking, where multiple actors, actors' motivations and agency were involved. During the iterative processes of data collection and analysis, a third aspect emerged, which was considered important to include in the final analysis: the role of the local/rural identity policymaking process.

Research question 1 (RQ1): What role does communication strategy (or the lack of it) play in local and regional climate change mitigation policymaking?

Sub-question: What role do traditional and social media play in the communication process?

Research question 2 (RQ2): What are the socio-political dynamics and possible constraints and challenges within the established forms of regional climate change mitigation policymaking?

Research question 3 (RQ3): What role do local and rural identities play in local and regional climate change mitigation policymaking?

1.8. Thesis outline

The thesis proceeds as follows:

Section 2 – Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Following the introduction, the literature review builds continuity between the research questions and the relevant literature. It is structured similarly to the questions and analyses three different but connected fields of theory: climate change messaging, emotions and perceptions; (online) public sphere, political communication, specifically consensual political culture in policymaking processes; and the role of local and rural identities in collaborative regional policymaking. Throughout this section, the relevance of these theory perspectives are connected to the research questions, and explained how they contribute to the analysis.

Section 3 – Methodology

This section begins by introducing the larger research project that the thesis was part of. It continues by presenting the guiding principles of the research and specifies the research strategy: a case study adopting an open-ended, in-depth qualitative research design combining both deductive and inductive approaches. The section explains the ontological and epistemological assumptions of this study. It further introduces the primary data of the research and explains how they were analysed using the thematic analysis approach.

Section 4 – Findings and Analysis

This section gives detailed insight into the wider context in which the case, the ATP collaboration, took place. Because the ATP was a multi-level collaboration project, it is also necessary to briefly introduce the Norwegian governance model to understand the dynamics in the process, which involved three different governance levels: the national, regional and local. Then, all four case municipalities are introduced to give insight into the complex pattern of different motivations and agencies that emerged during the collaboration and how they impacted the process.

This section continues by explaining the consensual approach that the ATP project adopted and how this both confirmed the strong characteristics of consensual political culture while also bringing to light the weaknesses of consensus-oriented policymaking. Next, the important findings and their impact on local-regional collaboration and communication are introduced. Then, the dynamics within the group and with the public are explained. Finally, local, and regional identity is analysed, and two significant findings are presented.

Section 5 – Conclusion

The final section presents the main findings regarding the research questions. First, it highlights how the lack of clear communication strategy impacted the process. Second, it shows how the actors outside the ATP collaboration shaped the public discussion through traditional and social media. Third, it brings up some significant findings that deserve further research focus. The second part gives policy advice for local practitioners on how to improve communication and collaboration. The third part of the conclusion is dedicated to recommendations for future research.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical framework

2.1. Introduction

This literature review aims to provide a theoretical framework for the thesis by focusing on some main themes in the literature that specifically address impacts and perceptions of climate communication messaging, political communication, and the role of local identity in the policymaking process.

The first section takes a close look at studies investigating how climate change and environment-related messaging and communication have been perceived by individuals, what emotions they trigger, and how they impact behaviour. This knowledge would help with interpreting the effects of certain types of communication messages and evaluating the overall impact of the communication practices that were used during the ATP collaboration. In that context, it was also considered relevant to briefly review consensual political culture and its distinctive features, and whether these aspects had significance in the outcome of the ATP project. In addition, the literature review looks at what role news media and social media channels can play in political engagement. The latter were regarded as important to include here, since similar political processes (the establishment of road tolls to finance green policies) had been sparking online and offline protests in other urban regions in Norway. Finally, despite the similarity of government policy (road tolls) implementation in other regions and the consequent tensions that took place, it was important to understand the local context and identities that were specific to the case study region. The interest here was, in later stages, to analyse local identities in connection with the outcome of the ATP collaboration.

Given these considerations, three different but connected fields of literature are reviewed in the following sections:

- climate change messaging, emotions, and perceptions;
- political communication and citizen engagement in policymaking processes; and the
- role of local and rural identities in collaborative regional policymaking.

2.2. Climate change messaging, emotions, and perceptions

There is significant literature in the field of climate communication (Feldman & Hart, 2016; Lyytimäki et al., 2013; Nisbet, 2009), as well as case studies carried out at the municipal level researching local development strategies (Cruickshank, 2006; Cruickshank, Lyngård, & Magnussen, 2009; Flyen, Hauge, Almås, & Godbolt, 2018; Granberg & Elander, 2007; Gustavsson & Elander, 2012; Wanvik & Haarstad, 2021). This and the following sections examine some general aspects of *where* and *how* climate communication takes place, the role of social media in political participation, and their influence in policymaking.

In examining climate change communication, I rely on the definition given by Moser (2006), who states that “[e]ffective climate change communication can be defined as any form of public engagement that *actually* facilitates an intended behavioural, organisational, political and other social change consistent with identified mitigation or adaptation goals” (p. 3, emphasis added). Interests and emphasis in this research are especially on the *actual* desired change in policymaking. As previous research projects in different Nordic countries have detected, there is relatively high awareness about climate change among citizens, though the implementation of policy measures to tackle it can still be challenging (Flyen et al., 2018; Gustavsson & Elander, 2012; Lyytimäki et al., 2013; Ryghaug & Næss, 2012). These findings have motivated my further exploration to understand the contexts and challenges of policymakers.

Climate change is addressed and information on it is communicated by various actors, scientists, activists, politicians, and journalists, through various arenas, such as conferences, online platforms, and news channels, with varying degrees of reachability and reception. Equally important is the content of the messages and how they are perceived by the audience. As various studies (above) have referred to, people in Nordic countries are generally well-informed about climate change issues, but climate change-related policymaking becomes an increasingly contested topic regionally and locally, as it often involves restrictions, rezoning, and taxation, to name a few potentially negative aspects for citizens. To reduce regional GHG emissions, these actions need to be taken locally.

One such example was the climate policy implementation process in the Norwegian city of Bergen, where the public mobilised against proposed road tolls around the wider circle of the city (Wanvik & Haarstad, 2021). Social media offered an easily accessible platform for the

public to express their frustration and to mobilise against the proposed restrictive policy measures (Wanvik & Haarstad, 2021). As mentioned in the introduction, restrictive mitigation measures have given rise to large-scale online and offline protest movements and even politicisation in both France and Norway (Boyer, Delemotte, Gauthier, Rollet, & Schmutz, 2020; Folkeaksjonen nei til mer bompenger, 2020; Wanvik & Haarstad, 2021).

General awareness about climate change has *per se* not been a guarantee of efficient implementation of restrictive infrastructural measures. It is, however, important to specify here that the reasons for extended establishment of road toll projects in Norway were, besides GHG reduction, first and foremost related to congestion problems in towns and cities, and they were also intended to increase mobility by using revenues from the tolls and government subsidies to finance public transport and build bike lanes (Meld. St. 33 (2016-2017), 2017). The potential socioeconomic impact of such restrictive measures must be further examined to understand the local context and origins of the protest movement.

Media and communication affect every aspect of modern life. In the case of protest movements, they are widely covered by local and national media. Dahlgren (2009, p. 81) says that “[m]uch of our civic knowledge derives from the media”, which also plays a role in our political engagement. Seggaard (2017, pp. 118–120), who analysed Norwegian local political communication through “social media venues”, found that for social media to be recognised as “arenas for political communication”, it requires acceptance and convergence by both voters and politicians to then form the “basis of the institutional process”. Several aspects are crucial in evaluating the role and impact of online political communication, such as age and “socioeconomical privilege” but also “actors’ perceptions of social media as platforms for political communication” (ibid., pp. 119–120).

In Norway, youth protests and demonstrations, together with growing global awareness and media coverage, have been widely covered by media bringing climate change into the political agenda. A year after the youth movement for climate, Fridays For Future (Fridays For Future, n.d.), was established and gained global attention, the Norwegian Green Party had its best ever election result in 2019 local government elections (NRK, 2019b). These events support findings and predictions based on the survey carried out by Seggaard in Norway. She demonstrated that both voters and politicians see social media as an “appropriate platform for political communication”, although not in isolation but rather beside “conventional arenas” (Seggaard, 2017, p. 135).

The above research findings are important for the case study in the Arendal region. An intriguing aspect to explore here is how social media engages with and impacts climate change mitigation policymaking. Grindheim et al. raise a rhetorical question: whether local inhabitants care about the local politics as long as municipal services are delivered (Grindheim, Heidar, & Strøm, 2020). Innes and Booher (2015, p. 204) reflect, in the context of consensus building and stakeholder engagement, that “[i]f everyone more or less agreed, normal governmental processes would be enough”, and that in the presence of conflict, “differences [...] over important issues” is what both engages stakeholders and obliges policymakers to seek dialogue, although with the price of confrontations and a slower process. These aspects are more closely reviewed in the following sections.

Surveys carried out among municipal inhabitants have shown that the majority is satisfied with municipal service delivery. Other surveys have found that although general satisfaction is high, over one-third of people doubted whether they have the competence to evaluate and have an impact in local politics, while only about one-third of respondents were confident in their competence (Grindheim, Heidar, & Strøm, 2020). These findings signal the aspect that is particularly relevant in climate change mitigation, where evaluating the impacts of current and future political decisions on the environment and emissions is a continuous process and requires a new knowledge set. The question is how accessible is such knowledge for the public?

Besides knowledge and contradicting views as reasons for engagement, emotions play an important role (Stoknes, 2014). Social media platforms were used actively in road toll protests in Norway, where the process had reached the stage of policy implementation (Wanvik & Haarstad, 2021). There are different views about whether increased social media use among individuals increases online activism or, as some analyses find, social media is an important contributor in engaging diverse groups in political participation (Mosca & Quaranta, 2016). At the same time, other forms of political participation can play an important role in connection with social media use and social networking (Choi & Kwon, 2019), for instance “non-institutional participation, such as demonstrations, petitioning, boycotts or occupations” (Mosca & Quaranta, 2016, p. 327; cf. Boyer et al., 2020).

Some of these non-institutional forms of participation were represented in the road toll protests in Bergen, where dissatisfaction with extended policy measures had reached its tipping point (Wanvik & Haarstad, 2021). However, it is important in every case study to consider the wider context and the motivations of different actors in relation to their political

engagement. Since this study reflects on similar policymaking processes from politician and administrator perspectives, the research focus must also consider openness, stakeholder involvement, and “procedural justice” in the process (Grossmann, 2019, p. 149).

During the policymaking process in the Arendal region, both traditional and social media platforms were used to address critiques of the ATP plan. Building on Seggaard’s (2017) research on social media platforms as arenas for political communication, I find it necessary in this study to distinguish ‘social media use for political campaigning’ from ‘citizen inclusion in policymaking process’. However, Seggaard’s (2017) approach to analysing social media platforms as arenas for political communication forms the theoretical framework for the sub-question under research question one.

2.2.1. Framing

Framing in the context of this study is seen as framing in communication and psychology discourse. I would lean on the short definition given by Stoknes (2014, p. 162), who describes it as follows: “[t]he concept of framing refers to the unseen, often subconscious frame around concepts and discussions that affect how an issue is perceived”. An issue that interests me in the context of this case study is analysing climate communication messages communicated to stakeholders in the form of a regional strategy for area and transport (the ATP) and concrete measures, *inter alia* road tolls, or incentives.

Perceptions are linked to emotions (O’Neill & Nicholson-Cole, 2009). Framing (perceptions) is part of any communication and can trigger a variety of emotions. Various studies categorise and analyse climate communication messages through the emotions these messages evoke, for instance hope, fear, and anger (O’Neill & Nicholson-Cole, 2009; Feldman & Hart, 2016 and Stoknes, 2014). To look at the two extremes of climate communication messages, at the one end is climate change denial (metadata research carried out by Björnberg, Karlsson, Gilek, & Hansson, 2017). At the other are movements, such as Fridays For Future which in one year forced change in the terminology we use to speak about the phenomenon, redefining climate *change* as climate *crisis* or climate *emergency*. The way we speak about things, the language we use, is a critically important contributor to the way we perceive things (Stoknes, 2014). Such a shift in terminology inevitably changes the “background image and linguistic framing” (Stoknes, 2014, p. 162) surrounding the new sharpened approach to climate change,

while negative framing “activates” negative associations (Stoknes, 2014, p. 163). The long-term impact these strong messages carry is yet to be evaluated.

Several studies have shown that negative framing, when used *alone*, is an inefficient communication model (Feldman & Hart, 2016; Nisbet, 2009; O'Neill & Nicholson-Cole, 2009; Stoknes, 2014). Eventually, it might even lead to other negative side effects such as feelings of “fatigue”, “helplessness” (Stoknes, 2014, pp. 161–162), and “ignorance” (Roelich & Gieseckam, 2018, p. 176). Brulle (2010) challenges the idea of fear as an entirely negative aspect, arguing that the picture is more complex and fear together with *knowledge* on how to meaningfully *act* could increase motivation. In that, O'Neill and Nicholson-Cole (2009) and Brulle (2010) seem to agree. Recent global mobilisations for climate are undoubtedly very efficient tools to raise awareness, but they can also trigger negative emotions, especially if activism over a long period is not leading to accessibility to “meaningful action” (Stoknes, 2014, p. 163). The above argumentation forms a basis of the theoretical framework related to communication and research question one.

Earlier studies (e.g., Brulle, 2010) have highlighted that citizen-initiated social movements play an important role in global climate awareness. O'Neill & Nicholson-Cole (2009) found that strong messaging, which is often a part of public movements, has the ability to both capture public attention but also to emphasise the importance of the issues communicated. Communication messages in public campaigns and movements are often alarming, using words such as “collapse”, “extinction”, and “failure” (Extinction Rebellion, n.d.). Many environmental movements might be perceived as carrying negative, even apocalyptic messages demanding that someone somewhere should do something (e.g., making politicians, not our lifestyles, accountable). It might also be that traditional media channels cover these movements by using negative framing (Mosca & Quaranta, 2016).

Public protest movements against restrictive policy measures use similarly strong, efficient messaging (Wanvik & Haarstad, 2021). Moving on from messaging, an important aspect in implementing restrictive policy measures is that policy would offer alternative pathways for the action that policy restricts, giving opportunities for “meaningful action” (Stoknes, 2014, p. 163). If policy fails to do so, citizens may find themselves between two different, often negative, information spaces, where on one side is increased media coverage about the negative impact of climate change and, on the other side, climate change mitigation policies that restrict mobility and challenge our lifestyles and habits. Hence, the policymaking process

should focus on communication messages that are collaborative, positive, and solution-oriented while involving both vertical (different levels of governance) and horizontal (stakeholders) collaboration. Such policy planning includes multiple actors, and a challenging aspect for policymakers would be in harmonising their different motivations and agency (Roelich & Gieseckam, 2018).

2.2.2. Bottom-up vs. top-down

Social media platforms give citizen initiatives more accessibility to participate in policymaking and give policymakers the opportunity to communicate with stakeholders. These platforms do not only facilitate communication; as Seggaard (2017, p. 119) argues, they also influence “the behaviour of the actors”, who, in the context of this study, are politicians and voters. Bottom-up initiatives can also disrupt established forms of top-down policymaking processes, as happened in the case of Bergen, Norway, where large-scale protest movements against restrictive policy measures delayed their implementation (Wanvik & Haarstad, 2021).

Brulle (2010) has strongly advocated for social change through civic movements that are, ideally, free from both the state and the market. He also argues that civil society institutions would be the more likely and more efficient driving force in defining and offering actions for solving environmental problems, as they are “unhindered by the limitations of institutions based on either the market or the state” (Habermas, 1996, cited by Brulle, p. 85). The role of civic initiatives cannot be underestimated—also in policymaking, when a large part of the public feels that policy measures increase inequality (Wanvik & Haarstad, 2021).

The ATP collaboration took place in parallel with citizen-initiated protest movements escalating in other urban regions in Norway, directed against restrictive measures similar to those planned in the Arendal region. How do these parallel processes affect one another, and how could future policymaking processes turn potential conflict into collaboration? In particular, protest movements against climate- and energy-related policies have the potential to grow and mobilise “critical masses” (Reusswig et al., 2016, p. 225) as well as interrupt and destabilise established forms of policymaking and sustainable development (ibid.; cf. Boyer et al., 2020; Grossmann, 2019; Wanvik & Haarstad, 2021). Such conflict, however, must not be considered unilaterally negative; rather, it must be seen as an opportunity to re-evaluate

current forms of policymaking to improve participation and communication practices (Simmel, 1908, cited by Grossmann; cf. Wanvik & Haarstad).

The theoretical approach used in later analysis addresses, first, public institution communication for achieving more positive and solution-oriented framing in climate communication, drawing from work by O'Neil and Nicholson-Cole (2009) that emphasises the importance of positive messaging in climate communication, since, as reviewed above, negative framing carries high potential to increase the divide and distance. Second, building on studies by Stoknes (2014) and Ryghaug and Næss (2012), one of the key components of efficient climate policy communication is elaborating alternative pathways for actions that the policy tries to restrict and communicating them clearly from the early stages. These theoretical approaches are connected to research question one, addressing communication. Segard's (2017) approach to analysing social media platforms as arenas for political communication forms the theoretical basis for the sub-question under research question one.

2.3. Political communication and citizen engagement in policymaking process

This section elaborates on the previous one and looks at how consensual political culture impacts policymaking design and processes, as well as public arenas where exchanges of ideas take place, public access to expert knowledge, and gaining an understanding of what matters for local communities whose lives are affected by environmental policy- and decision-making.

2.3.1. Consensual political culture

Norwegian political culture can be described as consensual democracy (Grindheim et al., 2020; Krick & Holst, 2018; Palonen & Sunnercrantz, 2021), meaning that it values an inclusive, negotiating, and compromise-seeking approach, where government is often formed by a broad coalition of several parties, through which it opposes the “majoritarian model”, a strong two-party system and one-party government formed by the majority's rule (Lijphart, 1999, p. 2). There are key dichotomous differences between the two democracy models.

Dutch-American political scientist Arend Lijphart has carried out extensive research where he studied and analysed 36 stable Western democracies and their institutional varieties over several decades, distinguishing these two large classifications (Lijphart, 1999). What Lijphart concludes is that “consensus democracy tends to be a ‘kinder, gentler’ form of democracy” (p. 275). Ironically, such a formulation was borrowed from the American conservative candidate George Bush’s acceptance speech for nomination in 1988; he had said: “I want a kinder and gentler nation” (p. 275). Lijphart observes, based on his extensive analysis, that consensus democracies are “more likely to be welfare states” and, particularly intriguing in the context of current research topic, he says they “have a better record with regard to protection of the environment” (p. 275).

Leaning on these assumptions, it seems that Nordic countries already possess some important prerequisites for successful implementations of climate change mitigation measures. Placing this generalisation into a narrower context—the ATP policymaking process—my interest is in exploring how consensus-oriented political culture might impact climate change policymaking processes.

Krick and Holst (2018), who analyse Norwegian and German committee governance through the lens of consensus culture and in that context touch briefly on Lijphart’s classification of consensus democracy, state that consensus-seeking decision-making is driven by *institutional* characteristics of political systems that “*shape and reinforce* political cultures of communication” (p. 154, emphasis added). Interestingly, Lijphart (1999), from whose work this classification derives, saw it from another angle. Despite the fact that in his research he focused on the *institutional* aspect of different forms of state organisation, in his conclusions he put emphasis on the *culture* that *shapes* institutional formation and development. Here, I would rather agree with Lijphart’s explanation that consensual political *culture* is the predisposition, “the basis”, for a well-functioning consensus democracy (p. 306). Having said that, I acknowledge that the picture is probably more complex and context-sensitive. An institutional structure that is built on consensus-seeking decision-making processes certainly strengthens a similar political culture.

The above research on committee governance in consensus cultures is relevant in this context, as some parallels can be drawn between the ATP project design and two committees investigated by Krick and Holst (2018). First, similarly, the ATP policymaking initiative was “supposed to develop a consensual trajectory on highly [...] contested issues that affected” (p. 153) a large group of people—the Arendal region’s over 80,000 inhabitants. The challenging

issue here was to achieve consensus on implementing government-incentivised policy measures that aimed to restrict car use in the region by setting up a toll ring around the cities of Arendal and Grimstad. Second, the ATP project could be seen as an “‘hybrid’ or ‘mixed’” (p. 154) committee bringing together a variety of professionals such as municipal planning experts and employees of the Norwegian Public Roads Administration, who contributed policy-relevant expert knowledge, and cooperating with municipal and regional politicians. A broader organisational spectrum as such could be interpreted as the project leadership’s aim to both ensure relevant knowledge production and build political consensus (Aust-Agder County Municipality, 2019a).

From that notion, that consensus is *inter alia* built on inclusiveness, questions arise: how it is practised in local and regional policymaking? Where and in which forms does it take place, and how does it ensure different groups’ access to knowledge and political participation in times of a rapidly changing media landscape? These are some of the dynamics my later analysis will try to address. To build more theoretical knowledge about how this might work in practice, I look in the next sub-section at a recent case study that had policy dilemmas similar to those of the ATP project involving the planning and/or implementation of restrictive policy measures.

Wanvik and Haarstad (2021) analysed populist resurgence in political processes connected to opposition to road tolls in Bergen. During the spring of 2019, Bergen had planned to implement an extended toll ring around the outer circle of the city. The reasons for this were the national government’s ambitious goal of achieving zero growth in car traffic (Meld. St. 33 (2016-2017), 2017) and the fact that revenues from an existing toll ring had decreased due to reduced car use in general, but also as a result of the increased number of electric vehicles which, in Norway, are exempted from paying road tolls (Wanvik & Haarstad, 2021). Wanvik and Haarstad noted a certain urgency among established political parties to implement the outer toll ring around the city, while being aware of growing opposition against road tolls and uncertainty regarding local government elections just a few months ahead. The authors highlight a thoroughly conflictive nature that sustainability transition has, which challenges the idea of a gradual green transition, and conclude that more diverse participation in sustainability transition must be accepted, making clear references to the recent anti-tolls populist resurgence in Bergen. This, according to the authors, comes with the price that the transition process would be slowed, but it would also give an opportunity to reconsider democratic processes and participation (Wanvik & Haarstad, 2021). In the latter case,

Taking the above case of Bergen and seeing it through the lens of Norwegian consensual political culture, one might assume that conflict avoidance, as one element of the culture (Palonen & Sunnercrantz, 2021), was preferred for the sake of a more “peaceful” policymaking process, a decision that backfired in the implementation stage. Palonen and Sunnercrantz (p. 155), who have analysed the formation of populist forces in Nordic countries, claim that such emergence has “to do with a reaction against the hegemony”. Hegemony, according to the authors, can be seen as “imaginary”, a political tradition that has been collectively agreed upon, unchallenged and preserved through continuous practice; at the same time, paradoxically, “[c]onsensus may also refer to the lack of diversity of opinions” (p. 155). As in the case of Bergen, tensions that gave rise to a populist single-issue political movement that opposed an extended toll ring around the city represented those who felt they were not part of such “established” consensus.

