Small steps in all directions

Exploring localisation of the Sustainable Development Goals in Norway

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Acknowledgements

I never thought I would write these acknowledgements. For years, this thesis felt too far away from being a thing that I would ever submit. I owe the fact that I *am* writing this to many people, a few of whom I want to thank especially.

First and foremost, I thank all the informants who took the time to talk to me. Second, I thank my supervisors Håkan T. Sandersen and Tim Richardson for always constructive and encouraging feedback and for helping me to structure my thoughts and sharpen my writing through all these years.

Third, I thank my co-authors Aase Kristine Lundberg and Kyrre Groven for the fun and frustration of writing papers together. Fourth, I thank Eivind Junker and Mikaela Vasstrøm for their valuable comments in my mid-term and final seminars. Fifth, thanks to Helga Eggebø and Christian Lo for commenting on papers and for the coffee breaks, and to Helena Gonzales Lindberg for language editing (any flaws and errors my fault is).

Sixth, thanks to the Faculty of Social Science at Nord University for employing me and, also, for letting me have a part-time position at Nordland Research Institute while doing this PhD. Thanks especially to Anneli Watterud for help with all administrative matters. Also thank you to colleagues at the MINS research group at Campus Bodø for being a great bunch of people, and especially to Beate Steinveg and office-roommate Anne Schäfer for providing feedback on parts of this text.

I also want to thank Nordland Research Institute for being a very flexible employer concerning my return as a full-time employee, and to all my colleagues for your well-meaning questions about when I'm submitting – here, it is done. Thanks also to everyone at Nordregio in Stockholm for welcoming me as a guest researcher in the autumn of 2022, and especially to Diana Huynh for your hospitality and for lending me your bicycle.

The most well-deserved thanks, go to my wife Eilen and our children Sigve and Kaja: for your patience with me while I have spent night after night, weekend after weekend, holiday after holiday, year after year, in front of these slowly emerging pages.

Finally, I would like to dedicate this thesis to the memory of Berit Skorstad, a warm, funny and always kind person who introduced me to environmental sociology and whose passing is a great loss.

Mathias Brynildsen Reinar

Bodø, January, 2024

Summary

With the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, the United Nations created a new framework for collective action towards sustainable development. In the years since, there have been numerous calls to "localise" the SDGs. This puts pressure on local governments to find ways to meaningfully engage with the SDGs as part of their planning and policy-making.

This thesis critically examines localisation of the SDGs in Norway and discusses the implications for Norway's progress on the 2030 Agenda. The thesis analyses how localisation has been formulated and justified as a strategy at the national level, as well as the practises that aim to make the SDGs appear relevant in local planning. To do this, the thesis develops a theoretical framework based on concepts from the policy mobilities literature, centring on the tensions that arise when global ideas, expressed in the SDGs, need to be anchored in local contexts. The empirical material comes from interviews with 41 planners and other key policy actors at local, regional and national government levels, as well as from analyses of municipal plans and national policy documents.

The findings are presented in four empirical papers. The findings show, among other things, that while the SDGs are generally appreciated by municipalities as a framework for local planning, local planners demand clearer guidance and clarifications about what implementation should entail. The thesis finds that the national government appeals to notions of local autonomy when justifying localisation as a strategy of implementation, which, in turn, leaves little room for defining national criteria for what progress should look like, given the tradition of strong local autonomy in Norway. One consequence of localisation is as such that the national effort to achieve the 2030 Agenda has little overall direction. In practice, progress on the SDGs becomes largely what municipalities make of it.

Sammendrag

Gjennom Agenda 2030 og de 17 bærekraftsmålene i 2015, skapte FN et nytt rammeverk for bærekraftig utvikling. I oppfølgingen av agendaen, har en rekke aktører pekt på nødvendigheten av å implementere bærekraftsmålene lokalt («lokalisere» målene). Kommuner har dermed press på seg til å finne meningsfulle måter å jobbe med bærekraftsmålene på i sin lokale planelling og politikkutvikling.

Denne avhandlingen utforsker såkalt lokalisering av bærekraftsmålene i Norge, og diskuterer implikasjonene for Norges innsats for å nå målene i Agenda 2030. Avhandlingen analyserer hvordan lokalisering har blitt rettferdiggjort på nasjonalt nivå, samt de ulike praksisene som har som formål å gjøre bærekraftsmålene relevant i kommunal planlegging. For å gjøre dette, utvikler avhandlingen et teoretisk rammeverk basert på konsepter fra «policy mobilities»-litteraturen. Sentralt her er spenningene som oppstår når globale ideer, uttrykt i FNs bærekraftmål, må forankres i lokale kontekster. Det empiriske materialet er hentet fra intervjuer med 41 planlegger og andre nøkkelaktører på det lokale, regionale og nasjonale styringsnivået, samt analyser av kommunale planer og nasjonale styringsdokumenter.