Consensual policymaking must strike a balance between expert knowledge and stakeholder involvement (Krick, 2021). Hanssen, Helgesen, and Vabo (2018) describe such balance-seeking in institutional design through efficiency as one metric. They observe that efficiency in decision-making is increased in committees where only relevant professional actors are involved and inclusiveness is reduced. By contrast, a committee that employs broad stakeholder involvement would be less efficient but more inclusive. These aspects are relevant and useful for later analysis of the ATP project design to examine how this balance was attempted to be achieved, since the outcomes would have affected the inhabitants of the entire Arendal region.

2.3.2. Public sphere and political deliberation

Developments in the information and communication technology (ICT) sector in recent decades have challenged and broadened the meaning of the *public sphere*. The phenomenon has been the research object of social science since its dawn in the 1990s, but, before that, the concept of the “public sphere” was developed and addressed in many of the works of Jürgen Habermas, a well-known German sociologist (Habermas, 1989, p. 1; 2006; cf. Dahlgren, 2009). Habermas links the idea of the “public sphere” to a public arena for information, communication, and deliberation, which ideally is “open to all” (1989, p. 1; Dahlgren). Habermas also observes various usages and meanings of the word “public”, such as “public authority” or “public reception” and others, which, according to him, do not correspond to the

idea of “public opinion” (1989, p. 2). Public, hence, can have various meanings. In his further development of the theory of public spheres, Habermas meant that “modern society lacked such public room for rational dialogue” (Haugseth, 2013, pp. 80–81, author’s translation).

Concepts of the public sphere and deliberative political communication can be analysed together with Bourdieu’s “field theory” (Haugseth, 2013, p. 117). What Bourdieu distinguishes as different “overlapping fields” or types of capital: “political, economic, religious and academic”, each of which giving individuals certain types of status, power, and “access to networks and knowledge” (Haugseth, 2013, pp. 115, 81) and advantages (Jones et al., 2009), could be put in the context of recent citizen initiatives in Norway that oppose climate change mitigation measures (Folkeaksjonen nei til mer bompenger, n.d.; Wanvik & Haarstad, 2021). What sort of ‘capital’ empowers people in the era of the online public sphere to participate, and would politicians recognise new emerging arenas for political deliberation? To what degree do policymakers themselves act as facilitators of public dialogue in the field of climate change mitigation, and do these two ‘fronts’ form a political discussion? One intriguing question is whether a lack of dialogue acts as a driving force for politicisation, as has been the case in anti-road tolls movements in other regions in Norway (Folkeaksjonen nei til mer bompenger, n.d.). One recent study that examined political communication and climate policy implementation in Bergen draws comparable conclusions and refers to populist surge (via online and offline mobilisation) as one community group’s reaction to evolving political discussion they were affected by, while feeling unrepresented in the discussion (Wanvik & Haarstad, 2021).

Habermas’s concept of the public sphere and deliberative political engagement have been widely reviewed, criticised, and built on (Calhoun, 2017; Dahlgren, 2009; Jones et al., 2009). According to Calhoun (2013), public engagement varies across geographic and cultural spaces, and communication via certain defined public spheres cannot be seen as “exhaustive” (p. 102). Dahlgren (2005, p. 158) states that “questions remain about why people participate in [the public sphere] or not”. Furthermore, we now have significantly improved access to information and political engagement via social media platforms, which, in the scattered reality of the online public sphere, means that the Habermasian ideal about the public coming together for deliberation and preferably forming some kind of common understanding is “utopian” (Haugseth, 2013, p. 23).

One might have assumed that the expansion of the Internet and communicative media platforms since the 1990s have had a positive effect on democratic development and would

comply with Habermasian views on “the benefits of the communicative action” (Viitanen & Kingston, 2013, p. 811). The online public sphere has undoubtedly impacted established political deliberation processes. Dahlgren (2005) distinguishes two parallel and contradictory dimensions by indicating that the Internet can both “destabilise” and widen and “pluralise” the public sphere in various ways (p. 148). Later researchers acknowledge that the picture is more complex and are taking increasingly critical stances on how technology companies intervene in politics (Viitanen & Kingston, 2013) and on how new forms of engagement can challenge democratic values, knowledge, and trust (Dahlgren, 2018).

Some earlier research emphasised that communicative interaction can strengthen individuals’ social capital and build solidarity, but is, however, also critical that it offers a platform for ideologies and actions that are interruptive, divisive, and counterproductive (Putnam, 2001). Dahlgren (2005, p. 159) critically elaborates on how Habermasian political deliberation may not always take place on a new media platform; he emphasises the importance of the “reciprocal dynamics that it can generate” and “reinforcing civic culture” that has an actual impact on politics. Lack of reciprocity, as observed in the case of Bergen in Norway, might be seen as the cause of interruptions (in the form of a new political protest movement). Wanvik and Haarstad (2021, p. 13) assert that such interruptions must not necessarily be considered a negative phenomenon and that we might need to “broaden the language of [green] transformation”. Dahlgren (2018) similarly concludes that “[w]e need to learn new forms of political practice to deal with these discursive contingencies” (p. 26). Habermas’s concept of the public sphere, where the deliberative process would “generate legitimacy” (Habermas, 2006, p. 413) and pave the way for unified public opinion, could be viewed as an ideal, but in the scattered online public sphere where polarised one-way messaging rather than deliberation dominates and where different fronts turn “us”—“the people”—against “them,” variously “the government”, we need to include more social science in debates about climate and the environment and imagine new modes of political deliberation (Dahlgren, 2018, p. 24).

The ATP policymaking process bore many similarities to the case in Bergen, where national climate policy guidelines needed to be followed and local solutions for mitigation policies found. The theoretical concepts discussed above and the case of Bergen justify a critical view of the public sphere. There are no clear guidelines for policymakers on how to navigate in this constantly evolving field of citizen engagement, these different levels of climate governance, and this polarised political deliberation. Such complexity poses several challenges, on which I elaborate in the next section.

2.3.3. Societal fragmentation

To understand the wider context in which ATP policymaking took place and how media engaged and impacted the process, I first review literature that addresses social media as an arena for political deliberation. As in the previous section, here also is one of the central concepts of the *public sphere*, but one seen more specifically in its role as a facilitator of social dialogue. I then look at literature that draws attention to increasingly fragmented societal structures. These two aspects are closely connected. Social media offers an easily accessible platform for communication and engagement for diverse groups of stakeholders. My interest in this context is to explore how such diversity in both media landscapes and social structures impacts and challenges climate change policymaking.

The most prominent networks of the modern age are Internet-based social networks, with their potential to enhance civic participation (Dahlgren, 2009). The question that arises in this context and is of interest to the current study is: should online-based networks be recognised as public spheres (Segaard, 2017)? Such networks unquestionably have an impact, and Nordic countries are leading the world in integrating ICT into public services, according to Segaard. Segaard (p. 119) attempts to map preconditions for social media to be recognised as an “arena for political communication between voters and local politicians”. She sees the institutionalisation of social media as a process, and the foundation of this process is that such an arena should prove its usefulness in terms of communication and be accepted and recognised by voters and politicians while “mutually influencing actors and institution itself” (p. 119). An important aspect to consider here in terms of research is to place and compare social media platforms in the context of other, more established communication platforms such as local newspapers, television, and radio. However, as Segaard concludes, more research is necessary to provide empirical evidence that social media functions as a mutual communication arena between politicians and voters.

In the context of the public sphere, it is important to draw attention to some of its limitations. Earlier scholarly work highlights some aspects that would resonate perhaps especially in today’s media landscape. Dewey, who has been described as “the civic optimist” (Dahlgren, 2009, p. 13), points out that there might be “too much publicness” and it can be “divided, scattered and labyrinthine” (Dewey, [1927] 2007, p. 21). But what intrigues most from the perspective of the current research is Dewey’s observation that there is “too little that binds them together into an *entirety*” (author’s translation, emphasis added). Habermas has also

pointed out limitations derived from the development of public dialogue. He argues that due to the expansion of the public in the 18th century in the form of “press and propaganda”, it lost some of the *unity* provided by “the institutions of sociability” and higher education (1989, pp. 131–132, emphasis added). Such development, according to Habermas, gave room for competing private interests on the public platform, which eventually forced changes in legislation and gave wider audiences opportunities to influence public opinion. The latter does not point to a negative aspect related to a wider development of the public sphere but rather a development that makes communication more scattered, complex, and challenging to unify. In his later work, Habermas acknowledges the complexity and emergence of “isolated issue publics” in relation to Internet-based communication platforms, which lead to “fragmentation” (Habermas, 2006, p. 423 and Dahlgren, 2009, p. 158). It becomes, in this context, useful to include Putnam’s concept of “bridging”, by which he signals the need to tie different networks and groups together, which in turn would develop, educate, and empower those networks (Putnam, 2000, cited in Jones et al., 2009, pp. 597–598 and in Haugseth, 2013, pp. 85–86). The challenges, hence, with the proliferation of social networks are fragmentation and potential lack of coherence in political communication.

Fragmentation has also taken place in different social structures, in media landscapes and public opinion (Dahlgren, 2005), but also in the field of climate policy- and decision-making, divided among different institutions and levels of governance (Haarstad, 2016; Roelich & Giesekam, 2018). To complicate the picture even more, urban communities are also described as highly fragmented entities (Hall & Barrett, 2012). In this context, challenging aspects for policymakers are, first, to learn to navigate this fragmented landscape of multi-level climate governance and, second, to develop strategies, or “bridges”, that would effectively address communication and collaboration with and for diverse groups of stakeholders. These aspects have been addressed by several social scientists.

The Habermasian approach has often been referred to by social scientists as conceptual grounds for the development of communicative planning theory, which has its emphasis on communication and the exchange of knowledge between planners and stakeholders (Innes & Booher, 2015). However, communicative planning theory is widely criticised. Innes and Booher distinguish four main dimensions that critics address: “community knowledge versus science, communication power versus state power, collaboration versus conflict, and process versus outcome” (p. 197). These are aspects also present in the ATP collaboration. The ATP was a multi-level collaboration initiative; its goals were defined based on scientific

knowledge and international and national regulations. It addressed local development challenges and had to balance the efficiency of the process versus engagement and communication. Despite the obvious dichotomies of the critique, Innes and Booher build on communicative planning theory through Castells' theory of communication power and suggest that dialogue should include a more diverse set of expert knowledge to avoid divisions, and more effort must be made regarding communication in the context of planning.

The theoretical approach in the second part of the literature review addresses, first, fragmentation in various aspects of modern society, demonstrating the challenge that climate change policymaking is confronted with and, second, the need to develop policy strategies that would help policymakers to better coordinate, communicate, and implement climate policies.

2.4. Local identities

In achieving global and national climate goals, understanding local communities and their concerns is a key element in the efficient implementation of climate change mitigation and adaptation policies. Therefore, the third research question and this section of the literature review address local and rural identities and the role they play in regional collaborative policymaking. Interest in exploring theoretical grounds of local identity came at a later stage of the research, after some data collection and iteration. This interest was specifically driven by data from interviews with local politicians and their reflections on the local way of life and my gaining knowledge about local practices in land use and residential development, which raised questions about the potential conflict between these immediate impressions from one side and expectations in the national guidelines on the other side.

The literature review in this section is narrowed to focus primarily on identity and place connections; it provides understanding about what defines local quality of life and how it might impact local and regional development. The literature selection is therefore partly based on the knowledge that I had already gained through the data collection. It also briefly reviews selected studies carried out in Norway and other Nordic countries, and a lengthier analysis developed by Robert Putnam (Putnam, 2001).

Identity has been brought up in many research papers examining the social impacts of climate change. It raises a plethora of questions regarding "identity construction" and how identity

intersects with politics (Kaijser & Kronsell, 2014, p. 418), or how identity impacts local policy formulations and what can be understood as an individual and municipal place identity (Gustavsson & Elander, 2012; Haugen & Lysgård, 2006; Tørnblad, Westskog, & Rose, 2014). Identity also plays a role in political participation, and in which forms it takes place, that is, “social movements” (Dahlgren, 2009, p. 155).

2.4.1. Identity and place

What defines identity, and how it is formed? The identity question has been examined in different fields of social science, but also in political communication (Lysgård, 2001). This section introduces general aspects related to identity construction, but, since this study is directly related to spatial planning, it will take a narrower approach to the relationship between identity and place. It must be acknowledged that such an approach is not complete and was considered with caution. However, place-related themes were the most dominant aspects that emerged from the research data. The first apparent place-related element was the construction of a “new” “political-administrative” space (Lysgård, 2001, p. 7), namely the Arendal region, which consisted of four selected municipalities. There were in total 15 municipalities in the former Aust-Agder County (Store Norske Leksikon, n.d.). The new, smaller region within the county was named after its largest city, Arendal. My interests related to identity were hence related to how the new construction impacts the place identity of municipalities; how will the sudden inclusion in the new “region” contribute or complicate their participation in the ATP project?

Lysgård (2001, p. 55) distinguishes various aspects that impact identity formation, such as time, space, and social processes; he elaborates that identity formation is strongly impacted by context and formed through “[t]he structuring social process between individuals and between individuals and their surroundings”. What further contributes to the strengthening of identity formation is the meaning that interaction between individuals and their surroundings create (ibid.), as we see also in examples elaborated by Eriksen.

Eriksen (1993, p. 19) explains that “[...] the Norwegian way of life could be related to their recent rural origins”. This perception has been relatively constant in time and is confirmed by later studies. Haugen and Lysgård (2006, p. 174) agree that “[t]he rural way of living has been and still is more or less regarded as the hegemonic norm for ‘quality of life’ in Norwegian

society, and this has had a severe impact on both regional/rural politics and research”. Urban–rural identity is often elaborated in research papers analysing Norwegian local and regional development (Cruickshank, 2006), where urban and rural are sometimes described on opposite scales. Rural focus has been dominant in regional policymaking and research since the Second World War (Haugen & Lysgård, 2006).

At the individual level, Norwegians seem to “place high value on a scattered settlement of the population” (Eriksen, 1993, p. 21). Valuing a rural way of life reinforces Norwegians’ connectedness with their natural surroundings, giving them a strong sense of pride in how nature has become part of their social life through popular outdoor activities:

Norwegians have slowly become an urban people to the extent that many of them live in towns and cities, but they have scarcely become an urban people in their own view. The rural connection and love of nature are very important aspects of the public self-definition of ‘what is typically Norwegian’ (Eriksen, 1993, p. 21).

Based on Eriksen’s reflection, the meaning of rural and what it means can be reconstructed and incorporated into a modern lifestyle and even into policymaking. The individual and the political are strongly connected, as “[t]oday, Norway is equipped with numerous policies that are aimed at the preservation of rural settlements and rural workplaces” (Cruickshank, 2006, p. 179). Regional policies also focus on ensuring economic growth in rural areas and defending the “intrinsic value” of rural life, but they also have to deal with the tensions that such policies create (Cruickshank et al., 2009, 85). The ATP final document clearly addressed some of these tensions, such as the socioeconomic and environmental impacts of urban sprawl through, for example, increased land consumption and car transport and weakened city centres (Aust-Agder County Municipality, 2019a, p. 11).

Local identity has been considered an important defining factor in previous research to explain “the public acceptance of restrictive policy measures”, the aspect that also guides the interest in the current research (Tørnblad et al., 2014, p. 48). The theoretical approach of Tørnblad et al. disconnects place identity from its physical environment as its defining element; it rather “constitutes a social construction [of physical characteristics] which is founded in the perception of individuals and groups” (Lalli, 1992, cited by Tørnblad et al., 2014, p. 48). Lysgård (2001, p. 55) similarly found in an earlier study that a more approachable way of understanding identity was to see it as “socially constructed”.

The above theoretical elaborations will frame further exploration of the ATP case and the question of whether the findings from the current study support earlier analyses by Eriksen (1993) and Lysgård (2001) on rural connections, their role in identity formation, and their impact on local and regional policymaking.

2.4.2. Where we live matters – the urban sprawl

Urban sprawl in Norwegian political discourse is usually referred to as “scattered settlement of the population” (*spredt bosetting*) (Eriksen, 1993, p. 21). This phenomenon is closely connected and often stimulated by real estate development in the Arendal region (Aust-Agder County Municipality, 2019a). The following compares observations from Robert Putnam’s book *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community* (2001) and draws attention to similarities and impacts of American urban sprawl and the Norwegian scattered settlement pattern.

Putnam (2000) has carried out extensive analysis on urban sprawl and how it has affected Americans’ social lives, political participation, social capital, consumer habits and, thus, every aspect of their lives. Putnam’s observations of American urbanisation and the growth of suburbs are relevant to the Norwegian context, as Norwegians are similarly increasingly dependent on cars. The paradox here might be that living close to nature does not mean one lives sustainably.

Putnam (2001, p. 212) reflects that “[i]t is difficult to overstate the symbiosis between the automobile and the suburb”, noting that many Americans describe a second car per household as “‘a necessity’ not ‘a luxury’”. Household investments in passenger cars in the United States have increased, as has “investment in time” (p. 212). As the car gives many families more freedom to choose *where* they settle, it also increases the time they spend on their daily commutes and other necessary trips. The paradox here might be that living close to nature, comparing similar developments in the Norwegian context, does not necessarily mean that one lives sustainably.

Another aspect that Putnam (2001, p. 213) observes in American society in relation to the car and the commute is that they are “demonstrably bad for community life”. Although it is not the single most important factor, “there is [...] strong negative effect of commuting time on informal social interaction” and, as a surprising consequence, it also “lowers average levels of civic involvement even among noncommuters” (p. 213). However, more detailed analysis

indicates that it is not only the time spent on the commute but also the simple physical distance, “a spatial fragmentation”, that negatively affects participation in “local affairs” (pp. 213–214). It might be tempting to draw similar conclusions about Norway, but local contexts differ greatly here. In Norway, citizen lack of interest in local political matters is described by the low local government election turnout, which, as Grindheim et al. (2020) assume, might be explained by the general satisfaction with municipal services; as long as they are delivered, people do not bother to become involved in local politics. Some research data indicate that people have doubts about their competence and agency in attempting to make an impact on local matters (Grindheim et al.). Dahlgren (2009, p. 155) states that political disengagement may not necessarily indicate a lack of interest but may be attributable to different forms of participation, such as “social movements” and “digital networks of activists”. Dahlgren further asserts that “[a]mong such groups, the boundaries between politics, cultural values, identity processes, and local self-reliance measures become fluid”; virtual participation and greater “horizontal communication” contribute to such “fluidity” but also to “fragmentation” (pp. 152, 155). Here, fragmentation appears, as in the previous part of the literature review. Living in a physically fragmented environment seemingly impacts our engagement, or displaces it increasingly into the digital landscape.

Putnam (2001, p. 214) distinguishes one aspect that favourably impacts urban sprawl:

Americans *chose* to move to suburbs and to spend more time driving, presumably because we found the greater space, larger homes, lower-cost shopping and housing – and perhaps, too, the greater class and racial segregation – worth the collective price we have paid in terms of community.

What might be the values Norwegians *choose* above others when they move to rural areas? A report by the Institute of Transport Economics published in 2011 analyses the reasons behind urban sprawl. With examples from the Norwegian context, they note, *inter alia*, that

The majority move out of the city at some later point. They typically move in their 30-40s, and after having established a family. The motive is essentially a desire for larger dwellings (houses) with a garden and a child friendly environment. (Christiansen & Loftsgarden, 2011, p. 16)

These two descriptions bare similarities. Where we live not only has an impact on our individual lives and those of our families but it also impacts community life. Elaborating further on Putnam’s line of thought, it is easy to find parallels in how such homogeneous

clustering might affect integration. A recent study carried out in Norway with refugees of different generations found that “[a]ll generations noticed that Norwegians keep to themselves and found it hard to make contact with them” (Daniel, Ottemöller, Katisi, Hollekim, & Tesfazghi, 2020, p. 8). Eriksen (1993, p. 19) noted similar aspects decades earlier: “[f]oreigners sometimes complain that Norwegians are difficult to befriend; that they jealously guard their personal space and seem worried and slightly afraid when confronted with strangers”. Eriksen reflects on this and assumes that this can be attributed to Norwegians’ “recent rural origins”; as urbanisation in Norway is a relatively recent phenomenon, many natives come from rural backgrounds with modest social lives and few intimate friends.

My assumption, based on the reflections above, is that Norwegian urban sprawl contributes to a lack of diversity in different environments and reinforces homogeneous clustering, choices which would, to a large degree, also impact the next generation, where parents pass the social environment and network on to children, a network that perhaps was already less exposed to diversity. This might contribute to the fact that school classes in certain areas would become more homogeneous with limited access to acquaintances with non-Norwegian backgrounds. Inhabitants with refugee backgrounds are often placed to live close to town or municipal centres, within walking distance from necessary municipal services such as offices of the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (commonly known as *NAV*) and Adult Education centres (*Voksenopplæring*) where Norwegian courses are taught, and, as a direct result, some schools might have considerably more pupils from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Diversity in society, due to such fragmented settlement patterns among different social groups, is hence unevenly distributed.

To balance and diversify urban development, expert knowledge on the positive aspects of living in a sustainable urban environment (e.g., moderately high density, shorter commute time, access to public transport, and access to nature) must be part of spatial planning (Mouratidis, 2019). It would give cities the opportunity to shape their environments in ways that would counterbalance their potentially negative aspects. The above aspects emphasise the important role social science plays in sustainability transition, as spatial development policies are not only about the physical environment and optimisation but also encompass very strong social dimensions.

2.4.3. Place branding

As referred to in the section on *Identity and space*, the beginning of the ATP collaboration also marked the creation of a new political-administrative space—the Arendal region. The county’s motivation behind this new formation was to strengthen the region’s political impact and its access to state funds through the cooperation programme in the upcoming National Transport Plan. The municipalities that formed Arendal’s region were closely connected through their infrastructure, housing, and labour market (Aust-Agder County Municipality, 2019a) but also differed greatly in physical environment and size. My interest here is to explore what might be the characteristics that would help to define a common identity for such a newly formed region and whether it is strong enough to collaborate as one region. Since climate change mitigation was one driver behind the collaboration, I look at its connection with place identity.

Climate consciousness can become part of local identity, as a case study, carried out by Gustavsson and Elander (2012), demonstrates. They researched city place-branding in connection with climate change mitigation in three Swedish towns and asked whether climate change mitigation can “become a marker of place identity through place-branding” (p. 770). The authors distinguish several motivations for towns to do so: applying climate-conscious policies might release state funds for local development; climate-conscious knowledge and capacity is available among professionals who can push the sustainable agenda; the Green Party is often engaged in local decision-making due to the balance of power; and, finally, the economy is a strong argument combined with branding the place from a positive climate-friendly angle.

The latter argument can also pose challenges to place-branding through climate change mitigation. According to Gustavsson and Elander, Sweden is seen, by itself, as an already climate conscious nation, and making excessive investments into climate change mitigation measures would be a hindrance for Swedish manufacturers in the global context. Climate change mitigation must also compete against a variety of municipal services that are taking the majority of budgets, while outcomes of the mitigation measures would be difficult to measure. Hence, the challenge for policymakers is that when uncertainties about economic concerns and the outcomes of the mitigation measures are not addressed, they may negatively contribute to general understanding and acceptance.

Gustavsson and Elander (2012) observe that local environmental conditions in one case municipality did contribute to mitigation-focused place-branding, where the new place identity also seemed to have grown out of *necessity* to address local environmental issues. Such policy direction may then gradually become part of the new local identity, even prior to public awareness about the necessity of climate change mitigation. In the other two cases, they observe that municipalities using climate as an important policy aspect is a relatively new phenomenon, and related more to opportunities to apply for EU funds and to bottom-up initiatives by climate conscious citizens. As seen in the case of Swedish municipalities, needs based on local conditions and access to tangible policy solutions (funding) are important drivers for local climate change mitigation.

The research findings on the three Swedish towns offer a valuable source of information for answers to questions in municipal climate policy planning: how to work towards public acceptance, how to engage citizens, and how to build a positive image around new, more climate-conscious policy measures. Sweden shares many similarities with Norway in cultural and legal contexts and, although geographically different, the challenges described above are directly relatable in the Norwegian context. Gustavsson and Elander (2012, p. 778) draw special attention to one critical aspect that hinders effective policy implementation. In the words of one participant, it “is difficult to uphold services in rural municipalities like these, with small, scattered villages”; the participant mentions cancelled bus lines and recycling spots as examples showing that the municipality gives a dual message: “as a citizen you should behave in a climate-friendly way, however, we will not make it easier for you”. The challenges referred to above are similar to those in many Norwegian municipalities with scattered settlement patterns and are outlined in the ATP strategy (Aust-Agder County Municipality, 2019a).

Local identity can also be something that a city can actively work for, to distance itself from its past or to build a new one (Gustavsson & Elander, 2012). In this context, it can be useful to analyse the research findings to identify how participants from their respective municipalities see themselves and how the local identity intersects with what the ATP strategy stands for. The Arendal municipality, for instance, has set very ambitious climate goals that demonstrate both a strong motivation and perhaps a *necessity* to create a new identity. Grimstad, though small, has several large industries, a university, and various innovative initiatives connected to the university. Tvedestrand and Froland are small rural municipalities that offer peaceful and nature-friendly living conditions for those who prefer that. Arendal is the town with the

most contrasting features, the largest city centre in the ATP region while also having scattered rural areas. It may be challenging to associate a town with such vast contrasts to *one* strong and easily identifiable feature through which it might promote itself. Arendal's municipal plan for climate and energy for 2019–2023 lays down a vision for a new green image for the town: “Arendal will be leading nationally and recognised internationally as an environment and climate-friendly municipality, and a learning partner for other municipalities” (Arendal kommune, 2019, p. 3, author's translation). This is one example of how a climate-friendly approach can become part of the new image and identity building.

As elaborated in previous sections, identity can have various linkages and meanings for individuals and places, and how they intersect with the rest of society. Key aspects to focus on in the later analysis are identifying place and identity connections in the participant municipalities, distinct local environmental challenges, or the lack of either, and whether they have an impact on participant motivation and agency in the context of the ATP policymaking process.

3. Methodology

3.1. Introduction

This thesis is part of a larger research project hosted by the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Agder (UiA) in cooperation with the Centre for Digital Transformation (CeDiT, n.d.), a professional forum for knowledge-based sustainable urban development, Bynett Sør (Bynett Sør, n.d.), and a regional partner organisation for academia and public and private institutions, Klimapartnere Agder (Klimapartnere Agder, n.d.). The research group undertook to examine climate communication and participation, opposition to toll roads and the housing, spatial and transport development plan in the Arendal region (the ATP; Aust-Agder County Municipality, 2019). The purpose of this research project was to provide advice on how to improve climate communication and participation practices at municipal and county levels. The project team was led by Associate Professor Vito Laterza and Professor Alexander Ruser at the UiA. The other members of the team included the PhD candidates Rachel Berglund and Kim Øvland; a former project leader for Bynett Sør, William Fagerheim; an advisor in the Faculty of Social Sciences at the UiA, Erna Synnøve Kjensjord; a former project manager for Klimapartnere Agder, Gunn Spikkeland Hansen and myself as the project's lead researcher of the study and author of the thesis. While I am grateful for the contribution made by the project team, the thesis work remains my own. I took the lead in all aspects of the thesis design, data collection and analysis. I further conducted all the individual interviews for the project and acted as the facilitator for the group discussions held with the participants during the workshops.

3.2. Guiding principles for the research

Co-production of knowledge. One of the leading principles of the present study was the emphasis on the co-production of knowledge, meaning that a horizontal and collaborative approach with a focus on mutual knowledge sharing was adopted. Local politicians and administrators' expertise and knowledge were the primary sources of data regarding context-specific issues in this study. In return, the project team's contribution was to develop a *policy tool* for future use as part of the communications toolbox to help the municipal and county

authorities improve their communication and participation strategies. The co-production of knowledge took the form of feedback from the local practitioners on the policy tool, which brought the academic and practitioner knowledge together.

Reflexivity. Another important guiding principle was reflexivity, namely, a researcher's awareness of their own position, experiences, values, reality, biases and perceptions (Bryman, 2016, p. 388; O'Reilly, 2011, p. 222). The purpose of this self-reflection was to add transparency by clearly positioning myself and critically evaluating my personal attributes, situation, lifestyle, knowledge and interpretative directions. Relevant questions in this context are where do I, as a researcher, stand in this study, and what are my interests in undertaking this study?

In addition to being a researcher, I am an inhabitant of a rural area in Grimstad municipality, which is the second largest among the four municipalities participating in the ATP collaboration. Living in this area, as for many other municipalities in Southern Norway, poses some challenges to one's mobility. I live in a detached house outside the city centre without access to frequent public transport near home, so I am dependent on a car to get to work and for daily errands. I am therefore fully aware of the local challenges when it comes to transport. Many rural areas, including where I live, are without any public transport opportunities except for a school bus in the morning and afternoon on weekdays. In rural areas, the closest grocery store is often several kilometres away. Municipal services, medical care and public offices are mostly located in town centres; however, in the case of Grimstad, the town centre is about 10 kilometres away from where I live. This has led me to contemplate, as I believe many inhabitants in the region have done, my ability to balance my desire to make sustainable choices with my personal transport needs. I am also a foreign citizen who has lived permanently in the region for over 15 years. I am fluent in Norwegian and consider myself well integrated. I have not engaged in any public movements, and my interest in the topic of this study developed gradually through my academic interest. Lastly, although gender is not a central theme in the study, it is something that I as a female researcher consider sufficiently important to include in my suggestions for further research.

Political neutrality. As the study involves specific aspects of national, regional and local politics, and references are made to programs and statements from several political parties, it has been essential for me to maintain political neutrality throughout the study to avoid being

mistakenly seen as favouring one political party over another. I confirm that I am not member of any political party nor have I participated in any political activities or campaigns.

3.3. Research strategy

An open-ended in-depth qualitative research design that brought together “deductive” and “inductive” components was used in this study (Blaikie, 2009, pp. 18–19; Bryman, 2016, p. 21), meaning that the study’s aim was both to explore and explain some of the challenges in the current policymaking and communication practices. The motivation for the study was therefore more “policy-oriented” (Blaikie, 2009, p. 49). New actors and forms of public communication drove some of the theoretical assumptions of this study.

I chose to employ a case study methodology by collecting primary data via in-depth semi-structured interviews and workshop discussions. The contribution of a single case study analysis to scientific knowledge may be disputable due to the sample size, and this therefore limits the generalisability of the study findings. Some social scientists oppose this notion and defend the use of case studies as a valid research method. Bent Flyvberg (2006, p. 241) argued that there are several misunderstandings about this method and that “the case-study method in general can certainly contribute to the cumulative development of knowledge”. In this study, I attempted to contribute to knowledge about local and regional mitigation policymaking and communication processes. Although the case study was context-sensitive, it can offer a comparative approach for similar case studies carried out in Norway and other Nordic countries.

An inductive strategy was considered a relevant approach to gain more knowledge and understanding of the region, the participating municipalities, the character of the ATP process and the dynamics between the participants. In the initial stage of my research, I did not have any underlying assumptions or deeper knowledge about the ATP regional collaboration project and found supporting information in the relevant literature. I regarded the inductive approach as appropriate when exploring the local context with respect to research questions 1, 2 and 3 and addressing the dynamics in the policymaking processes and the role of local identity (Gustavsson & Elander, 2012; Lysgård, 2001; Tørnblad, Westskog, & Rose, 2014; Wanvik & Haarstad, 2021).

A deductive strategy builds on a literature review and preliminary media analysis. The literature showed that the field of climate communication and policymaking is complex and in a state of constant flux (Lyytimäki, et al., 2013, Seggaard, 2017; Stoknes, 2014). A deductive approach was considered relevant for research question 1 and its sub-question, which aimed to explain the role of social media. Although research question 1 was formulated as a ‘what’ question, which indicated a more inductive approach, I had a strong underlying assumption that social media platforms are not recognised as arenas for political deliberation by all actors involved in policymaking processes (Seggaard, 2017). My intention here was to explain this social phenomenon and its role in *why* climate-friendly policy measures are challenging to implement.

3.3.1. Ontological considerations

The ontological assumptions of this study were drawn from constructionism, meaning that my view of social reality is that it is constructed by actors, their understandings and interactions with one another and is not constant in time (Bryman, 2016, p. 29, 375). I considered this an ideal approach because the environment that formed the ‘case’ for this case study encompassed a complex set of social and political relations, actions and changes in the dynamics between the actors during the period of the ATP collaboration. This context was challenging from a research point of view as it was difficult to create any objective criteria to evaluate the meanings and causes of the outcomes of the ATP project.

3.3.2. Epistemological considerations

An epistemological position is based on interpretivism, where the researcher attempts to make sense of and recreate the participants’ reality by interpreting their reflections and other data sources using the researcher’s pre-existing knowledge and theoretical framework (Bryman, 2016, p. 26–28). In this study, a closer examination and evaluation of the participants’ positions as well as the context that surrounded them (i.e. their perceived reality) during the period of policymaking were required.

3.4. Data Collection

The primary data collection for the study was carried out between November 2019 and January 2020. The core of the data came from the workshop discussions, follow-up interviews and a focus group discussion. The primary data were supported by documentary, newspaper and social media content analysis. The scope and role of these analyses is explained in more detail below.

3.4.1. Workshops

The data collection started with the first of two workshops. The first was held by the research team in November 2019 and included local and regional politicians, while the second was hosted for administrators from municipalities, the county and the Norwegian Public Roads Administration (NPRA). The participants took part in structured group work that involved discussing various issues related to the project's research questions. The workshop was organised using the World Café method, which is a concept that encourages the participants to express themselves freely and informally in small groups (The World Café, n.d.). Four questions were prepared for both workshops, with one question per group. The groups were rotated to enable each group to discuss four different questions, with 20–30 minutes per question per group. Each group had one research team member who assumed the role of the facilitator.

The topics first discussed by the workshop groups were the main issues at stake in the Arendal region. Second, the participants were asked how they had dealt with disagreements and conflicting interests around the ATP project and opposition to the toll roads. The third topic addressed communication and the participation channels that the politicians and administrators had used in the negotiation and implementation of the regional strategy plan. This included whether social media platforms had played a role in this, and if so, what role they played. The final discussion topic encouraged the participants to share their thoughts on what had worked and had not worked in the ATP collaboration project and to provide suggestions on how to approach similar processes in future collaborations. Since one of the guiding principles for the research were the co-production of knowledge, these workshop discussions provided an important platform for data collection based on the participants' reflections and evaluations of the project and its outcomes.

3.4.2. Focus group discussion

A focus group discussion was carried out in November 2019 with four politicians from local municipalities and the Aust-Agder County council. The lead facilitator was a PhD research fellow and member of the research team. I acted as an observer. The discussion was arranged for politicians who could not attend the workshops. Given the small number of participants, it was decided to have a focus group discussion. The questions asked and the topics discussed were the same as those in the workshops.

3.4.3. Individual semi-structured interviews

Individual semi-structured interviews, for which all the participants gave their consent, were conducted as a follow-up to the workshops. Six additional participants were contacted for interviews due to their involvement in the ATP project either as administrators, politicians, or communications experts. In total, 21 in-depth semi-structured interviews were carried out. Among them, eight were with administrators from local municipalities, the county municipality and the NPRA, 11 were with politicians and two were with communications experts involved in the ATP process.

The interviews were carried out using an interview template with general questions for all the participants (see Appendix) and some specific questions that addressed the specific role each participant had played in the process. The interviews took the form of conversations, with the intention of letting the interviewees lead the conversations and highlight the aspects that *they* considered challenging or difficult during the collaboration process. The potential weaknesses of this approach were, first, that the research data collected were broad and challenging to compare. Second, and especially when interviewing the politicians, the conversations were more challenging to steer, and it seemed as if few participants took the lead and talked about what they felt more comfortable discussing. However, allowing more flexibility during the interviews was counterbalanced by the participants sharing more nuanced data, which offered deeper insights into their realities (Bryman, 2016).

I conducted all the individual interviews. The respondents were asked to disclose in-depth information on the issues that were specific to their municipalities or institutions in the

context of the ATP. This was intended to provide more detailed knowledge about the issues of concern locally as well as how the local and regional authorities related to each other through the ATP process. The second question addressed financing and how toll roads entered the ATP discussions. Here, the focus was on the participants and their perspectives and opinions about the financing. Finally, since communication was one of the central interests of the study, it was important to gain knowledge about the current communication practices in municipalities and the role the participants thought social media played in the ATP process.

3.4.4. Transcriptions

The primary data collection resulted in 26 hours of audio recordings, and I transcribed verbatim all the workshop discussions, focus group discussions and individual interviews.

Some of the data in the interview transcripts had to be anonymised so as not to reveal the identity of the interviewee or the other participants in the ATP project, in line with the General Data Protection Regulation and Personal Data Act (GDPR) guidelines on the protection of personal data (The European Union, 2018). For instance, when an interviewee described some aspects that related specifically to their position, references were made to the institution rather than the position. Transcribing the interviews before conducting the more structured thematic analysis greatly increased my knowledge of the data and thus improved the quality of the overall analysis.

3.4.5. Documentary analysis

The ATP plan makes reference to various international, national and regional guidelines (Figure 2) that together formed the basis for the establishment of the inter-municipal collaboration project. The scope of the documentary analysis was thus defined by the ATP strategy paper. These documents were reviewed primarily to understand the context, multiple levels of governance, document hierarchy and municipal discretion, but most importantly, the legal frames and dynamics between the participating institutions. Some of these documents have been referred to where it was necessary to add clarity for readers unfamiliar with the subject as well as to understand the contexts and dilemmas the actors faced.

International	National	Regional
The Paris Agreement	National expectations for regional and municipal planning 2019–2023 (14.05.2019)	Regional Plan for Agder County 2030
UN Sustainability Goals	National guidelines for climate and energy planning in the municipalities (04.09.2009)	Climate Map Agder
	National coordinated housing, area and transport planning (26.09.2014)	Climate account for the Agder counties (2015)
	Government's White Paper no. 21 (2011-2012): Norwegian climate policy, and the Climate Agreement 2012	Regional plan for equality, inclusion and diversity in Agder 2015-2027 (LIM-plan)
	Climate Change Act (01.01.2018)	VINN Agder – Regional plan for innovation and sustainable value creation Agder (2015–2030)
	Government's White Paper No. 33 (2016-2017): National Transport Plan 2018-2029	Regional Transport Plan Agder (2015–27)
	Government's White Paper No. 22 (2015-2016), New elected regions - role, structure and tasks	County Road Plan (2017–2024)
	Government's White Paper No. 6 (2018-2019) Tasks for new regions	Strategy Plan for 2017–2030 Agder Public Transport (AKT)
		Traffic Plan for Agder region 2018-2024

Figure 2. General Legal and Strategic Guidelines of the ATP project

Source: Table compiled by the author from data in <https://www.atp-arendalsregionen.no/>

3.4.6. Newspaper, and social media content review

I conducted a review of the content of the regional newspaper Agderposten and Grimstad's local newspaper, Grimstad Adressetidende, from 2014 when the ATP project was established to 2019 when the strategy was adopted. The review focused primarily on the coverage of the ATP collaboration and its most contested subject, the potential implementation of toll roads. My interest here was to observe the media angle regarding the policymaking process and proposed measures.

Since the first research question addressed the role of communication and social media, it was necessary to observe some of the content publicly available on social media platforms. The selection of the social media groups was based on their intention to be publicly involved in the discussions about the ATP policies and/or their opposition to toll roads. Significant attention needed to be paid to the ethical issues arising from the use of data from social media, particularly with respect to the protection of the privacy of individuals and groups (Bryman,

2016). All social media data were therefore collected anonymously (e.g. through anonymised note-taking).

The purpose of this analysis was to determine whether there was a connection between the events occurring in the online media platforms and the developments taking place over the years of the ATP collaboration. Such a “triangulation” of data from different sources is considered important to either support or refute the study findings (Bryman, 2016, p. 386).

The decision to add data from these media items to the general (primary) data set was taken during the interview process and as a result of ongoing iterative reflection since questions arose about whether and how news and social media impacted the ATP process. All those different sources of data were then matched and compared to support or refute the findings (Bryman, 2016, p. 386).

3.5. Thematic analysis

For the data analysis, a thematic analysis approach was used. In a thematic analysis, the researcher applies a qualitative method in which they review and assess the data (transcriptions) based on their research interests and identify regularities, patterns, explanations or other pieces of information that could have significance in explaining the social phenomena or could help answer the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Bryman, 2016, p. 584). These fragments of data are significant to the study and are then grouped under ‘codes’.

During the process of transcribing the interviews and workshop discussions, I created a ‘Notes’ file in which all my initial thoughts and questions were noted down in my own words, and quotes were added in some instances to support an idea. I structured and categorised these initial thoughts and data sources so that I could refer to them later. Based on this analysis, I chose several initial categories (‘codes’) and created a separate Excel file for the codes (Table 3). I also created separate Excel spreadsheets for the workshop discussions, focus group discussion and individual interviews. During the reading and re-reading process, I filled the categories with quotes and created new codes where necessary, renamed some, moved and rearranged the data fragments into different categories and copied the same data into two different categories if it seemed relevant to do so (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In some cases, it

was necessary to clarify additional comments to reduce the need to enter excessive amounts of text, while in other cases, longer quotes were inserted as I considered these important to understand the context. I then critically reviewed the codes and evaluated whether they had connection points and whether there were enough data to form solid patterns or a ‘story’ that would help provide answers to the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Bryman, 2016).

	Consensus culture	Common challenges	Differences	Multiple levels of governance	Media / Communication	Local identity
Politician 1						
Politician 2						
...						

Figure 3. Coding table example as provided by Bryman (2016, p. 586) with selected initial categories.

As seen in Figure 3 above, the category ‘Local identity’ very specifically addresses the third research question: *What role does local (rural) identity play in regional policymaking?* This code was interpreted broadly, and any data that made reference to local values, experiences, cultures, practices and ways of life were inserted in that category. The other categories, for instance, ‘Consensus culture’, ‘Common challenges’ and ‘Differences’ were later analysed with ‘Local identity’ as, together, they formed a unique local context.

During the process of defining the themes, I drew various thematic maps (Figure 4) to help systematise the data and identify patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 91–92). The selected themes were evaluated in light of the whole process, and they were compared to one another to determine the hierarchy and their overall significance to the ATP process outcomes (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

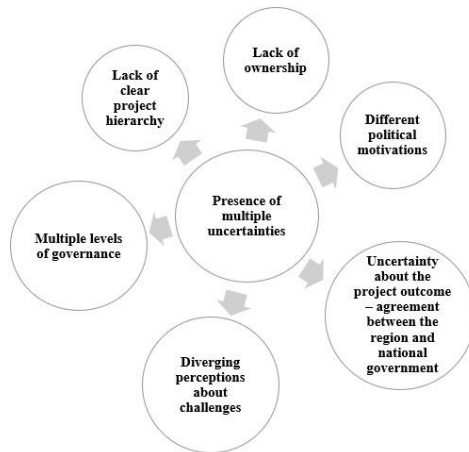


Figure 4. Example of initial “thematic map” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 90) with codes and main theme.

Lastly, during the research analysis, I was cognisant of Brown and Clarke’s (2006, p. 80) critique of how themes ‘emerge’ as if the relevant information were objectively available and the researcher’s role in selecting and making sense of it is passive. I paid attention to my reflexive characteristics and the *choices* made during the theme selection by explaining why they were seen as significant. My role in the interpretation and selection of the themes was thus acknowledged (Bryman, 2016; O’Reilly, 2011).

3.6. Presentation of findings

A narrative approach was used to present the study findings. The reason for this was to offer the reader an insight into the years-long process, to recreate the timeline and context and to draw attention to the events that took place during the period of collaboration and which the participants considered to be significant. Understanding the process is essential to understanding the challenges, perspectives and imaginations of the politicians and administrators. Evidence (i.e. extracts from transcripts, events that occurred, media coverage, etc.) is therefore presented with the analysis.

3.7. Limitations

One of the limitations of this study is the lack of broader data about citizens' perspectives on the most contested issues addressed by the ATP. However, the study does reflect the experiences of the politicians and administrators involved in the ATP process, which was the study's aim. The study findings also indicate, especially in the case of the politicians, what they *thought* the inhabitants of the region felt about *road tolls* – the main financing mechanism of the ATP policy. To balance this and obtain a broader understanding of the effects of climate change policymaking, academic literature dealing with how people respond to such policies (or the lack of them) and messages was reviewed. In addition, traditional news media coverage during the years of the ATP policymaking were observed, and anonymised data from social media group discussions were collected. Although attempting to add a broader perspective, the data collected from the latter two resources were predominantly one-sided and therefore did not represent the perspectives of the wider population to the extent it was hoped they would.

A further limitation is that municipalities were not represented in equal numbers in the research project. Notwithstanding, their representation was proportional to the size of the municipalities, and more politicians and administrators from the two larger municipalities (Arendal and Grimstad) were interviewed.

Third, the gender balance among the participants could not be increased during the study as the majority of the politicians and administrators involved in the ATP work were men. Overall, it must be acknowledged that the group of participants were not very diverse; however, they *were* representative of the reality of the municipal, county, and public office administrators and politicians.

3.8. Ethical considerations

Considerable attention was paid to ethical issues during the planning and data collection stages. The bulk of the study data came from interviews with politicians and administrators. Local politicians are public figures who must expect public scrutiny, which includes being the subjects of research (Norwegian National Research Ethics Committees, 2016). Nevertheless, as stated in the Guiding Principles, a politically neutral line was maintained throughout the

study. Moreover, municipal officials are in the service of the public and are funded by taxpayers. Even though they are not considered public figures, they too must accept the public interest in and scrutiny of their work (Norwegian National Research Ethics Committees, 2016). This, however, does not mean that there were no risks to the participants. The potential for risks and harm to the participants was evaluated throughout the study. No matter the participants' public roles, every interviewee's dignity, right to privacy, integrity and other elements relating to ethics were upheld in line with the guiding principles (Norwegian National Research Ethics Committees, 2016). The study findings are presented in a way that cannot lead to the identification of any of the participants, and thus potential harm from participating in the study was avoided. Strict procedures with respect to free and informed consent were followed. As a researcher, it was my duty to convince the participants of my impartiality, objectivity and lack of personal interest.

Part of the data collection was carried out through the observation of social media data that was not only publicly accessible, but also intended for a public audience; no personal data were collected, stored, recorded or processed in any form through these observations.

Attention was also paid throughout the study to preventing the disclosure of personal data that could lead to the identification of and potential harm to individuals and groups (Bryman, 2016; Norwegian National Research Ethics Committees, 2019). The participants' personal data were processed confidentially and in accordance with the GDPR (The European Union, 2018). When quoted in the thesis, no reference was made to any pseudonyms or numbers connected to the participants, thereby guaranteeing their full anonymity.

4. Findings and analysis

4.1. Multiple levels of climate governance

The Norwegian government's long-term policy to achieve zero growth in car traffic and support sustainable transport solutions is coordinated through collaboration projects with urban regions. An urban region consists of several municipalities. Three governmental levels are involved in climate change mitigation policymaking: state, region, and municipality. The county authority has an important role in coordinating the collaboration between different levels of governance. The current state–region climate change mitigation model is challenging, as the government support for sustainable transport projects is preconditioned on the establishment of road tolls in larger urban regions (Meld. St. 33 (2016-2017), 2017). However, local and regional interests may not always coincide. Hence, regional areas and transport planning are closely connected to national climate change mitigation and transport policy.

To understand the dynamics of the ATP policymaking process, it must be viewed in connection with the Norwegian governmental model. As briefly described in the *Introduction*, governing authority is divided between three different levels: national, regional, and local. The county municipality, in the form that it functions now, was established in the mid-1970s. Its scope of responsibility has undergone changes in the last few decades, and questions about the necessity of the two different levels of local steering have been raised (Grindheim, Heidar, & Strøm, 2020; Hanssen, Helgesen, & Vabo, 2018). Each level has its own directly elected representatives and clearly divided set of responsibilities. For example, school transport and environmental protection are delegated to the counties. Such division brings different dynamics and motivations into the regional collaboration and may explain the stronger motivation of the county authority, in the case of ATP, to find solutions for more sustainable transport and lower GHG emissions.

Although municipalities in Norway enjoy relatively high autonomy, government policy in recent years has strengthened the role of counties in regional development. They are seen as important actors in choosing a 'strategical direction for development', 'mobilisation' and 'link between different levels of governance' (Hanssen et al., 2018, p. 162). These dynamics were supported by the research data, where the county took an active role as a coordinator and formal leader in the ATP project.

The Arendal region is classified as a medium-size urban region, and it is not included in the current subsidy package. The establishment of the ATP project demonstrated the region's motivation to be part of such state–region collaboration (Aust-Agder County Municipality, 2019a). To further strengthen their position and have an impact on national transport policy planning, the five medium-size urban regions, including Arendal, have established a network for this purpose (Agder Fylkeskommune, n.d.). This network adds a horizontal dynamic to the policymaking processes.

As the research progressed, several aspects emerged from the data that gave a strong indication that regional policymaking and communication needed to be seen in connection with local identities, especially because the Arendal region as a *region* is a recent construction. The Arendal region was defined as a geographical and institutional entity within the framework of the ATP collaboration and includes four neighbouring municipalities in the former Aust-Agder County in Southern Norway: Arendal, Grimstad, Tvedestrand and Froland. This new region was institutionalised through the ATP collaboration and is now also recognised as such in the new National Transport plan for 2022–2033 (Meld. St. 20 (2020–2021), 2021).

Interview data revealed that the municipalities that formed the Arendal region had differing interests, motivations, and agency. However, it is not clear what formed the identity of the Arendal region as a new administrative construction, with its own challenges, interests, and motivations.

4.2. The context of the ATP collaboration

The ATP project started its collaboration in 2014. It was partly motivated by the prognoses from Statistics Norway (SSB), which indicated that the region's population would grow in the next 20 years by 13,000. This would increase the need for transport and housing and pose traffic challenges for the current infrastructure if no restrictive measures are implemented (Aust-Agder County Municipality, 2019a). Another reason for collaboration was the national government's subsidy package (the Urban Growth Agreement), a state–region cooperation to co-finance sustainable transport solutions. The agreement was preconditioned on the region agreeing to establish toll roads to reduce road traffic before the government agreed to allocate subsidy funds (Meld. St. 33 (2016-2017), 2017). The region, which is usually formed by

neighbouring municipalities around the largest city, must reach a consensus between all parties involved. The contrasts between collaborating municipalities can be vast in terms of population, urban/rural characteristics, and geographical settings.

Another complexity in the regional area and transport planning is that these processes are usually time consuming, starting with policy planning and research to build up solid factual knowledge about the challenges and possible solutions in the region. Such extensive analysis and preparatory work were carried out by and on behalf of the Aust-Agder County Council administration.

During the almost five-year ATP collaboration, several events occurred that impacted the planning process. Two local elections were held, and a third was scheduled to take place a few months after the final hearing of the plan in Municipal County. After the project began, the ATP group had some initial meetings before the first municipal elections were held in 2015. This resulted in a change of some representatives in the ATP political steering group, and, as one Arendal politician described, it impacted the continuity of the process (focus group interview, November 2019). Although the transfer of power is part of democratic processes, it interrupts process continuity, especially when policymaking occurs over several years.

Some administrators admitted that the process was taking too long (interview, Tvedestrand administrator, January 2020) and that it might have caused a loss of enthusiasm in the project (interview, Arendal administrator, December 2019). However, it also had a positive side, as such processes need to mature (interview, Froland politician, January 2020; Interview, County Council administrator, November 2019).

Year	Events
2014	The ATP project starts its collaboration
September 2015	The local elections
April 2017	The National Transport Plan for 2018-2029 was presented by the Government
Spring 2017	Start of the mobilisation against road tolls policy in other urban regions in Norway
May 2017	Grimstad has had signature campaign to arrange local referendum on toll roads
June 2017	The ATP project and feasibility study are presented by project leader and all four mayors in <i>Agderposten</i>
September 2017	The parliamentary elections
October 2017	Grimstad municipality announces its departure from the Urban Environment Package (toll roads)
May 2019	Arendal municipality votes against implementation of the Urban Environment Package (toll roads)
June 2019	The adoption of the final document, the ATP Strategy Plan
September 2019	The local elections

Figure 5. The ATP process 2014 – 2019, events timeline.

Sources: Table compiled by the author from the data available at www.agderposten.no, www.gat.no, www.nrk.no, www.atp-arendalsregionen.no, www.valgresultat.no, anonymised online sources.

The selection of events in the timeline in Figure 5 is based on participants' comments on what affected the process or had significance as well as on media and social media analyses carried out during the research. The table is illustrative, not exhaustive, and additional events that took place could have been presented here, for instance, the national movement against road tolls prior to the 2017 parliamentary elections, which, as many participants and politicians said, affected feelings and attitudes in the Arendal region (interviews, the NPRD, Arendal, Tvedestrand, the County Municipality administrators, November 2019–January 2020). The purpose of presenting the timeline events here is to show the context in which the collaboration took place.

4.3. The ATP project design

The ATP cooperation was built on several international, national, and regional regulations, strategies, and guidelines (see Table 1), among which the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals (hereinafter SDG) were particularly relevant. Sustainability as a guiding principle for all development in Norway was already spelled out in the government's White Paper in 2012 . The national expectations for regional and municipal

planning constitute SDGs as basic principles for all municipal planning (The Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation, 2019).

Building on a broad spectrum of government papers and regulations, the ATP collaboration also sought to achieve broad acceptance regionally. Therefore, the project design featured a consensual approach from the beginning. Each municipality and county was represented by three politicians in the ATP political steering group: mayor, deputy-mayor, and opposition leader (altogether fifteen politicians). To assist the political steering group and provide expert knowledge in the areas of transport and housing, an administrative strategy group was established, represented by municipal, county, and NPRA administrators. Other cooperation partners for the project were the County Governor of Agder, who is the government's representative in the region, and Agder Public Transport Company (Aust-Agder County Municipality, 2019a). Occasionally, local business associations were engaged as well.

Norwegian political culture is described as consensual (Krick & Holst, 2018; Palonen & Sunnercrantz, 2021). The consensual approach to collaboration was expressed in various ways. The ATP project leadership emphasised that the County was 'very humble and receptive to municipalities' input, not trying to tell them how they should be. [...] [i]t should not be a plan made hierarchically, it should be a plan made in close partnership with the four municipalities' (interview, County administrator, November 2019). The ATP final document, a regional strategy, states that although it is not legally binding, 'it is founded in cooperation and agreement on strategies' (Aust-Agder County Municipality, 2019a, p. 24).

From a project design perspective, the consensual approach had some weaknesses. It was founded on the idea that consensus would be maintained throughout the process, and it lacked a strategy for handling disagreements. Agreement, however, proved to be difficult to maintain. Diverging opinions, interests, and motivations intervened, disrupting deliberation. Figure 5 shows the ATP collaboration process and how it would have continued if the consensus had been maintained between all participants.

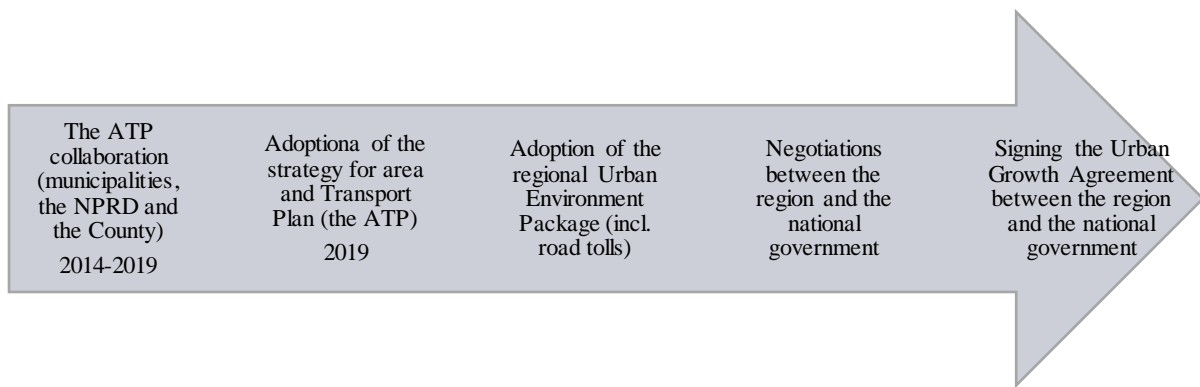


Figure 6. The ATP cooperation process Figure compiled by the author.

When the Grimstad municipality, in the middle of the process in autumn 2017, declared that it was not supporting the toll road policy, it ended further discussion in the group. This caused frustration among politicians from other municipalities, who argued that it was premature decision and undermined the whole project. However, the dialogue on toll roads as a financing mechanism for the region did not continue. One county politician explained that ‘it is out of the question for us to try to get municipalities to change opinions or try to force an agreement when there was disagreement’ (focus group discussion, November 2019). In order to maintain consensus in the group, the controversial topic was removed from agenda. The project leadership separated financing mechanisms (including toll roads) from the policy plan, continuing the collaboration with a non-binding strategy.

These research findings confirm the weaknesses in consensual policymaking. Paradoxically, a consensual approach may become exclusionary and less diverse by not allowing contradicting views to be part of the discussion (Palonen & Sunnercrantz, 2021). Furthermore, it struggles to strike a balance between broad actor engagement and efficient decision-making (Hanssen et al., 2018; Krick, 2021).

4.4. The case municipalities

The ATP collaboration was taking place between Aust-Agder County and four neighbouring municipalities. The two largest municipalities, Arendal and Grimstad, are both towns and municipalities, while the two smallest have little municipal centres. All municipalities have

strong rural characteristics, and part of the municipal territory has a scattered settlement pattern. The smaller municipalities often refer to themselves as rural municipalities.

The statistics presented in Table 6 include the populations of the municipalities. The table also shows the number of detached houses compared to the number of flats, indicating that living in houses is preferred and also possible due to rural characteristics. The table also presents two services (among many) that the county and municipality must deliver. School transport is the County municipality's responsibility, while elderly care belongs to the long list of municipal social services. Transport and area planning are closely connected. Continuing urban sprawl would increase the need for transport, GHG emissions, and expenditures. The final ATP document signalled, *inter alia*, that an ageing population was one aspect that the strategy must consider. With such ageing, the need for social services will increase, and future area planning must consider mobility and accessibility from the perspective of the elderly population.

The reason the statistics are presented is to show the differences between the municipalities, their settlement patterns, and the percentage of people who need municipal and County services. Table 6 shows that the rural municipalities, Tvedestrand and Froland, must spend remarkably more of their budgets on social services, as the large distances in rural areas make service delivery more expensive. The smaller numbers of inhabitants in these municipalities also mean less tax revenues, hence contributing to more costly social services.

Municipality	Population	Detached houses	Flats	Pupils receiving school transport 2019	Recipients of home care aged between 67-79 years old
Arendal	45 064	14 434	2 383	20,5 %	57,1 per 1000 citizens
Grimstad	23 610	7 573	1 415	19,6 %	57,8 per 1000 citizens
Tvedestrand	6 058	2 672	153	33,5 %	73,4 per 1000 citizens
Froland	5 966	2 212	166	43,2 %	87,8 per 1000 citizens

Figure 7. Municipality population, housing, and social services statistics. Source: Table compiled by the author from the data available at (Statistics Norway, 2020)

Comparing municipalities by the amount of their GHG emissions, larger municipalities score highest (see Table 7). However, road traffic is the biggest emitter in all municipalities, which explains the national government's emphasis on reducing car traffic in urban regions, as it would significantly reduce overall emissions (Meld. St. 33 (2016-2017), 2017). In addition, Grimstad and Arendal have emissions from industry activities.

Municipality	Industry, oil, and gas	Energy supply	Heating	Road traffic
Arendal	3 340,2	-	5 648,4	31 810,1
Grimstad	1 332,8	73,6	1 648,1	14 917,5
Tvedestrand	-	-	692,2	7 942,3
Froland	-	-	532,5	4241,6

Figure 8. The emission of three GHG gases (CO₂, methane (CH₄), nitrous oxide (N₂O) in four ATP municipality shown in four different categories measured in tons of CO₂ equivalents (Norwegian Environment Agency, 2020). Source: Table compiled by the author from the data available at Norwegian Environment Agency <https://www.environmentagency.no/>

4.4.1. Municipalities' size, agency, and motivation

As described above, the four participating municipalities differed in their territorial size, number of inhabitants, and other characteristics. One of the first themes that emerged from the interviews and workshop discussions was the differences between the four neighbouring municipalities. This raised a question: How did the size of the municipalities impact their participation in the ATP? Similar research carried out with four different municipalities in Sweden indicates that size and administrative capacity *can* have an impact, but it cannot be considered as the single defining factor, and the wider context must be considered (Lundqvist & Borgstede von, 2008).

Lundqvist and Borgstede von (2008, p. 302) ask 'whether size and capacity influence smaller municipalities in an urban conglomeration area to seek joint action through negotiated agreements to avoid de facto dominance by the large city'. The findings from this research support that assumption. Froland's and Tvedestrand's higher motivation might partly be attributed to their size, as they could see more benefits of being part of the regional strategy planning projects that affect them locally (interviews, Froland and Tvedestrand municipality politicians, November 2019, January 2020). Importantly, the two smallest municipalities did not have to fight the uncomfortable political battle at home about the restrictive policy measures. Road tolls, if implemented, would have been established around the city centres of Arendal and Grimstad. This may have positively impacted their motivation to participate in the ATP process. The question smaller municipalities asked was how they would benefit from supporting the ATP collaboration. Simply put, there was more to be gained as the funds gathered through the road tolls and the following state subsidies would have been distributed between the four municipalities.

The municipalities' size seemed to define some of the attitudes impacting the project collaboration. As one administrator from the Norwegian Public Roads Administration stated, 'Grimstad is probably the kind of town that has difficulties to tackle changes. Our analysis showed that Grimstad has a small-town structure, but is growing, while it was not willing to steer it as if they were bigger' (interview, November 2019). Politicians from Grimstad saw the size of the municipality through their local/rural identity. Some of the participants' place identity seemed to be tied to their ambitions.

An Arendal politician and administrator made references to the construction of a new place identity for the town, aiming to become climate conscious (interview with Arendal administrator, December 2019; interview with Arendal politician, January 2020). As the largest town in the region, Arendal had the most severe traffic challenges compared to the other municipalities. The tight infrastructure and merging housing and labour markets between all four ATP municipalities contribute to the traffic challenges in Arendal while not affecting the other municipalities significantly (Aust-Agder County Municipality, 2019a). This seemed to be one of the major motives for Arendal to participate in regional collaboration. Common among municipalities with higher motivation to participate was a specific local challenge and the possibility to solve it collectively through the ATP project.

Through the iterative process, the question emerged of whether a municipality’s size mattered in terms of its motivation and agency. As elaborated above, the participating municipalities share some similar features but also have key differences. These differences also seemed to impact their motivation and agency (see Table X). As in Froland’s case, motivation was closely linked to benefits, that is, the individual gain the municipality expected from their participation, for instance, hoping to co-finance bike lane construction through the collaboration and increase local traffic security. These measures, as well as traffic challenges in Arendal, required collective effort to solve (interviews, Froland and Arendal politicians, November 2019–January 2020). In comparison, the interview data did not indicate that the Grimstad municipality had any defining issues to solve through regional–municipal collaboration, which may explain their level of motivation (interviews, Grimstad politicians, November 2019–January 2020).

	Motivation	Agency
More	Arendal Froland Tvedestrand	Grimstad Arendal
Less	Grimstad	Froland Tvedestrand

Figure 9. Municipalities’ motivation and agency in participation of the ATP project.

Figure 9 maps the motivation and agency of the four ATP participant municipalities. This division is based on the findings from the primary research data, interviews, and workshop discussions. First, it must be clarified what is meant by ‘motivation’ and ‘agency’ in this context. Here, ‘motivation’ indicates a participant’s general interest in being part of the ATP project and seeing value in expected outcomes for one’s respective municipality. ‘Agency’ refers to participants’ actual and imagined capacity to influence the outcome of the ATP collaboration. To evaluate agency, two indicators were considered, the municipality’s size and administrative capacity and their own reflections on their role in the ATP process together with other participants’ reflections about them. A second important aspect to clarify is that the categories ‘more’ and ‘less’ do not indicate the extreme ends of the scale. For instance, evaluating Grimstad as a participant with less motivation does not mean that Grimstad lacked motivation, just that it had less motivation compared to the other municipalities. The expected outcome from the ATP collaboration for Grimstad did not seem to be the motivating factor for the municipality (interviews, Grimstad politicians, November 2019, January 2020).

This mapping helps to visualise the different perspectives that the participating municipalities had. The agency and motivation aspects are closely connected to the rest of the analytical framework provided in next sections.

4.5. How consensus building worked during the ATP process

4.5.1. Consensual policymaking in multi-level network

Norwegian political culture can be described as consensual (Krick & Holst, 2018; Palonen & Sunnercrantz, 2021). Among its many positive aspects, consensual policymaking is more inclusive and flexible (Lijphart, 1999), which helps to ensure that policy measures will gain the widest possible acceptance. As noted above, this consensus orientation was affirmed on several occasions by a number of participants.

Several aspects of the ATP collaboration supported the idea of consensual policymaking. First, the way the project was organised allowed a broader political spectrum, including municipal coalition and opposition representatives, to participate in discussion and strategy shaping. Second, efforts to build consensus were facilitated by the dialogical process in steering group meetings, and in meetings between the project management team and single

municipalities when the latter felt it necessary to address matters of local importance in greater depth—as in the case of Froland (the smallest municipality) and others (Interview, Froland politician, November 2019). Third, the project leadership and other politicians clearly expressed a desire to build the regional collaboration on the principle of consensus. In general, both administrators' and politicians' views about the ATP were overwhelmingly positive when addressed in the workshops and interviews. The County Council administrator emphasised the need for unity from the very start: “[w]e must stand together here; we must work for consensus so that everyone feels an obligation. That was the first thing I said when we started in 2014” (Workshop discussion, County Council administrator, November 2019). On the politicians' side, one city mayor was decisive: “Everyone must be a winner. And, of course, everyone must be allowed to negotiate on something that is important to them” (Interview, politician, January 2020).

The collaboration process was flexible in the sense that every municipality *did* secure something that was important for them. For instance, as a general principle laid down in the ATP final document, 80% of planned future growth (housing development) in Arendal and Grimstad will be in prioritised areas close to city or municipal centres, and in a few selected local centres. Exceptions were made for the rural municipalities of Tvedestrand and Froland, where 30% of housing development will be allowed outside municipal centres, prioritising defined local centres (*knutepunkter*) for the remaining 70%. In Grimstad, one rural area (Homborsund) was defined as separate local centre (*knutepunkt*) despite its distance from the city centre and other municipal services. The overall impression from the interviews was that municipalities were positive about the collaboration, and that finding a balance between different levels of governance was part of their everyday practice (Interview, Grimstad politician, November 2019).

Overall, the interviews confirmed that the majority of participants were motivated, but it also seemed that they wished to avoid controversy. For instance, the interviews and workshop discussions with politicians revealed that climate change mitigation *per se* was not a central topic in discussions, despite being identified as one of the ATP project's key goals. Some administrators felt it would be strategically preferable to “justify” the ATP initiatives by focusing on issues that inhabitants could relate to in their daily lives, such as traffic challenges. Climate goals were not considered “good enough” as an argument to “sell” the policy to the people (Workshop discussion, administrators, November 2019). This approach supports the literature that, because climate change is perceived as “distant in time”, it

provides insufficient motivation for citizens to change their behaviour (Stoknes, 2014, p. 161).

As another example of the desire to keep policymaking peaceful and consensual, avoiding major controversies, the project work was deliberately framed to avoid forcing municipalities to take a position on toll roads. However, it was clear from the start that, to enter a state-region partnership to co-finance sustainable transport and infrastructure, regions would have to implement road tolls. Despite this consensus-oriented approach, Grimstad municipality declared that it would not support the toll road policy. As the project leadership lacked the tools to tackle such a controversy, the discussion ended, although the majority was positive.

Although Aust-Agder County was the formally designated leader and coordinator of the ATP process, the horizontal democratic approach was emphasised from the outset: “[the ATP] shall be a plan made in close partnership with four municipalities” (Interview, County Municipality administrator, November 2019). This was motivated by a desire to achieve broad political acceptance for the strategy and subsequent implementation: “[the ATP] has no value if there is no political will to follow it up in municipalities” (Interview, County Municipality administrator, November 2019). For that reason, borders were blurred in the regional strategy planning process. The power balance between municipalities and county constituted a dilemma in relation to the local-regional planning hierarchy. One County politician explained that while Grimstad and Froland had attempted to characterise the ATP plan as a guide for municipal planning, some politicians in the County held that the ATP should define the overall strategy for municipal plans to follow (Interview, December 2019). The same politician went on to say:

[t]here was a political disagreement; the Christian Democrats (KrF) and the Labour Party (Ap) were very much in favour of this regional plan as superior, with which [municipalities] must comply. However, the Conservative Party (H), the Progress Party (FrP) and the Liberal Party (Venstre) believed that the municipal council’s decision is considered the most democratic. (Interview, County Municipality politician, December 2019)

The final version stipulated that “[the] ATP for the Arendal’s region is a strategic and overall plan that requires elaboration and realisation through municipal plans” (Aust-Agder County Municipality, 2019a, p. 24), indicating more clearly its hierarchic position. One county administrator agreed that “[u]nless there is political will to follow up on the [ATP] principles

in the municipal plan, the plan has no value [...] unless you've managed to sell it to the municipality that the municipality's politicians would actually follow it" (Interview, County council administrator, November, 2019). On that basis, the process was initiated top-down by the County while the project design adopted a horizontal consensus-seeking approach.

The interviews revealed that representatives of the County Municipality—both administrators and politicians—were aware of the delicate balance and sensitivity needed to ensure good cooperation with municipalities, and some resistance may have been expected from the municipalities' side against an assumed top-down leadership that would potentially limit their municipal autonomy. The following comment from the County Municipality administrator confirms that the collaboration was consensus-oriented from the start:

The challenge, when you sit in the County Municipality, is to create trust in municipalities, not least politically. And I was keen on trust-building [...] For the County Municipality, challenge number one was to be very humble and responsive to get input what municipality thinks, and not to try to tell them how they should be. [...] it should not be a plan made by County Council, it should be a plan made in close partnership with the four municipalities (Interview, November 2019).

Despite these signals, one Grimstad politician was convinced that the County's approach was generally more top-down: "[t]hey want to control us a little more than we think is ok. They cling a little more to the national level, and we then think that we do not always fit so well into the national objectives" (Interview, Grimstad politician, November 2019). To counter this dynamic and establish the grounds for more consensus-oriented collaboration, one leading County Municipality administrator made the following point to the ATP steering group: "[...] I know there is a certain resistance to proposals that come from regional level. [...] many municipalities feel that the County is superior, makes a lot of demands and raises objections [...]" (Interview, County Council administrator, November 2019).

As the study findings confirm, consensual policymaking also poses some challenges. Among its potential negative aspects, the different opinions and inputs can make the process more fragmented and time-consuming (Grindheim, Heidar, & Strøm, 2020). Gathering inputs from a diverse group of stakeholders and public actors is also a challenging task—especially in 2019, when political dialogue was interrupted by imminent local government elections and by anti-toll road movements in other urban regions.

In conclusion, it is important to note that the research data do not clearly indicate that power dynamics was an issue throughout the process. Nevertheless, the possibility that it affected the motivation of some participants cannot be ruled out.

4.6. The ATP communication

In the early stages of defining the research focus, the initial assumptions were that there existed a clear fixed strategy for communication, and that one possible angle would be to describe and analyse this strategy from the perspective of earlier scholarly works on measuring efficacy and positive or negative signals embedded in certain types of messages (Brulle, 2010; Feldman & Hart, 2016; O’Neill & Nicholson-Cole, 2009; Nisbet, 2009; Stoknes, 2014).

The first findings of the research revealed that there was no fixed communication strategy as such. The initial theoretical assumption about the existing communication strategy and how the research could then evaluate the character of potential messages had to be dropped and the research focus redefined. The focus was then shifted towards detecting the complexity of issues surrounding the communication. The broader questions that arose during the process of re-design were: what made the communication aspect complex; what were the reasons for lack of communication; and how did this impact the policymaking process and its outcome?

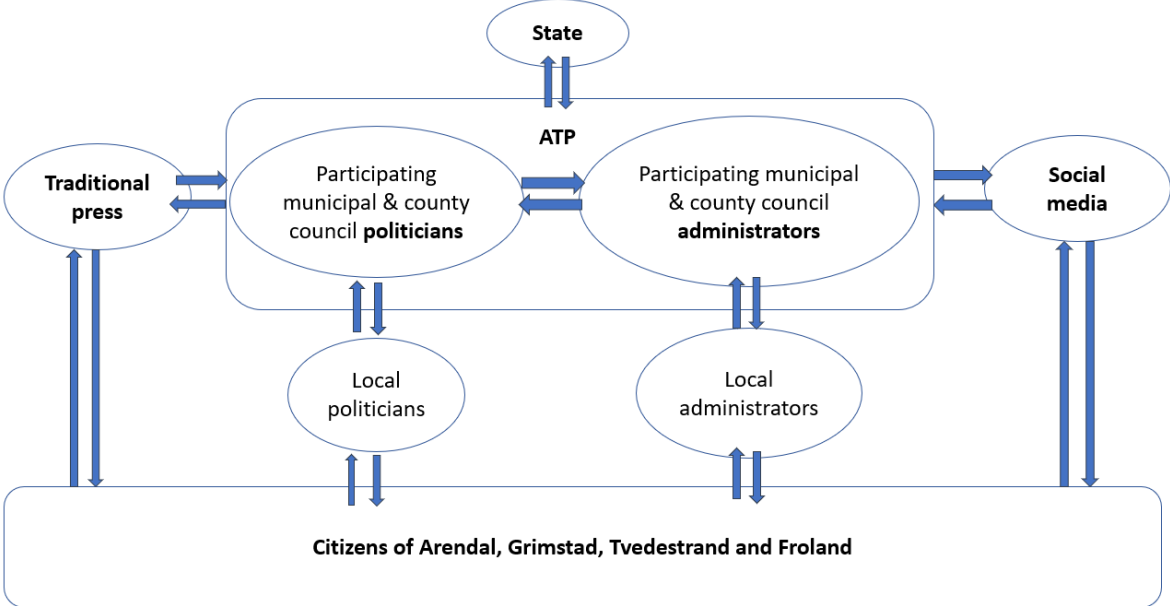


Figure 10. The ATP communication map

As the research progressed, a complex patterns of the communications inside the regional ATP project emerged. Figure 10 above maps the patterns of *actual* and *possible* or *expected* communication flows based on the interview data collected. It does not present a complete analysis of the communication flow detected in relation to the ATP; rather it seeks to present

the tendencies that emerged from the data. Actual communication was taking place either due to the project design (between the ATP administrators and politicians) or due to the fact that the research data provided evidence that it was taking place (between the ATP steering group and local business associations, for instance). Some administrators reflected on the process and suggested that more regular meetings with politicians would have helped to understand each other's perspectives. The county municipality expected that politicians who participated in the ATP project would be the link between the project and municipalities by taking the project's discussions with them to their home municipalities.

As the project collaboration took place over several years, and some politicians were participating in it through their two election periods, one county municipality administrator expressed disappointment that during that time these politicians did not actively communicate their knowledge to other politicians in their home municipalities, or perhaps did not communicate enough (Interview, November 2019). Thinking back and evaluating the importance of better information flow, the administrator said: "We should have made tougher demands on politicians, I think we should have had the courage to do that. It was almost as if we had to follow them home and tell them that now you have to go and inform the other politicians about what you have heard in the ATP steering group" (Workshop discussion, county council administrator, November 2019). Few politicians admitted that they could have done better in communicating the knowledge gained through the ATP collaboration to their party politicians in municipal councils.

Interpretation of interview data led to the emergence of two clear patterns that formed the basis for two themes: the political lack of ownership; and the presence of multiple uncertainties. Several administrators and politicians signalled that communication was an important part of the ATP process, but there seemed to be different understandings about delegation and scope of that responsibility.

Politicians were often signalling that it was administration's task to communicate, indicating that communication was an administrative process itself. This assumption might have come from common municipal practices, wherein communication advisors maintain the website where the municipality informs citizens about municipal policies and decisions. Municipal planners gave an impression in the interviews and workshop discussions that they took ownership for communication or mentioned that communication could have been done better. They also signalled that they did not have capacity for that (Interviews, municipality

administrators, 2019–2020). From the politicians' side, there appeared to be reluctance to consider communication as part of their duty in policymaking processes.

The ATP steering group (politicians) had taken a study trip to Skien and Porsgrunn, two towns that were part of the Grenland urban region, which had successfully implemented road tolls in 2013 (Bypakke Grenland, n.d.). The purpose of the trip had been to learn from Grenland's experience in going through the planning, negotiation, and implementation processes in the same policy areas. Skien's approach was described as very clear and well-communicated, and the mayor of the town as very proactive. When asked in interviews what the Arendal region could have learned from Skien, politicians' answers were vague. As one mayor reflected, "One cannot put it in the copy machine and say that this is what we should have done. It does not work, because there are cultural differences, and different challenges" (Interview, January 2020). Meanwhile, one opposition politician felt confused about how they as opposition politicians should communicate when the mayors and deputy mayors were the ones representing the municipal governments in the ATP process (Interview, December 2019). The county municipality politician shared that after the trip to Skien, they were convinced that the project needed a communication strategy: "This [communication] was the administration's task. But we were very aware of it, so we hired a communication expert" (Interview, December 2019). Media reactions to the hiring of the communication expert were negative (see the next section).

Workshop discussion with politicians gave the impression that *if* the national government had allocated funds for the project, then the whole situation "would have been something different" (Froland politician, November 2019). Politicians also felt that they did not have anything they could "promise" or "sell" to the citizens. The researcher's impression was that politicians were reluctant to promote a state-region co-financing package which included establishment of toll roads (the Urban Growth Agreement) without having any financial guarantees from the state to start with. Politicians' impressions were that the government believed that regions should achieve a consensus on a toll road policy themselves and before collaboration with the government even started. The latter added uncertainty to the whole process. As one county municipality politician explained: "it was not even guaranteed that after such acceptance (for implementing toll roads) regionally, we would have started negotiations with the government" (Interview, December 2019).

From the interviews with politicians, it appeared that when Aust-Agder County established the ATP collaboration, climate change had not yet become that prominent a topic in media

and politics. Such regional collaboration was innovative, and had a vision and desire to actively lead development, with one possible outcome: establish road tolls and receive government funds to subsidise sustainable transport. This process was started, although the government had not yet defined the Arendal region as a partner in such a state-region co-financing partnership (The Urban Growth Agreement).

The ATP project did not assign responsibility for communication in the project design. Since the county municipality was the formal leader of the project, the municipalities and municipal politicians did not take responsibility for communication. The uncertainty about the project outcome, a state-region partnership, seemed to be another factor that made some politicians hesitant about taking ownership and endorsing the project. They felt that they did not have anything to “sell” (Workshop discussion, Tvedestrand politician, November 2019).

The ATP communication toward citizens could be described as what Lyytimäki et al. (2013, p. 121) call “traditional one-way dissemination with press releases”, which in the case of the ATP was irregular releases of newspaper articles and project information posted on the ATP website. The county municipality arranged public meetings in municipalities. Some administrators and politicians noted, based on their experience, that spatial development plans in general were not very engaging topics among inhabitants: “[...] if you held a public meeting for the ATP plan, then no one would come. It’s not interesting” (Interview, Arendal municipality administrator, December 2019). One Arendal politician reflected: “[...] it may not be the most interesting thing, and municipal plans are perhaps one of the most boring things there is (Interview, Arendal municipality politician, December 2019).

When it came to specific measures which would immediately and directly impact people’s everyday lives, as for instance implementation of road tolls, then engagement was more active, both in town hall meetings and in regional newspapers (Interview, NPRA administrator, December 2019). A participant from the Norwegian Public Roads Administration noted: “I can say that one of the problems with this whole debate there [in town hall meetings to introduce the ATP policy], those who attend, are the oldest. Men 60-plus and they are mostly just negative. They are not positive about anything ... It is very skewed in relation to the population. The young people do not get involved too much, but they are mostly positive”.

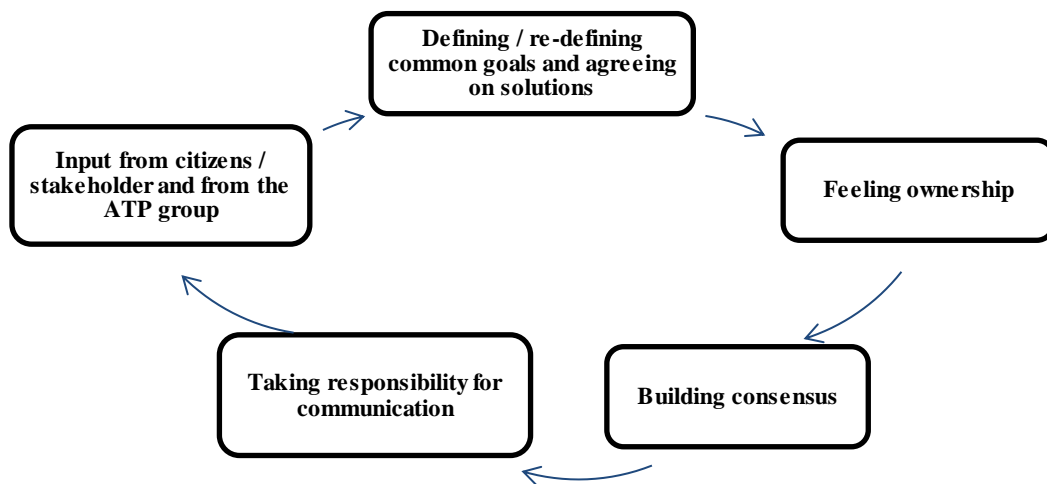


Figure 11: The circle of different factors impacting the communication.

Figure 11 above illustrates the circle factors, whether present or not, that played a role in the communication and in the project outcome. For instance, Feeling ownership lays the groundwork for consensus-building and communication. In the section on Political lack of ownership below, I analyse in more detail its impact for the communication and collaboration processes. When consensus is achieved, the parties in the project would be more motivated to communicate the policies to the wider public. Stakeholder involvement was important in the ATP project design, but not systematically practised throughout the collaboration period. If this had taken place, it might have led to the re-definition of common goals and solutions. Although the theoretical approach and primary focus in the research was on the ATP project and its communication, it became increasingly clear that it was the understanding of the ATP process and its connection to other institutions, stakeholders and society at large that needed to be analysed.

The ATP project lacked a dialogue channel with local citizens. As already seen in the *Literature review*, a similar regional development project in Bergen was put on hold in 2019 due to massive public outcry and a populist surge that had some of its roots in a lack of public dialogue (Wanvik & Haarstad, 2021). The establishment of the ATP collaboration in Arendal's region had opted for a different approach from the beginning. Its project design had many elements that might have resulted in a different outcome, such as a desire to include a broader political and administrative spectrum and cooperate with various interest groups. Although the effort to extend the circle of actors participating in the deliberative process was

laudable, it also carried a risk of dividing, interrupting and counteracting the traditional processes due to its diverse number of participants (Wanvik & Haarstad, 2021).

Politicians' assumptions about people's reactions to road tolls were built on media coverage of the large-scale anti-toll protests taking place in other, larger, urban regions in Norway—especially since these protests were taking place in parallel with the ATP collaboration. Some politicians reflected, “Of course, no one likes toll roads” (Interview, Froland politician, November 2019), “[h]ad [toll roads] been implemented, it would have been hell” (Interview, Grimstad politician, November 2019), “[i]n general, in society, most people are against toll roads” (Interview, Tvedestrand politician, November 2019), “[n]o one wants toll roads [...]” (Focus group interview, Arendal politician, November 2019). These strongly negative assumptions discouraged what little desire there was to have a public discussion about planned restrictive measures. By ignoring the communication aspect, more power over the narrative was given to the social and traditional media (see the next section).

Overall uncertainty about the project outcome, and the lack of ownership that resulted from it, negatively impacted the communication. The local consensual political culture often avoids confrontations, by which they also limit diversity in political deliberation processes (Palonen & Sunnercrantz, 2021). This is one of the weaknesses in consensual political culture. It avoids bringing up controversial topics and is less competitive compared to the majoritarian model (Lijphart, 1999). Wanvik and Haarstad (2021) call for reconsideration and acknowledgement of diverse oppositional public engagement, although their participation may disrupt, slow down or even redefine the initial goals.

The latter vision may have a destabilising effect for established forms of policymaking. Such a risk must be acknowledged, but a more flexible approach and a gradual inclusion of actors who want to be involved must be recognised. For instance, when specific policy measures are proposed, part of that process must include public information sharing, exemplifying positive tangible outcomes, while simultaneously proposing measures to reduce potential negative impacts for some marginalized groups, e.g., low-income households (Carattini, Carvalho, & Fankhauser, 2018). As Stoknes (2014) suggested, people should have access to meaningful actions and alternative pathways that would balance restrictions. Based on the literature and research findings, a gradual implementation of policy measures would be advisable. That would reduce resistance, and when potential positive effects become more visible (both through effective communication and user experiences), it is easier for people to accept restrictive measures *ex post* (Carattini, Carvalho, & Fankhauser, 2018).

4.6.1. The role of traditional and social media

The following analysis relies on the data collected through participants' reflections about the role of the media, both traditional and social, and overall coverage during the policymaking process. This data was compared with content reviews from regional newspapers (*Agderposten*) and Grimstad's local paper (*Grimstad Adressetidende*) and discussions in social media groups.

It is important to specify that most of the politicians interviewed in the ATP group were men over forty or fifty years old with ethnic Norwegian backgrounds. A lack of diversity was dependent on the composition of the ATP political steering group; members appointed were holding positions as mayor, deputy mayor and opposition leaders. The group also lacked gender balance. Data analysis, therefore reveals dynamics that were present in the policymaking process, being aware of the lack of diversity.

Traditional media. Traditional media had become the main source of information about what the ATP collaboration was about. The regional newspaper, *Agderposten*, was most vocal about the subject, regularly releasing long cover stories or two-page articles with illustrations on what was discussed in the ATP group. According to participants' reflections on municipal newspaper coverage of the ATP collaboration, it was either very modest or non-existent. Participants were aware that very few people understood what the ATP project was about. Although traditional media coverage was not always favourable from the ATP politicians' perspective, focusing on the possible negative impact of the road tolls, measures were not taken to engage in the discussion. On some occasions there was even a sense of hopelessness: "[t]here was not much one could do about it" (Interview, Arendal municipality politician, December 2019).

Wanvik and Haarstad (2021), who studied road toll policy implementation and the ensuing public protests in 2018–2019 in the Norwegian city of Bergen, observed many aspects that the current research data supports. They described social and traditional media engagement in road toll policy in Bergen as something that was taking place in its own terms, highlighting issues that people, not experts, saw as important. Similarly, in the Arendal region, the regional newspaper covered political meetings where road tolls were discussed, without much input from politicians (Interviews, politicians and administrators, November–December, 2019).

Although opposition to road tolls in Arendal never grew into a large-scale protest movement as was the case of Bergen, it is significant that the ATP lost its political ground between 2017 and 2018 in parallel with anti-road toll protests in other Norwegian cities. Media coverage of these processes may have given warnings to local and regional politicians of what to expect.

The social media as a platform for political communication. The following analysis about social media's impact on the ATP process must be seen in connection with the anti-toll movements that took place in other cities in Norway between 2017 and 2019 and before adoption of the ATP strategy. These protests were widely covered by the media, and activity in social media was high (Anonymised observation, public Facebook groups, 2017–2019).

Research findings show the lack of interest (or even lack of recognition) in using social media as an arena for political communication. Communication was seen by some politicians as an administrative process, expressing that all municipal documents were “public” and accessible via municipality websites, indicating that this by itself was part of informing citizens (Interview, Froland municipality politician, November 2019).

Many participants confirmed that they were not actively engaged in social media. Some politicians gave the impression that social media was not something to take seriously, or that they would rather stay out of it. Many of them were aware of the road toll debates taking place in Facebook groups, but had no wish to engage:

What's scary, at least from my part, is that if you go in and answer one, then you have to be there all the time. I have stayed out of it. Simply because it is completely impossible to be on 24 hours a day. [...] I read it, but I don't join, although I really want to clarify things, about what's really true, ... you just have to let go (Workshop discussion, municipal politician, November, 2019).

Lack of recognition of social media groups was also expressed by an opposition politician who otherwise uses social media actively, including for election campaigns and opposing road tolls, referring that “those who make the most noise are usually a small group of people” (Interview, opposition politician, January, 2020). Also, administrators were aware of the ongoing discussion in social media about the uproar over the road tolls. Their feelings about engagement in these discussions was similar to what politicians thought:

If you are positive about something, you will very quickly be taken down by those who are critical. Especially social media then, if someone writes something negative, and you try to defend it, then there are some who will express themselves negatively [...] again you try to

explain it, it never works. In the end, those who are positive give up, and stop commenting that they are positive, and then only the negative ones are left. And then you get the situation, where it appears that the majority in Facebook is negative. (Interview, Arendal municipality administrator, November, 2019).

Politicians and administrators had differing views on whether social media had impacted the ATP process. Politicians' reactions to the question about what role they thought social media played in the process were for the most part hesitant or dismissive, expressing that they did not think it had any influence. Administrators thought differently:

[i]n the political environment, there has been tremendous pressure. But what is different now is that these actions have a great effect, it is because social media works very strongly. It affects politicians much more than was the case before, to influence politicians now is completely different than it was before where you did not have that channel (Interview, Arendal municipality administrator, November, 2019).

These findings confirm some of the biggest limits that political deliberation via social media has, that “important actors and groups are not participating” (Haugseth, 2013, p. 127) or that this participation takes place on separate platforms. Haugseth (ibid.) doubts whether the Habermasian ideal about different groups meeting and building a consensus through deliberation would ever take place. The research confirmed the issues raised in the literature review that the media landscape is fragmented (Dahlgren, 2005; 2009, 2018), and that discussion takes place in different arenas.

In her recent study about recognition of social media as arenas for political communication carried out in Norway, Seggaard (2017) found that there is relatively wide acceptance among voters and politicians. The current study revealed that it is necessary to separate two different processes in political communication: political election campaigning and policymaking. In the first case, social media has already established its stronghold (Dahlgren, 2009). As for policymaking, two important aspects were confirmed through the research. First, climate change-related policymaking, as it appeared in the case of the ATP, has become increasingly politicised. Opposition to regional road toll policy as part of local election campaigning was actively communicated via social media by some politicians and particularly by one right-wing party (Anonymised observation of politicians' and parties' public Facebook accounts, 2017–2019). Second, social media venues as platforms for mutual knowledge sharing, deliberation and participation in the policymaking process, *the new public sphere*, have still

not found its established form, and the communication practices vary from municipality to municipality.

The research data also indicated that there is a tendency towards professionalisation of the communication processes. The ATP administrators were the experts in spatial planning and infrastructure; communication was part of their daily work. One Arendal administrator expressed that they were not used to communicating in a such a proactive way that might have been necessary (Workshop discussion, November 2019). Since communication proved to be more time and resource consuming than the initial ATP project design estimated, a communication expert was briefly hired to help to get out the ATP's message. This action resulted in further negative press coverage (*Agderposten*, content review, 2017–2018). Reactions in social media claimed that the politicians were trying to “sell” the road tolls to the people (Anonymised observation of public social media group discussion, spring, 2017).

The role of professional communication staff in municipalities was described by one participant as maintenance and update of municipal websites, but not active communication (Interview, NPRD administrator, December 2019). The communication in the long and complex policymaking processes of the ATP was not solved by short-term outsourcing of services. Delegation of communication gave cause to question political ownership, as seen by the social media responses.

Public discussion was taking place but not always in a dialogue with the relevant politicians or administrators. Traditional media was taking on the role as the main informant of the ATP policy. Satisfaction with media coverage among the participants varied. What the findings from the ATP case study indicate are that political deliberation has yet to achieve the level of reciprocity in a rapidly changing “online public sphere” (Dahlgren, 2005).

4.6.2. Political lack of ownership

Ownership as a theme emerged in parallel with observations about some politicians' lack of ownership of the ATP measures (including road tolls). Politicians' thoughts on the importance of owning the project's cause was something they were aware of: “[C]ounty municipality owns the ATP more than municipalities” (Focus group interview, county municipality politician, November 2019); “the more you own the document, the more you stand up for it,

right? [...] I think you can say, about the ownership, that first comes county municipality, then Arendal and then Grimstad” (Focus group interview, Arendal politician, November 2019).

The County Council as a project leader commissioned the County and NPRA administrators to carry out feasibility studies for municipalities and densification analysis. The feasibility study for public transport was outsourced to a private company. The focus was on measures that would help to achieve one of the main goals of the ATP, zero growth in car traffic. These analyses were appreciated by both politicians and administrators. Several municipality administrators said they benefitted from the analysis which they could use in their daily work and would not have had the means to collect and analyse themselves (Interviews, 2019–2020). A less positive aspect was that the proposed measures were presented to municipal politicians as some sort of “ready to apply” measure. Feasibility studies were developed by and on behalf of the County Council. Municipalities were not engaged at this stage. Solutions presented were not the ones some of them believed their municipality needed (Interview, county municipality politician, December 2019). Grimstad municipality did not have any severe infrastructure challenges and therefore felt that the presented options were unattractive. Arendal town, on the other hand, could have benefitted from restrictive measures (including road tolls) and reduced congestion problems in specific areas. This brings our attention back to the different challenges municipalities had, and how it impacted their motivation and ownership.

Using its agency, Grimstad municipality declared in the middle of the process (autumn 2017) that they would not support any road toll policy. Such a declaration caused friction in the ATP group, and Grimstad was seen as torpedoing the whole process. The ATP group, wishing to restore consensus, removed the contentious road tolls from discussion and continued with only strategy planning. This confirms what a strong consensual approach the project had, avoiding controversial discussions, and yet paradoxically allowed a single opposing voice to change the course of entire policy.

As realisation about the importance of communication grew among the participants of the ATP project, it also revealed persistent unawareness of the importance of the internal communication. The ATP steering group, which consisted of municipal and county politicians, had meetings at least every quarter. Sometimes it was difficult to fit the meeting into the calendar of mayors and deputy mayors. Some politicians made reference to a busy schedule which made it difficult to address communication (Interview, Tvedestrand politician, November 2019), even toward one’s own party group in the municipal committee (Interview,

Arendal politician, December 2019). It was also assumed, by one opposition politician, that as the municipality is represented by a mayor and deputy mayor, then the mayor “was in the lead”, but also admitting that “[w]e did not have any internal meetings in Arendal, but we should certainly have had them, we politicians and administration [...]” (Interview, Arendal politician, December 2019). Since each municipality was represented by politicians from both opposition and municipal governments, it added local uncertainty about the ownership and responsibility for communication towards the citizens. It was due to the nature of their contradictory roles in the municipal government and committee, but also due to the overall uncertainty of the ATP collaboration, which will be elaborated on more closely in the next sections.

4.7. Presence of multiple uncertainties

One of the defining characteristics of the communication in the ATP process during several years of cooperation was the presence of numerous uncertainties. This impression emerged gradually, towards the end of the interviewing process. The literature is rife with problems about decision-making in other fields where the delivery process is fragmented and different actors are involved (Roelich & Gieseckam, 2018).

One of the uncertainties was the contradictory communication from the national government and the expectations from municipalities laid down in the national guidelines for climate and energy. The Minister of Transport at the time was also the Progress Party (FrP) politician, a party which strongly opposes restrictive measures on car use, including road tolls. One Tvedestrand politician stated that government was not “talking with one voice” (Interview, Tvedestrand municipality politician, November 2019).

The national guidelines for climate and energy planning in the municipalities clearly state that municipalities have a leading role in reducing GHG emissions through their area and transport planning (art. 1) and that they “shall incorporate measures and instruments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions” (art. 3) (The Ministry of Climate and Environment, 2009). In its explanatory comments to the guidelines, the Ministry of Climate and Environment indicates that one GHG mitigation measure is to “introduce restrictions on car use” (ibid.). Some local politicians aired their criticism towards government politics, referring to uncertainty about the timeline of the future state-region partnership (the Urban Growth Agreement) (Interview,

county municipality politician, December 2019). These expectations have left regional and local politicians in the medium-sized urban regions to deal with the challenges in the uncertain environment.

The ATP collaboration included several actors, with different motivations and agencies. It impacted not only internal communication, as described in the previous section, it also affected communication outward, towards citizens. These dynamics undermined the public's trust and the process's legitimacy.

4.8. Local and rural identities

4.8.1. Identity matters

Norway is a country of many contrasts, and one does not have to travel far to notice them. Differences are readily apparent in the landscape, climate, dialects and the character of the people. It is intriguing how a relatively small nation can be so diverse. There seems to be a sense of pride in one's origin, including the region, and this is manifested in preserving one's dialect, wearing folk costumes on holidays and maintaining close ties with one's hometown or region. As a foreigner, this can be learned about Norway and Norwegians after living in the country for several years. A local may not reflect on culture and identity when living their everyday life, but for a foreigner, this is always an interesting subject.

Local identity came into focus through the iterative process during the research, although it was not mentioned by participants as an issue *per se*. The question that was addressed by administrators in the workshop discussions and in later interviews when speaking about spatial planning was the rhetorical 'Where shall we live?' The ATP strategy's mission statement "Proximity to everything" (*Nærhet til alt*) means that future spatial planning should consider the distance between home and daily necessary activities, such as grocery stores, the workplace, school and leisure activities, while ideally reducing the need for private car use (Aust-Agder County Municipality, 2019a). The key terms that politicians used regarding spatial planning were population growth and mobility.

Through the workshops, focus group discussions and individual interviews with politicians and administrators, different patterns of motivation and agency appeared. Smaller

municipalities, such as Tvedestrand and Froland, clearly expressed their motivation to be part of the ATP project with the realisation that being a small municipality provides fewer opportunities to impact regional development strategies.

Tvedestrand and Froland define themselves as rural municipalities (*land kommuner*) (Interviews with municipal politicians, November 2019), although each of the four municipalities has a strong rural character. The place where one lives is strongly connected to one's identity. As a leading Grimstad politician put it, "[In Norway] people live outside large centres. And I mean, at least in Grimstad, that is how it should be" (Interview, November 2019). This clarified references to what is seen as local quality of life. Interestingly, such views and attitudes overlapped across the left–right political spectrum. Politicians representing opposing political sides shared similar views:

We have been flexible about some residential areas, which are not necessarily located in the smartest places in terms of public transport. But those who settle there, [. . .] will choose one value over another [. . .] you would very much choose belonging to more rural [areas] and more to nature, but you will not necessarily have access to bus departure every twenty minutes. And the possibility that people will be able to make such choices in a small municipality in Norway, I think, is important. (Interview, Grimstad politician, January 2020)

Several supporting arguments were connected to this view. An opposing politician explained: 'I am thinking that this is about public health; it is about quality of life [. . .] people must be allowed to live where they want [. . .] But, the infrastructure, it must be there' (Interview, Grimstad politician, January 2020). The impression given was that because it would be the county taking responsibility for the operation and maintenance of the road, the municipality could continue its scattered housing development. The latter views coincided with a coalition politician who stated, 'infrastructure should come after' (Workshop discussion, November 2019).

Such connectedness to the place and what it adds to one's quality of life is also manifested in the Grimstad municipality's spatial plan, laying down conflicting principles. Grimstad's municipal spatial plan for 2019-2031 was adopted just a few months after the ATP strategy, and while it seemingly incorporates the ATP's principles about prioritised areas for housing development, its formulation is vague and leaves room for a broad interpretation of the municipality's spatial development priorities. It states, *inter alia*, that one of its main principles for residential development is '[. . .] a positive attitude towards scattered housing

construction' (Grimstad kommune, 2019), which is a confusing signal as a mere 20% of growth will come from outside defined local centres (*knutepunkter*).

As previously noted, the climate aspect was not part of the political deliberation. It was not mentioned in the interviews, with a few exceptions. Tørnblad et al. (2014, p. 38, emphasis added) reflected that '[. . .] place-specific conditions *may* matter for policy formulation [. . .] the relationship between place-related social identity and attitudes towards environmental sustainability differs between communities [. . .]', and they agreed 'that sustainability cannot be considered in isolation from its place-related context'. As in the case of Grimstad, municipalities' strong rural attachment may therefore conflict with values manifested in sustainability.

Grimstad's geographical position is unique. The town is located between the biggest cities on the southern coast of Norway, requiring only a short commute to the large labour market. The city centre does not experience any major traffic challenges. The municipality also has large rural areas that are suitable for housing development, which makes it attractive for both families and real estate developers. Grimstad takes pride in comparing its growing population to Arendal's stagnated population, proving that the region is attractive. These unique features made Grimstad a confident collaboration partner with more negotiation power than other municipalities.

Conversely, Arendal has the biggest contrasts from other municipalities. It has the largest city centre but also large rural areas with a scattered settlement pattern, which in combination negatively impact road traffic because many jobs are located near the centre. These factors have made Arendal a more flexible and open collaboration partner. Moreover, unlike Froland and Tvedestrand, which define themselves as rural municipalities, Arendal has no dominant features, and the town is more open to creating a 'new' identity through sustainable policies. Arendal municipality politicians and administrators take pride in its green policy decisions, which followed the principles of the ATP strategy before the strategy was adopted. Although this was partly driven by need, my assumption here is based on research data and documentary analysis, which found that the city also seeks stronger place identity. As the Arendal municipal plan for climate and energy states, Arendal wishes to 'maintain its position as one of the world's most ambitious climate municipalities of its size' (Arendal kommune, 2019). Clearly, these are two different municipalities with two different identities, environments and policy approaches.

Politicians were confident in the ATP collaboration and relatively united on general terms, but the Arendal region, as a new administrative construction, lacked a specific or common identity other than the ATP collaboration, which was formed for that purpose only. Previous sections covered the differences between the municipalities. The region could be characterised as a fragmented union, consisting of diverse smaller entities among which the local identity dominated the regional one.

4.8.2. Who defines where and how we want to live?

This section addresses questions that arose during the data analysis regarding who defines and reinforces values related to where and how we want to live. The interview data revealed that some influential stakeholders impacted municipal housing policies but were not involved in the ATP discussions. A few administrators suggested that real estate developers should have been included in the ATP collaboration (Workshop discussion, Arendal and the NPRD administrators, November 2019; Interview, county administrator, November 2019).

This finding was of interest for further analysis not because it was not brought up by many participants but rather for the opposite reason. The possibility of allowing cooperation with real estate developers was only signalled by a few participants. The researcher's impression was that such a form of cooperation was not part of municipal practice. Developers possess expert knowledge, economic power and significant influence in some municipalities (Interview, county administrator, November 2019). Such cooperation would not be novel and is encouraged by the 'State planning guidelines for coordinated housing, area and transport planning', which is one of the ATP's guiding documents: 'The guidelines shall contribute to a good and productive interaction between municipalities, the state and developers to ensure good local and urban development' (Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation, 2014, art. 1). The county administrator felt positive about the idea and reflected that, '[t]here is no doubt that we should have had a closer dialogue with developers or this industry' (Interview, November 2019).

The influence that developers possess in one municipality was described as follows: '[t]he way it is now, it is largely market-driven where [housing] development takes place' [. . .] [v]ery developer-driven [building activity], it is more important that local developers have

growth in their industry rather than seeing financial consequences for the municipality' (Interview, municipality administrator, December 2019). As further reflected by the administrator, the municipality could take more of a lead in residential development. On the contrary, Grimstad municipality politicians seemed to take great pride in the fact that their municipality still had demographic growth, and Arendal's stagnating growth was often noted in comparison. The politicians justified extended housing development in rural areas with population growth and a need for housing.

The ATP project had dialogue meetings with local business associations, cooperation with whom was described as positive and "backing up" the ATP strategy (Interview, county administrator, November 2019). The business association, however, did not represent developers in these meetings. Efforts were made to establish cooperation, as one county administrator stated, "[. . .] what we tried, but which we never achieved, was to have a meeting and discuss[ion] with those who run housing development; it was unclear who were the prominent force here" (Interview, November 2019).

In the case of Grimstad, the municipality is not actively involved in finding new residential areas that would be more strategically located near important municipal services, such as schools and health care institutions, allowing developers to steer that process. One administrator commented on such practices: 'It is not the municipality itself that finds or proposes new areas for housing; it is mostly private input that is considered in such processes [municipal area planning]. This is probably one of the mistakes' (Interview, administrator, December 2019). Developers' political influence was confirmed by a previous Grimstad mayor, who made a public statement in the regional newspaper—a practice that is unusual in this consensus-oriented region (Kalvehagen, 2020). The latter also demonstrates that it is a contested topic in local and regional development. Therefore, inclusion of influential stakeholders in future policymaking processes would positively contribute to mutual knowledge-building and collaboration.

Few voices among the respondents called for cooperation with construction companies and real estate developers. According to one county council administrator, some developers possess too much power and seem to have too much influence in political decision-making in matters related to the company's undertaking (e.g. granting building permission, especially in remote areas). In that way, market and municipal practices keep feeding the narrative about the ideal family home in sparsely populated rural areas.

That factor raised research interest in who defines where and how we want to live and who reinforces these values. In addition, the question remains as to how diverse is a group of citizens that the developers and politicians represent. Interview data and regional newspaper coverage indicated that there were strong signs of market influence. At the same time, market influence has been positive in some municipalities, where more building activity takes place closer to local centres and in accordance with the ATP plan, as mentioned by the County Council and Tvedestrand administrators (Interviews, November 2019, January 2020).

In conclusion, the research findings confirm that strong rural influence is part of the local identity in the Arendal region (Cruickshank, 2006; Cruickshank, Lysgård, & Magnussen, 2009) but also show how such influence may intersect with policy- and decision-making (Tørnblad, Westskog, & Rose, 2014).

5. Conclusion

While climate change has been a focus of international and national politics, there is a growing need to understand the context-specific indicators that determine the successful implementation of mitigation measures. This study aimed to contribute to the critical knowledge needed improve communication and collaborative local and regional policymaking. In this qualitative case study, I have explored challenges and dynamics in established forms of local and regional policymaking and communication targeting international and national climate change mitigation goals.

We live in an increasingly fragmented society. Fragmentation has taken place in different society structures, in the media landscape, and in public opinion as well as in the field of climate policy- and decision-making, divided between different governmental levels. These developments pose challenges for established forms of policymaking. Efficient multi-level policymaking increasingly requires more coordination and communication.

Implementing climate change mitigation measures has become an increasingly contested topic in local and regional politics and policymaking. In recent years, Norway has seen the emergence of large-scale protest movements opposed to climate change mitigation measures, such as toll roads. Digital communication platforms have been increasingly used for broad political engagement, and mobilisation has taken place across the online–offline divide. These developments disrupt and destabilise policymaking processes.

Climate change mitigation policies also have strong social dimensions, as they often involve restrictions. Hence, spatial and transport policies are not just about the physical environment; they impact in people's everyday lives, habits, and freedoms. We also need to understand the new social reality that comes with the new (online) public sphere. Therefore, social science research needs to engage more to critically examine those processes.

This research was built on three research questions related to regional climate change mitigation policymaking. First, it explored the role of the communication strategy as well as traditional and social media in policymaking. Second, it sought to identify the socio-political dynamics, constraints and challenges during this process. Finally, it examined the role of local and rural identities.

The case selected to study the dynamics in established forms of local and regional policymaking and communication was the area and transport plan of the Arendal region (the ATP), a collaboration project established by the Aust-Agder County municipality including the four neighbouring municipalities of Arendal, Grimstad, Tvedestrand and Froland. The ATP collaboration took place from 2014 to 2019. Thus, the study provides a retrospective look at the process as seen through the eyes of the participating administrators and politicians. The qualitative data come from in-depth semi-structured interviews and workshop discussions with politicians and administrators.

The theoretical framing of the study focused on three different but connected fields of literature. The first theoretical approach addressed research question one and was built on three theoretical perspectives: positive and solution-oriented framing in climate communication, drawing on the work of O'Neil and Nicholson-Cole (2009); elaborating alternative pathways for actions that the policy attempts to restrict and communicating them clearly from the early stages, drawing on the works of Stoknes (2014) and Ryghaug and Næss (2012); and finally, addressing the sub-question about the role of social media, drawing on the work of Seggaard (2017), who analysed social media platforms as arenas for political communication.

The second theoretical perspective addressed both research questions one and two and looked at how consensual political culture impacts policymaking processes and explored new public arenas in which political deliberation occurs, drawing on the works of Habermas (1989, 1996, 2006), Lijphart (1999), Seggaard (2017) and Dahlgren (2005, 2009, 2018 and Krick & Holst (2018).

The third theoretical approach was connected to research question three and explored the relevant literature on the role of local and rural identities in collaborative regional policymaking, building mainly on the works of Lysgård (2001), Gustavsson and Elander (2012) and Haugen and Lysgård (2006).

5.1. Communication

5.1.1. The importance of communication

The theoretical framework for the question that addressed communication was based on the initial assumption that the regional strategy planning project had a communication strategy and that the research could examine the characteristics of its communication messages. The first findings of the research revealed that there was no fixed communication strategy. Therefore, this initial research focus had to be abandoned and redefined. The focus was then shifted towards detecting the complexity of issues surrounding communication regarding the multi-level collaboration project. The broader questions that arose during the process of re-design were: what were the main challenges related to communication, and how did they impact the policymaking process and its outcome?

The research resulted in several significant findings. The study revealed the organisational challenges of the multi-level collaboration. First, because the ATP project design did not include an explicit communication strategy, there were no allocated resources for it, which ultimately impacted the policymaking process as the topics discussed were not communicated effectively to the wider public. In addition, the project design had a democratic and horizontal approach, meaning that all parties involved were equally represented and the focus was on broad consensus-building within the group, but there was confusion regarding who should take responsibility for communication with the public and how. The ATP project communication to citizens was irregular, consisting of a few releases of newspaper articles and project information made available through the ATP website. Due to such inconsistent one-way communication, a dialogue with the wider public was not formed.

As the study progressed, other aspects emerged that impacted communication, such as different challenges and motivations, and in some cases, there was a lack of ownership in proposed policy measures among participants. The study also showed that internal, or downward, communication (about the matters discussed in the ATP group) between the ATP project members and other local municipal politicians was fragmentary or non-existent. This finding has significance because it showed discontinuity in knowledge distribution, which may have impacted a wider anchoring of the policy measures in participating municipalities. Knowledge and communication are intertwined in climate change mitigation policymaking. A

large amount of expert knowledge is continuously produced, both locally and regionally, for strategy planning purposes, such as various feasibility studies and analyses. In a local policymaking process, politicians and administrators must continuously update their knowledge base. In the ATP collaboration, the high-quality analyses were carried out by the Norwegian Public Road Administration and the Aust-Agder County and were discussed internally in project meetings with local and regional representatives. The county municipality anticipated that the politicians who participated in the ATP project would be the link between the project and municipalities by taking the project's discussions with them to their home municipalities. In reality, this did not take place. The impact that had on local political engagement was not possible to evaluate as the current study only included politicians and administrators who were part of the ATP collaboration. What can be highlighted is that policymaking processes where different governmental levels and expertise are involved need to focus more on efficient knowledge distribution outside the frames of the collaboration projects and should include mutual knowledge sharing.

5.1.2. Social media as an arena for political deliberation

Another important finding is related to social media. Building on previous research by Seggaard (2017), who analysed the recognition of social media venues as arenas for political communication and election campaigning, found that there is relatively wide acceptance among voters and politicians. The current study revealed that it was necessary to separate two different processes in political communication: political election campaigning and policymaking. Research data indicate that social media venues as platforms for mutual knowledge sharing, deliberation and participation in the policymaking process, the new public sphere, have not found an established form. This research confirmed that social media venues were not recognised by actors in policymaking processes, especially among politicians.

The study also found that public discussion was taking place but without policymakers. Traditional media, the regional newspaper, was playing the role of a main public communicator of the ATP policy by regularly following project meetings and writing articles about the matters discussed. The road toll policy as the most controversial issue was discussed in public social media groups, some them specifically formed to these purposes. Policymakers were aware of these online groups but reluctant to engage. These findings confirm that the

political deliberation has yet to achieve the level of reciprocity in the rapidly changing online public sphere (Dahlgren, 2005).

5.2. The socio-political dynamics

5.2.1. The presence of several uncertainties

One of the defining dynamics of multi-level policymaking taking place over a long period of time is the presence of several uncertainties. It has been confirmed that there are challenges, which are highlighted in previous studies, in similar fields where the delivery process is fragmented and several different actors are involved (Roelich & Giesekam, 2018). One challenging aspect was unpredictability regarding the state–region partnership to co-finance the sustainable transport solutions of the ATP project. Local and regional policymakers' impressions were that it was difficult to balance the national government's expectations on regional GHG mitigation when the government did not have a clear timeline of the future state–region partnership. This contributed to the lack of communication of the ATP policy goals and measures as the local politicians felt they had nothing to promise.

By addressing the communication and policymaking process, the theoretical framework of the study focused on determining how consensus-oriented political culture could impact policymaking processes. Consensus-orientation and a horizontal approach were the core values of the ATP project. Collaboration gave equal representation to its members, bringing together both coalition and opposition politicians from each municipality. A consensual approach was also emphasised by participants.

5.2.2. The increased politization of local and regional planning

The collaboration took place over several years, during which several events occurred that impacted the planning process. Two local elections were held, and the third was going to take place in a few months after the final hearing of the plan in Municipal County in 2019. A year before the local elections in 2019, the ATP road toll policy had lost its political support locally, and the collaboration continued working on an overall non-binding strategy only.

Furthermore, the ATP policy planning was taking place in parallel with growing mobilisation against road tolls in other urban regions. During the years of the ATP collaboration, discussion about restrictive mitigation measures, such as toll roads, had become increasingly politicised, social media platforms were actively used, contributing to broad political engagement across the online and offline divide, and new populist groups formed. The protests were largely covered by traditional media, national and regional newspapers and TV. The politicians interviewed for this study did not think social media played any role in the outcome of the ATP collaboration, and some mentioned that local political resistance against the toll road policy was initiated by local politicians. There was also hesitance in discussing the anti-toll road protests in other regions. In contrast, administrators were convinced that social media impacted political decision-making.

Although the ATP network did not manage to achieve its initial goal, to adopt a strategy and implement policy measures, the progress was made in several areas. First, national guidelines were put on the agenda of municipal spatial planning. Second, several high-quality analyses were carried out, something which municipal planning and politicians can benefit from. Third, the collaboration created an arena for politicians and administrators, contributed to mutual knowledge sharing and strengthened regional collaboration.

5.2.3. Consensual political culture, strengths, and weaknesses

Consensual policymaking has many positive characteristics, it is considered to be more inclusive, flexible and policymaking is facilitated through the dialogical process to ensure as wide acceptance as possible. Consensus-orientation was apparent through the collaboration model that the ATP project had adopted, but also expressed by participants.

Several aspects in the ATP collaboration supported the idea of consensual policymaking. First, the organisation of the project by such manner that allowed broader political spectrum. From the project design perspective, the consensual approach had some weaknesses. This approach was founded on the assumption that consensus would be maintained throughout the process, but the group lacked the strategy or tools to continue discussions despite disagreements. Thus, consensus proved to be difficult to maintain. Diverging opinions, interests and motivations intervened and disrupted deliberation. In order to maintain the consensual approach, the project work had to be restructured, and controversial and

conflicting topics (e.g., implementation of toll roads) had to be removed from the agenda. Then, the process continued with a non-binding strategy only. The literature indicates that “consensus may also refer to the lack of diversity of opinions” (Palonen & Sunnercrantz, 2021, p. 155). The above example confirms this and demonstrates the weakness of consensual political culture when the minority collaboration party can block the policy direction that the majority have more or less supported.

5.2.4. Political lack of ownership

Political lack of ownership was another theme detected in this research. Additional themes that emerged from interviews and workshop discussions highlighted the differences between the four neighbouring municipalities. From this, the question of how municipalities’ size impacted their participation in the ATP arose. Previous studies have indicated that size and administrative capacity can have an impact (Lundqvist & Borgstede von, 2008). The municipality’s size seemed to define some of the attitudes impacting the project collaboration. For example, higher motivation was demonstrated among smaller municipalities, confirming their desire “to seek joint action through negotiated agreements to avoid de facto dominance by the large city” (Lundqvist & Borgstede von, 2008, p. 302). Regardless of size, another common theme for municipalities with higher motivation was the presence of specific local challenges that required collective effort to solve, such as bike lane construction or congestion problems. Political ownership was also affected by policy planning processes. The research data revealed that some politicians felt that they had not been part of the process of defining the common challenges from the beginning, referring to feasibility studies carried out by administrators from the county and the Norwegian Public Road Administration.

5.3. Rural identity, market, and climate change mitigation

Policymaking and communication processes were also analysed through local identities. “Arendal region” is a relatively new administrative construction that was institutionalised through ATP collaboration and includes only four neighbouring municipalities around the city of Arendal. This new form of collaboration aimed to strengthen the regional development and access to the government’s funds for sustainable transport solutions. The Arendal region, as a new administrative construction, did not have any specific or common characteristics other

than the regional collaboration that was formed for that purpose only. Although the collaboration was relatively united in general terms, the region could be characterised as a rather fragmented union consisting of diverse smaller entities among which the local identity dominated over the regional. It was, however, not clear what formed the identity of Arendal as a region.

This study also confirmed rural attachments in all four case municipalities. The smaller municipalities often referred to themselves as rural. Several politicians reflected on the rural way of life, connecting the scattered settlement pattern with the quality of life. This dynamic overlapped across the left–right political spectrum in some municipalities. These findings confirm the dynamics already explored in earlier research (Haugen & Lysgård, 2006).

The study further focused on how rural identity that values living in sparsely populated areas may intersect with climate change mitigation policymaking. Significantly, there was one aspect that was not addressed by any politician and by just a few administrators in workshop discussions and interviews. Nevertheless, it was important to explore this aspect further. The research data indicated that municipal housing policies were strongly impacted by market interests, while influential stakeholders, such as developers and construction companies, were not involved in deliberative policymaking processes. The market influence in municipal housing policy was also confirmed by other data sources, such as local and regional newspapers. A few administrators suggested that real estate developers should have been included in the ATP collaboration. The overall impression was that such a form of cooperation was not part of municipal practice. In addition, municipal engagement in defining new areas for housing varied between municipalities. In the case of one municipality, the market was allowed to steer area planning, while another adopted a more restrictive approach in line with the principles of dense housing development.

Several politicians justified extending housing development in rural areas with population growth and a need for housing by indicating that this was something families preferred and that would improve the quality of life. Some reflections in workshops and interviews brought in an “urban versus rural” dynamic (Tørnblad et al., 2014, p. 49), mentioning with condescending undertones that the municipality should not build those “bird boxes” (*fuglekasser*), referring to apartment buildings.

The research data were insufficient to make assumptions about how prevalent such practices were in different municipalities, but these dynamics were clearly present and demonstrated how the market and municipal practices contribute to feeding the narrative about the ideal

family home in rural areas. This raised the questions of who defines where and how people want to live and who reinforces these values. In addition, more research is necessary to estimate the diversity of the group of citizens that the developers and politicians represent. The ATP strategy's population projections for the next decade indicate that an "increasing number of people will be living in single households, and there will be fewer traditional family households" (Aust-Agder County Municipality, 2019a, p. 5). These perspectives are contradicting, and even conflicting with climate change mitigation policies, and should be researched more thoroughly.

To sum up, the research findings show that knowledge about the local context and place identity are critically important to understanding the dynamics in local-regional collaboration. The findings also confirm theoretical assumptions that the local-rural identity impacts policymaking processes (Haugen & Lysgård, 2006; Tørnblad et al., 2014).

Finally, although the current research was retrospective, the topic remains relevant. In its revised National Transport Plan for 2022–2033, the Norwegian government established a new subsidy program for climate and environmentally friendly urban development for five medium-sized urban regions, including Arendal (Ministry of Transport, 2021). This means that it will once again be up to local politicians to reach a consensus about state-region's co-financing mechanisms, a goal that the Arendal region had worked towards throughout the ATP project.

5.4. Policy recommendations

Having conducted the research and analysed the data, the findings demonstrated many positive effects in the ATP collaboration. The region has a high potential to increase its attractiveness by adopting a climate-friendly approach. The regional climate networking experience has already created an infrastructure for “knowledge development”, in addition, an earlier research has demonstrated that the participation in such administrative and/or political networks can have many positive effects, *inter alia*, an increased awareness and enhanced municipal planning (Flyen, Hauge, Almås, & Godbolt, 2018, p. 58).

I propose a few recommendations for how to improve collaboration and communication:

- Develop an active communication strategy to take charge of the narrative and shape it using various media channels. Show positive outcomes. Communication strategy is never a final product; it must be regularly revised (Lyytimäki, et al., 2013).
- Integrate communication as part of the project design from the beginning to the end, and allocate resources for it. Define stakeholders in respective fields, and plan ahead on how to best include them in the discussion.
- Create a platform for the co-production of knowledge for local and regional practitioners (this can be in the form of an annual conference or workshop). This idea was initiated by several administrators participating in the workshop discussion for this study.
- Aim towards gradual policy implementation in order to maintain consensus and anchor policy decisions locally. At the same time, anticipate differing views and continue discussion rather than avoiding contested topics.

5.5. Recommendations for future research

Gender aspects must be included in local and regional planning. Gender balance was not specifically addressed and reviewed in this study. The thesis therefore lacks a theoretical foundation to elaborate on this issue in detail. While some observations were made, gender aspects were not addressed in the ATP strategy, and thus there is insufficient knowledge to draw conclusions about how gender equality would be impacted by such regional planning.

However, the research findings highlighted the need to learn more about how to gather signals from various groups and stakeholders in the fragmented field of media consumption—not only how to identify these groups but also how to interact with them. Female politicians and administrators were underrepresented among the respondents, but their perspectives were significant because of their angle and how they signalled different aspects that were not raised by any of their male counterparts. For instance, one female administrator brought in a gender perspective and pointed out what she believed the male politicians over 50 years of age were focused on: ‘road, road, road’ (interview, Administrator, December 2019). She also signalled that politicians (overrepresented by men) were, in the early stages of the ATP project, more focused on the results and had a ‘what’s in it for me’ attitude.

Another female politician expressed concern about how to reach various groups in society and change their habits of media consumption. She was fully aware of the differences between different age groups and that, for example, the local newspaper was no longer read by the younger generation. She also seemed uncertain about how she could balance her full-time job and obligations as a local politician while also communicating actively with citizens via social media. The fact that discussions on social media platforms do not stop at the end of one’s workday seemed to concern other politicians as well. This indicates the need to develop clear concepts and frames for online political communication that are easy to use for politicians and administrators while also considering the healthy balance between work and political activity—a dilemma that did not seem to concern any male politicians. The latter aspect might have significance in terms of gender balance in political engagement, not just as politicians but as citizens.

Another aspect to consider when addressing gender in the context of local and regional planning are differences in employment patterns. According to Statistics Norway, more than twice as many women as men work part time (36,4% women and 14,9% men). Here, I would clearly acknowledge that, as a female researcher, I have an assumption that the scattered settlement patterns and longer commutes might impact men and women differently. Several politicians highlighted that families with children prefer living in detached houses in rural areas. Families’ dependence on cars was exemplified by the necessity to drive children to kindergarten, pick them up from after-school care, or drive to training and for other errands. My further assumption here is that, due to the scattered settlement patterns and lengthy daily commutes, women could be more at risk of being forced to work part-time to cope with the work–life balance and family logistics. Long distances would also limit one’s options with

regard to working far from home. The reasons that more women than men choose to work part time are complex, but statistics show an increase in part-time employment among women who have underage kids and/or a partner who earns considerably more than they do (Statistics Norway, 2004).

This field is complex, and no definite conclusions can be drawn without considering various other factors, such as local culture, tradition, and religion. This research also showed that gender was not represented equally among the participants due to the positions the participants held in the local political and administrative entities.

The importance of knowledge and how to make it available to different groups in society. The research revealed that politicians and administrators admitted, from their individual perspective, that they grew in the ATP process, increased their knowledge base, and experienced the process as useful. I could say the same, not as a researcher but as a common citizen. I acknowledge my privilege of having access to high-quality, in-depth expert information. Each participant is also an inhabitant in the region, a stakeholder, a recipient of some municipal services. What sets them apart from other inhabitants is that their access to knowledge was acquired through their position. I assume that, for a common citizen, access to expert knowledge and comprehension is not self-evident, although all documents “are publicly available” (Workshop discussion with politicians, November 2019).

Hence, more research is necessary to understand how increased knowledge impacts citizen participation in policymaking. Some research suggests that, from the citizen’s perspective, participation is positively impacted by their level of knowledge, socio-economic situation, education, and social status or position. From this perspective, the inclusion of vulnerable and minority groups in local and regional planning might fall short.

What could climate change communication learn from the handling of the COVID-19 pandemic in Norway? There are many parallels between handling the pandemic and handling the environmental crisis. First and foremost, they are both global crises. The measures taken to curb the further escalation of the pandemic and measures proposed for reducing emissions both restrict people’s mobility, the former more than the latter. What made people accept restrictions in Norway? Throughout the pandemic, actors have been united, political and expert communication has been woven together, the danger appeared immediate, and people understood the link between their actions and possible consequences.

What could we learn from the handling of the crisis, and what role has communication played? Who communicates and how, how regular is it, and what channels are used? What availability and access to necessary information exists for different community groups? Answers to these questions could help planning future climate communication strategies.

Co-productive policymaking, a citizens' perspective? One question that arose—which current research has not provided an answer to—was what exactly matters for citizens and how politicians could learn what it is. To obtain a more profound understanding of the dynamics between local development goals and the needs of local citizens, future research could focus on implementing and evaluating the use of digital communication models that would allow citizens to participate in new ways that are easily accessible and less time consuming. This would provide data from more diverse sources while maintaining traditional town hall meetings and local newspaper reader posts.

The pandemic has taught us to use digital tools more creatively. When the Grimstad municipality was not able to arrange a town hall meeting in 2020 to promote stakeholder engagement in the spatial planning project in the city centre, the municipality instead organised a survey and sent it to all Grimstad inhabitants. The response rate was unexpectedly high, but the most positive effect was that it diversified stakeholder involvement remarkably. Nearly half of the respondents were 15–34 years of age, people who might not usually attend town hall meetings (Kvasjord, 2020).

The region, which has over 80 000 citizens, likely has a more diverse spectrum of opinions than ‘only’ opposing voices. As one NPRA administrator put it, if one reads the regional newspaper, the opinions (about the ATP/toll roads) are solely negative (interview, December 2019). But, which platforms would different society groups feel more comfortable using to engage in policymaking?

The current study is based on the perspective of politicians and administrators. Representation and diversity of opinions should be the leading principles in municipal planning and policymaking. As one municipal administrator admitted, ‘we planners live perhaps in our own bubble’ (interview, Arendal municipality administrator, December 2019).

One positive example is from a smaller project involving the highly trafficked road Kystveien in Arendal. According to the interviewed administrators and politicians, organised neighbour groups along the Kystveien road signalled the need to take measures to combat the high

traffic flow, noise, and pollution. Such an initiative was welcomed by the interviewed politicians and administrators. Meetings were organised, in which the platform for political deliberation was created. The Arendal municipality later implemented measures together with the Public Road Administration favouring accessibility to public transport. While it is unclear whether this specific citizen initiative was the one that led to the regulatory change, the context in which this case was described by participants was positive. Here, the theoretical assumption is that the Habermasian ideal of smaller social settings for political deliberation might be effective (Habermas, 2006). It is also important that parties recognise these platforms for mutual knowledge sharing takes place, and see themselves as change agents. Such co-production of knowledge, or what Habermas (2006) calls “cooperative learning”, may ideally lead to “collective problem solving” (p. 414). Research on such cooperation models would provide valuable knowledge for future policymaking and contribute to the more efficient implementation of municipal policies.

Earlier studies indicate that some limitations might impact the readiness to facilitate broader participation, such as a ‘lack of political will’, ‘fear of slow-down in the process’, and ‘conservative attitudes’ (Raagmaa, 2002, p. 62).

Comparative case study. The participants in the ATP research talked about the study trip to the Skien municipality, which is a little larger than Arendal with 54 916 citizens (Statistics Norway, 2020). The purpose of the study trip was to learn from their experience in working toward a state-incentivised City Growth Agreement in the Grenland region, of which the Skien, Porsgrunn, and Siljan municipalities are part (Bypakke Grenland, n.d.). The region has received a mandate to start negotiations with the government about the content of the future City Growth Agreement (ibid.).

Several politicians and administrators mentioned the study trip, but it remains unclear what they learned from the Skien municipality’s communication with its citizens. One leading politician answered that question directly, arguing that Skien’s model might not be directly applicable and that municipalities have different political cultures. “Cultural differences” between the four ATP municipalities were also mentioned by one administrator. Here, it was also unclear what exactly was meant by these “differences” and the form in which they manifested. A comparative case study of different regions’ approaches could provide valuable

new knowledge about different communication approaches and strategies, contributing to a more transparent, legitimate, and co-productive policymaking process.

List of References

- Agder Fylkeskommune. (n.d.). *Nettverk for bærekraftige regionbyer*. Retrieved May 2021, from <https://agderfk.no/vare-tjenester/samferdsel/samarbeid-og-nettverk/nettverk-for-barekraftige-regionbyer/>
- Arendal kommune. (2019). *Kommunedelplan. Klima og energi. Arendal 2019-2023*. Arendal kommune. Retrieved June 2021, from https://www.arendal.kommune.no/_f/p1/i45e02721-237f-4abd-8d67-135941ccb561/kommunedelplan-klimaogenergi-arendalkommune2019-2023.pdf
- Aust-Agder County Municipality. (2019a). *Areal- og transportplanen arendalsregionen*. Arendal. Retrieved from <https://www.atp-arendalsregionen.no/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/atp-arendalsregion-plan-2019-dobbeltsider-lr.pdf>
- Aust-Agder County Municipality. (2019b). *Areal- og transportplanen for arendalsregionen*. Retrieved June 2021, from <https://www.atp-arendalsregionen.no>
- Ballestad, A. G. (2019, desember 7). Politikere tør ikke fatte vedtak. *Agderposten*, s. 10. Hentet fra <https://www.agderposten.no/nyheter/frykter-sosiale-medier-er-en-trussel-for-demokratiet-tror-det-kan-pavirke-politikerne/>
- Besteforeldrenes Klimaaksjon. (n.d.). Retrieved July 15, 2020, from <https://www.besteforeldreaksjonen.no/>
- Biermann, F., & Möller, I. (2019, March). Rich man's solution? Climate engineering discourses and the marginalization of the Global South. *International Environmental Agreements: Politics, Law and Economics*(19), pp. 151–167. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10784-019-09431-0>
- Blaikie, N. (2009). *Designing Social Research. The Logic of Anticipation* (2nd ed.). Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Boyer, P. C., Delemotte, T., Gauthier, G., Rollet, V., & Schmutz, B. (2020, January). Les déterminants de la mobilisation des Gilets jaunes. *Revue économique*(Vol 71:1), pp. 109-138. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26895613>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*(3:2), pp. 77-101. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>

- Brulle, R. J. (2010). From Environmental Campaigns to Advancing the Public Dialog: Environmental Communication for Civic Engagement. *Environmental Communication*(4:1), pp. 82-98. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/17524030903522397>
- Bryman, A. (2016). *Social Research Methods* (5th ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bynett Sør. (n.d.). Retrieved July 10, 2020, from <https://www.uia.no/senter-og-nettverk/bynett-soer>
- Bypakke Grenland. (n.d.). Retrieved November 11, 2020, from <https://bypakka.no/>
- Calhoun, C. (2013). The Problematic Public: Revisiting Dewey, Arendt, and Habermas. *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values* (pp. 65-107). University of Michigan. Retrieved from <https://tannerlectures.utah.edu/Calhoun%20Tanner%20Lecture.pdf>
- Calhoun, C. (2017). Facets of the Public Sphere: Dewey, Arendt, Habermas. I H. L. -J. F. Engelstad (Red.), *Institutional Change in the Public Sphere: Views on the Nordic Model* (ss. 23-45). Warsaw, Poland: De Gruyter Open. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110546330>
- Carattini, S., Carvalho, M., & Fankhauser, S. (2018). Overcoming public resistance to carbon taxes. *WIREs Climate Change*, 9(11), 1-26. Retrieved May 2021, from <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/wcc.531>
- Castells, M. (2012). *Networks of Outrage and Hope. Social Movements in the Internet Age*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- CeDiT: Centre for digital transformation. (n.d.). Retrieved July 10, 2020, from <https://www.uia.no/en/research/samfunnsvitenskap/cedit-centre-for-digital-transformation>
- Choi, Y.-T., & Kwon, G.-H. (2019, January). New forms of citizen participation using SNS: an empirical approach. *Quality & Quantity*(53), pp. 1-17. doi:<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11135-018-0720-y>
- Christiansen, P., & Loftsgarden, T. (2011). Drivers behind urban sprawl in Europe. (1136). Retrieved from <https://www.toi.no/getfile.php/1317329-1303822159/Publikasjoner/T%C3%98I%20rapporter/2011/1136-2011/1136-2011-el.pdf>

- Cruikshank, J. (2006). Protest against centralisation in Norway: The evolvement of the goal for maintaining a dispersed settlement pattern. *The Norwegian Journal of Geography*(60:3), pp. 179-188. Retrieved from <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00291950600889954>
- Cruikshank, J., Lysgård, H. K., & Magnussen, M.-L. (2009). The logic of the construction of rural politics: political discourses on rurality in Norway. *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography*, pp. 73-89. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0467.2009.00307.x>
- Dahlgren, P. (2005). The Internet, Public Spheres, and Political Communication: Dispersion and Deliberation. *Political Communication*(22:2), pp. 147-162. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/10584600590933160>
- Dahlgren, P. (2009). *Media and Political Engagement: citizens, communication and democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dahlgren, P. (2018). Media, Knowledge and Trust: The Deepening Epistemic Crisis of Democracy. *Javnost - The Public*(25:1-2), ss. 20-27. Hentet fra <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13183222.2018.1418819>
- Daniel, M., Ottemöller, G. F., Katsi, M., Hollekim, R., & Tesfazghi, Z. Z. (2020, February 11). Intergenerational perspectives on refugee children and youth's adaptation to life in Norway. *Wiley*, pp. 1-12. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.2321>
- Demokratene. (n.d.). Retrieved July 25, 2020, from <https://www.demokratene.no/>
- Dewey, J. (2007). The Public and its problems (1927). In B. Gentikow, & E. G. Skogseth, *Medier og Demokrati* (pp. 18-29). Oslo: Scandinavian Academic Press.
- Ditlefsen, H., Sundsdal, S., & Skår, K. (2019, May 23). Arendal sier nei til bompenger: – Regjeringen må på banen. *NRK*. Retrieved April 2021, from <https://www.nrk.no/sorlandet/arendal-sier-nei-til-bompenger-1.14562049>
- Eden, S. (1996). Public participation in environmental policy: considering scientific, counter-scientific and non-scientific contributions. *Public Understanding of Science*(5), pp. 183–204.
- Engelstad, F., Larsen, H., Rogstad, J., & Steen-Johnsen, K. (2017). Introduction: The Public Sphere in Change. *Institutional Perspectives on Neo-corporatist Society*. I F.

- Engelstad, H. Larsen, J. Rogstad, & K. Steen-Johnsen, *Institutional Change in the Public Sphere* (ss. 1-21). Warsaw: De Gruyter Open Ltd.
- Eriksen, T. H. (1993). Being Norwegian in a shrinking world: Reflections on Norwegian Identity. In K. C. Anne, *Continuity and Change. Aspects of Contemporary Norway* (pp. 11-38). Oslo: Scandinavian University Press.
- Evensen, M. R., Hetland, K., & Laugaland, J. (2018, August 22). Bom-aksjonister lamma trafikken i to byer. *NRK*. Retrieved April 2021, from <https://www.nrk.no/rogaland/bom-aksjoner-i-sandnes-og-stavanger-1.14176428>
- Extinction Rebellion. (n.d.). Retrieved June 2021, from <https://rebellion.global/>
- Extinction Rebellion. (2018). Retrieved July 15, 2020, from <https://rebellion.global/>
- Feldman, L., & Hart, P. S. (2016). Using Political Efficacy Messages to Increase Climate Activism: The Mediating Role of Emotions. *Science Communication*, pp. 99-127. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1177/1075547015617941>
- Fergusson, J. (2013). How to do things with land: a distributive perspective on rural livelihoods in southern Africa. *Journal of Agrarian Change*(13(1)), pp. 166-174. doi:<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1471-0366.2012.00363.x>
- Flyen, C., Hauge, Å. L., Almås, A.-J., & Godbolt, Å. L. (2018). Municipal collaborative planning boosting climate resilience in the built environment. *International Journal of Disaster Resilience in the Built Environment*(9), 58-69. Retrieved from <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/IJDRBE-10-2016-0042/full/pdf?title=municipal-collaborative-planning-boosting-climate-resilience-in-the-built-environment>
- Flyvberg, B. (2006, April). Five Misunderstandings About Case-Study Research. *Qualitative Inquiry*(12:2), pp. 219-245. Retrieved from <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1077800405284363>
- Folkeaksjonen nei til mer bompenger. (n.d.). Retrieved July 15, 2020, from <https://www.neitilmerbompenger.no/partiet/>
- Fridays for Future. (n.d.). Retrieved July 2020, from <https://www.fridaysforfuture.org/>
- Fridays For Future. (n.d.). Retrieved July 2021, from <https://www.fridaysforfuture.org/>

- Giest, S., & Howlett, M. (2013, November 20). Comparative Climate Change Governance: Lessons from European Transnational Municipal Network Management Efforts. *Environmental Policy and Governance*, ss. 341–353.
doi:<https://doi.org/10.1002/eet.1628>
- Granberg, M., & Elander, I. (2007). Local Governance and Climate Change: Reflections on the Swedish Experience. *Local Environment*(12:5), pp. 537-548. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1080/13549830701656911>
- Grimstad kommune. (2019, October 27). *Municipal Spatial Plan for 2019-2031*. Retrieved October 2, 2020, from https://www.grimstad.kommune.no/_f/p1/i7e533459-9ee6-401e-8848-8c83492f8b31/03_planbeskrivelse-kommuneplan-2019-2031-med-innsigelser_221019.pdf
- Grindheim, J. E., Heidar, K., & Strøm, K. W. (2020). *Norsk Politikk*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- Grossmann, K. (2019). Using conflicts to uncover injustices in energy transitions: the case of social impacts of energy efficiency policies in the housing sector in Germany. *Global Transitions*(1), 148-156. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.glt.2019.10.003>
- Gustavsson, E., & Elander, I. (2012). Cocky and climate smart? Climate change mitigation and place-branding in three Swedish towns. *Local Environment*, 17:8, pp. 769-782. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/13549839.2012.678319>
- Habermas, J. (1989). *The Structural Transformation of Public Sphere*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Habermas, J. (1996). *Between facts and norms: Contributions to a discourse theory of law and democracy*. Cambridge: MA: MIT Press.
- Habermas, J. (2006). Political Communication in Media Society: Does Democracy Still Enjoy an Epistemic Dimension? The Impact of Normative Theory on Empirical Research. *Communication Theory*(16), pp. 411-426.
- Hall, T., & Barrett, H. (2012). *Urban Geography*. New York: Routledge.
- Hanssen, G. S., Helgesen, M. K., & Vabo, S. I. (2018). Det regionale nivået og fylkeskommunen. In G. S. Hanssen, M. K. Helgesen, & S. I. Vabo, *Politikk og demokrati. En innføring i stats- og kommunalkunnskap* (pp. 151-173). Oslo: Gyldendal Akademisk.

- Haugen, M. S., & Lysgård, H. K. (2006). Discourses of rurality in a norwegian context. *Norsk Geografisk Tidsskrift - Norwegian Journal of Geography*(60:3), pp. 174-178.
Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1080/00291950600889947>
- Haugesund kommune. (2018, January 10). *Fem mellomstore byregioner danner felles politisk nettverk*. Retrieved from <https://haugesund.kommune.no/aktuelt/nyhetsarkiv/9844-fem-mellomstore-byregioner-danner-felles-politisk-nettverk>
- Haugseth, J. F. (2013). *Sosiale medier i samfunnet*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- Henden , R. M. (2019, Mars 20). *Doktorgrad om effektivt klimaarbeid*. Hentet fra www.kristiansand.kommune.no:
<https://www.kristiansand.kommune.no/aktuelt/doktorgrad-om-effektivt-klimaarbeide/>
- Haarstad, H. (2016, May). Where are urban energy transitions governed? Conceptualizing the complex governance arrangements for low-carbon mobility in Europe. *Cities. The International Journal of Policy and Planning*(Vol. 54), pp. 4-10.
doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2015.10.013>
- Ingold, K., & Fischer, M. (2013, January). Drivers of collaboration to mitigate climate change: An illustration of Swiss climate policy over 15 years. *Global Environmental Change*(24), pp. 88-89. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2013.11.021>
- Innes, J. E., & Booher, D. (2015). A turning point for planning theory? Overcoming dividing discourses. *Planning Theory*, 14:2, pp. 195-213.
doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/1473095213519356>
- IPCC. (2018). *Global Warming of 1.5 °C*. Retrieved from <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/>
- Jones, N., Sophoulis, C. M., Iosifides, T., Botetzagias, I., & Evangelinos, K. (2009, July 24). The influence of social capital on environmental policy instruments. *Environmental Politics*, pp. 595-611. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/09644010903007443>
- Kaijser, A., & Kronsell, A. (2014). Climate change through the lens of intersectionality. *Environmental Politics*(23:3), pp. 417-433. Retrieved from <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09644016.2013.835203>
- Kalvehagen, M. N. (2020, July 9). Jeg slåss mot politikere som så det som sin fremste oppgave å hjelpe utbyggingsinteresser. *Agderposten*, pp. 18-20. Retrieved from

- <https://www.agderposten.no/nyheter/eks-ordforer-jeg-slass-mot-politikere-som-sa-det-som-sin-fremste-oppgave-a-hjelpe-utbyggingsinter/>
- Klimapartnere Agder. (n.d.). Retrieved July 10, 2020, from <https://klimapartnere.no/>
- Kommuneloven. (2019). Hentet fra <https://lovdata.no/dokument/NL/lov/1992-09-25-107?q=kommuneloven>
- Krick, E. (2021). Dealing with the epistemic-democratic tension in policy-making. Institutional design choices for multi-layered democratic innovations. *Political Research Exchange*(3:1), 1-31. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1080/2474736X.2021.1893608>
- Krick, E., & Holst, C. (2018). Committee Governance in Consensus Cultures: An Exploration of Best Practice Cases in Germany and Norway. In F. Engelstad, C. Holst, & G. C. Aakvaag, *Democratic State and Democratic Society. Institutional Change in the Nordic Model* (pp. 151-174). Warsaw: De Gruyter. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110634082-008>
- Kristiansand kommune. (n.d.). Retrieved May 2021, from www.byvekstavtalen.no
- Kvasjord, A. T. (2020, October 29). Enorm respons: – Har klart å engasjere de unge. *Grimstad Adressetidende*. Retrieved from <https://www.gat.no/nyheter/enorm-respons-har-klart-a-engasjere-de-unge/>
- Les Gilets Jaunes - The Yellow Vests movement. (n.d.). Retrieved July 2020, from <http://pagesgiletsjaunes.fr/>
- Lijphart, A. (1999). *Petterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries*. Yale University Press.
- Lundqvist, L. J., & Borgstede von, C. (2008, January). Whose Responsibility? Swedish Local Decision Makers and the Scale of Climate Change Abatement. *Urban Affairs Review*(43:3), pp. 299-324. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/1078087407304689>
- Lysgård, H. K. (2001). Regional identitet - en analytisk begrepsramme. In H. K. Lysgård, *Produksjon av rom og identitet i transnasjonale regioner. Et eksempel fra det politiske samarbeidet i Midt-Norden* (pp. 53-78). Trondheim: Norges Teknisk-Naturvitenskapelige universitet.

- Lyytimäki, J., Nygrén, A. N., Ala-Ketola, U., Pellinen, S., Ruohomäki, V., & Inkinen, A. (2013). Climate Change Communication by a Research Institute: Experiences, Successes, and Challenges from a North European Perspective. *Applied Environmental Education & Communication*(12:2), 118-129. Retrieved from <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/1533015X.2013.821869>
- Magnus, P. C., Leirvik, J. B., & Bjørge, R. (2018, September 26). Bompengaksjonar i Bergen: «Nok er nok!» møtte «Bomring – Tusen takk!». *NRK*. Retrieved April 2021, from https://www.nrk.no/vestland/bompengaksjonar-i-bergen_-_nok-er-nok__-motte-_bomring_-_tusen-takk__-1.14224427
- Mancebo, F. (2019, August 6). Smart city strategies: time to involve people. Comparing Amsterdam, Barcelona and Paris. *Journal of Urbanism: International Research on Placemaking and Urban Sustainability*. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1080/17549175.2019.1649711>
- Meld. St. 20 (2020–2021). (2021). *Nasjonal transportplan 2022–2033*. Samferdselsdepartementet. Retrieved May 2021, from <https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/fab417af0b8e4b5694591450f7dc6969/no/pdfs/stm202020210020000dddpdfs.pdf>
- Meld. St. 33 (2016-2017). (2017). *National Transport Plan 2018-2029*. Samferdselsdepartementet. Retrieved May 2021, from <https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/7c52fd2938ca42209e4286fe86bb28bd/no/pdfs/stm201620170033000dddpdfs.pdf>
- Ministry of Environment. (2012). *Norsk klimapolitikk*. Meld. St. 21 (2011-2012). Retrieved from <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/meld-st-21-2011-2012/id679374/?ch=1>
- Ministry of Environment. (2020, June 9). *Webinar: Climate considerations in area and transport planning*. Retrieved from <https://www.miljodirektoratet.no/aktuelt/arrangementer/2020/juni-2020/klimahensyn-i-areal--og-transportplanlegging/>
- Ministry of Transport. (2017). *National Transport Plan 2018-2029*. Meld. St. 33 (2016-2017). Retrieved May 2021, from

- <https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/7c52fd2938ca42209e4286fe86bb28bd/no/pdfs/stm201620170033000dddpdfs.pdf>
- Ministry of Transport. (2021). *Nasjonal transportplan 2022–2033*. Meld. St. 20 (2020–2021). Retrieved May 2021, from <https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/fab417af0b8e4b5694591450f7dc6969/no/pdfs/stm202020210020000dddpdfs.pdf>
- Mosca, L., & Quaranta, M. (2016). News diets, social media use and non-institutional participation in three communication ecologies: comparing Germany, Italy and the UK. *Information, Communication & Society*(19:3), pp. 325-345. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2015.1105276>
- Moser, S. C. (2006). Talk of the city: engaging urbanites on climate change. *Environmental Researc Letters*(1), 1-10. Retrieved from <https://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.1088/1748-9326/1/1/014006/pdf>
- Mouratidis, K. (2019, September). Compact city, urban sprawl, and subjective well-being. *Cities*(92), pp. 261-272. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2019.04.013>
- Nisbet, M. C. (2009). Communicating Climate Change: Why Frames Matter for Public Engagement. *Environment: Science and Policy for Sustainable Development*, pp. 12-23. doi:<https://doi.org/10.3200/ENVT.51.2.12-23>
- Norsk elbilforening. (2021, March 31). Retrieved May 2021, from Statistikk elbil: <https://elbil.no/elbilstatistikk/>
- Norwegian Environment Agency. (2020). *GHG emissions in municipalities*. Retrieved from <https://www.miljodirektoratet.no/tjenester/klimagassutslipp-kommuner/?area=41§or=-2>
- NRK. (2019a). *Valgresultat 2019*. Retrieved July 23, 2020, from <https://www.nrk.no/valg/2019/resultat/nb>
- NRK. (2019b, September). Retrieved from <https://www.nrk.no/valg/2019/resultat/nb/parti/MDG>
- O'Neill, S., & Nicholson-Cole, S. (2009). “Fear Won’t Do It” Promoting Positive Engagement With Climate Change Through Visual and Iconic Representations.

- Science Communication*(30:3), pp. 355-379.
doi:<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1075547008329201>
- O'Reilly, K. (2011). *Ethnographic Methods*. London: Routledge.
- Palonen, E., & Sunnercrantz, L. (2021). Nordic populists as hegemony challengers. In A. Koivunen, J. Ojala, & J. Holmén (Eds.), *The Nordic Economic, Social and Political Model. Challenges in the 21st Century* (pp. 153-176). Abingdon: Routledge.
- Pike, A., Rodriguez-Pose, A., & Tomaney, J. (2017). Where is local and regional development? In *Local and Regional Development* (2nd ed., pp. 32-39). Abingdon: Routledge.
- Public Administration Act. (2019). Retrieved from <https://lovdata.no/dokument/NLE/lov/1967-02-10?q=Public%20Administration%20Act>
- Putnam, R. D. (2001). Mobility and Sprawl. In R. D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (pp. 204-215). New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks.
- Regjeringen. (2018, April 27). *Byvekstavtaler*. Retrieved July 25, 2020, from <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/tema/kommuner-og-regioner/by--og-stedsutvikling/Byvekstavtaler/id2454599/>
- Regjeringen. (2019, December 19). Retrieved June 2021, from Nye fylker: <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/tema/kommuner-og-regioner/regionreform/regionreform/nye-fylker/id2548426/>
- Reusswig, F., Braun, F., Heger, I., Ludewig, T., Eichenauer, E., & Lass, W. (2016). Against the wind: Local opposition to the German Energiewende. *Utilities Policy*(41), 214-227. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jup.2016.02.006>
- Roelich, K., & Gieseckam, J. (2018). Decision making under uncertainty in climate change mitigation: introducing multiple actor motivations, agency and influence. *Climate Policy*(19:2), pp. 175-188.
doi:<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14693062.2018.1479238>

- Rost, K., Stahel, L., & Frey, B. S. (2016, June 17). Digital Social Norm Enforcement: Online Firestorms in Social Media. *PLoS ONE 11(6)*, ss. 1-26. Hentet fra <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0155923>
- Rygghaug, M., & Næss, R. (2012). Chapter: Climate Change Politics and Everyday Life. In A. Carvalho, & R. T. Peterson, *Climate Change Politics. Communication and Public Engagement* (pp. 31-58). Cambria Press.
- Raa, H., Heggheim, S., & Stokkeland, K. (2018, September 11). Demonstrerte mot flere bomstasjoner og økte satser. *NRK*. Retrieved May 2021, from <https://www.nrk.no/sorlandet/demonstrerte-mot-flere-bomstasjoner-og-okte-satser-1.14203894>
- Raagmaa, G. (2002). Regional Identity in Regional Development and Planning. *European Planning Studies(10:1)*, pp. 55-76.
- Segaard, S. B. (2017). The Institutional Anchoring of Social Media Venues as Arenas for Local Political Communication. Perceptions by Voters and Politicians. In F. Engelstad, J. Rogstad, H. Larsen, & K. Steen-Johnsen (Eds.), *Institutional Change in the Public Sphere. Views on the Nordic Model*. (pp. 118-138). Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Statistics Norway. (2004). *Kvinner og menn jobber deltid av forskjellige årsaker*. Retrieved July 10, 2020, from <https://www.ssb.no/arbeid-og-lonn/artikler-og-publikasjoner/kvinner-og-menn-jobber-deltid-av-forskjellige-aarsaker>
- Statistics Norway. (2019). *Likestilling*. Retrieved July 10, 2020, from <https://www.ssb.no/befolkning/faktaside/likestilling>
- Statistics Norway. (2020). Retrieved from www.ssb.no
- Statistics Norway. (2020, November 2). Retrieved May 2021, from Utslipp til luft: <https://www.ssb.no/natur-og-miljo/forurensning-og-klima/statistikk/utslipp-til-luft>
- Statistics Norway. (2020). *Kommunefakta Skien*. Retrieved July 23, 2020, from <https://www.ssb.no/kommunefakta/skien>
- Statistics Norway. (2021, April 14). Retrieved May 2021, from Sal av petroleumsprodukt: <https://www.ssb.no/energi-og-industri/statistikker/petroleumsalg/aar>

- Stoknes, P. E. (2014, April). Rethinking climate communications and the "psychological climate paradox". *Energy Resource & Social Science*(1), pp. 161-170.
doi:<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2214629614000218>
- Store Norske Leksikon. (n.d.). Retrieved June 2021, from Aust-Agder (tidligere fylke):
https://snl.no/Aust-Agder_-_tidligere_fylke
- Strand, J.-O., Nordli, R. C., Glimsdal, K., Gundersen, O., & Dukene, J. (2017, June 30). Arendalsregionen inn i en ny tid. *Agderposten*. Retrieved June 2021, from
<https://www.atp-arendalsregionen.no/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/atp.kronikk.agderposten.30.6.17.pdf>
- The European Union. (2018). *Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC*. Retrieved from <https://gdpr-info.eu/>
- The Ministry of Climate and Environment. (2009, September 4). *National guidelines for climate and energy planning in the municipalities*. Retrieved November 2020, from
<https://lovdata.no/dokument/LTI/forskrift/2009-09-04-1167>
- The Ministry of Climate and Environment. (2017). *Klimastrategi for 2030 – norsk omstilling i europeisk samarbeid*. The Ministry of Climate and Environment. Retrieved May 2001, from <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/meld.-st.-41-20162017/id2557401/?ch=1>
- The Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation. (2014). *State planning guidelines for coordinated housing, area and transport planning*. The Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation. Retrieved from
<https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/689bae9d728e48e8a633b024dcd6b34c/sprbatp.pdf>
- The Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation. (2019). *National expectations for regional and municipal planning 2019–2023*. Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation. Retrieved from
<https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/cc2c53c65af24b8ea560c0156d885703/nasjonale-forventninger-2019-bm.pdf>

- The Norwegian National Research Ethics Committees. (2016). Guidelines for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences, Humanities, Law and Theology. Retrieved November 25, 2020, from <https://www.forskningsetikk.no/en/guidelines/social-sciences-humanities-law-and-theology/guidelines-for-research-ethics-in-the-social-sciences-humanities-law-and-theology/>
- The Norwegian National Research Ethics Committees. (2019). A Guide to Internet Research Ethics. Retrieved November 25, 2020, from <https://www.forskningsetikk.no/en/guidelines/social-sciences-humanities-law-and-theology/a-guide-to-internet-research-ethics/>
- The Planning and Building Act. (2013). *The Planning and the Processing of Building Applications*. LOV-2021-06-04-57. Retrieved May 2021, from https://lovdata.no/dokument/NL/lov/2008-06-27-71/*#*
- The World Café. (n.d.). Retrieved November 11, 2019, from www.theworldcafe.com/key-concepts-resources/world-cafe-method/
- Tjørholm, V. (2019, May 9). Fem byer der politikerne har endret eller utsatt bompengerplanene. *NRK*. Retrieved June 2021, from <https://www.nrk.no/norge/fem-byer-der-politikerne-har-endret-eller-utsatt-bompengerplanene-1.14544765>
- Tørnblad, S. H., Westskog, H., & Rose, L. E. (2014). Does Location Matter? Public Acceptance of Restrictive Policy Measures at the Local Level. *Journal of Environmental Policy and Planning*(16:1), pp. 37-54. Retrieved from <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/1523908X.2013.817946>
- United Nations. (1994). *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*. Retrieved from https://unfccc.int/files/essential_background/background_publications_htmlpdf/application/pdf/conveng.pdf
- United Nations. (2015). The Paris Agreement. Paris. Retrieved from https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/english_paris_agreement.pdf
- Veglova. (1963). *Lov om vegar* . LOV-1963-06-21-23 . Retrieved May 2021, from <https://lovdata.no/dokument/NL/lov/1963-06-21-23?q=veglova>

Viitanen, J., & Kingston, R. (2013). Smart cities and green growth: outsourcing democratic and environmental resilience to the global technology sector. *Environment and Planning*(46), pp. 803-819.

Wanvik, T. I., & Haarstad, H. (2021). Populism, Instability, and Rupture in Sustainability Transformations. *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*, pp. 1-16.
doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/24694452.2020.1866486>

WSP. (2016, March 11). *Mulighetsstudie Kollektivtrafikk i Arendalsregionen*. Retrieved June 6, 2020, from <https://www.atp-arendalsregionen.no/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/mulighetsstudie-kollektiv-2016.pdf>

Aasness, M. A., & Odeck, J. (2015, October 8). The increase of electric vehicle usage in Norway—incentives and adverse effects. *European Transport Research Review*(7 (34)). doi:<https://doi.org/10.1007/s12544-015-0182-4>

Appendix

Interview Guide

Notes: Background information, fully anonymised. Current and previous role.

1. What issues and interest in the ATP are specific for your municipality or institutions that? And how do these differ and interact with other municipalities and institutions involved w ATP?
2. How financing and road tolls come up in ATP discussions, and processes? We discussed it in workshop, but I am looking your perspective / opinion about it. Can you tell me more of your perspective and your institutions’?
3. What role do you think social media played in ATP and perspective from your institution?
4. Were there any town hall meetings, neighbour meetings? Can you tell us more about communication processes in your municipality and relation to other municipalities, institutions?