Funnene er presentert i fire empiriske artikler. De viser blant annet at bærekraftsmålene i stor grad forstås som et velkomment tilskudd til kommunal planlegging, samtidig som planleggere krever tydeligere styringssignaler og avklaringer om hva lokal implementering bør innebære. Avhandlingen viser at argumenter om lokal autonomi brukes av regjeringen for å rettferdiggjøre det å peke på kommunenes ansvar. Dette medfører imidlertid at det er lite rom for å sette nasjonale minstestandarder for lokal framgang på bærekraftsmålene. Én konsekvens av lokalisering av bærekraftsmålene er derfor at den nasjonale tilnærmingen til bærekraftsmålene har en lite overordnet retning. I praksis blir framgang knyttet til bærekraftsmålene i stor grad det kommunene selv legger i det.

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Abbreviations

ICLEI	Formerly: International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives Currently: Local Governments for Sustainability
ITU	International Telecommunications Union
KS	Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities
LA21	Local Agenda 21
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NVR	National Voluntary Review
NSD	Norwegian Centre for Research Data
PBA	Norwegian Planning and Building Act
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UN	United Nations
UCLG	United Cities and Local Governments
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
U4SSC	United for Smart Sustainable Cities
WCED	World Commission on Environment and Development

List of papers

Paper 1: Reinar, M. B., & Lundberg, A. K. "Everything the state does not want to do, we leave to the municipalities": Framing the scale of the Sustainable Development Goals in Norwegian national policy.
[Manuscript submitted to Journal of Environmental Policy and Planning]

Paper 2 : Reinar, M. B., & Lundberg, A. K. (2023). Goals à la carte: selective translation of the Sustainable Development Goals in strategic municipal planning in Norway. *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management*, 1-17.
https://doi.org/10.1080/09640568.2023.2191816

Paper 3: Reinar, M. B. Moving metrics: the global mobilisation and local translations of sustainability indicators in Norwegian municipal planning.
[Manuscript submitted to Cities: The International Journal of Urban Policy and Planning]

Paper 4: Reinar, M. B., Groven, K., & Lundberg, A. K. (2022). Mye styr, lite styring? Implementering av FNs bærekraftsmål i samfunns- og arealplanlegging [All Show and No Go? Implementing the UN Sustainable Development Goals in Societal and Land-use Planning"]. In *Bærekraft: Fjordantologien 2022* (pp. 298-317). Universitetsforlaget.
https://doi.org/10.18261/9788215062938-2022-1

1 Introduction

1.1 An offer they couldn't refuse

Every January, municipal managers, mayors and other senior leaders in the county of Møre og Romsdal, located on the northwestern coast of Norway, meet for two days at an annual New Year's Conference to discuss current topics for the public sector in the region. In 2020 the topic was how the public sector could work with sustainability. At this time the Møre og Romsdal county authorities had established a countywide "Sustainability project" aimed at supporting the municipalities in their local work toward sustainability. As part of this project the county has established a formal collaboration with a United Nations initiative called *United for Smart Sustainable Cities* (U4SSC). This collaboration involves the benchmarking of smartness and sustainability on the basis of 91 indicators mainly regarding economic issues and the aim of Sustainable Development Goal 11 to develop sustainable cities and communities (International Telecommunication Union, 2021). However, the county authorities needed to get the 24 municipalities in the county on board so the whole county could be benchmarked according to the United Nations (UN) standard. With no formal power to impose decisions on the municipalities, the county had made application of the indicators an obligatory entrance point for participation in the "Sustainability project"

Early on during the first day of the conference, the county authorities took to the stage and made a proposition: By joining the U4SSC project, the municipalities would receive help with their work of implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). All they had to do was gather the necessary data for the indicators, as all other costs of joining had been taken care of. The county authorities, together with a representative from the U4SSC initiative, strongly encouraged the municipalities to join the initiative sooner rather than later in order to have any influence on the direction of the project. They specifically argued that any attempt to anchor the project at the political level in each municipality would be a waste of time. The municipalities would be asked to

gather the data anyway, so they might as well join. The representatives at the conference were given 48 hours to respond (Møre og Romsdal County Municipality, 2020). Essentially, the proposition gave the municipalities the choice of either joining the project and receiving support to achieve the SDGs, or not joining and having to find ways to implement the SDGs on their own. The train was about to leave the station. All the municipalities were expected to join, and as an informant from the county authority later told me, they had proposed a deal that the municipalities couldn't refuse: "No one could say no".

At this time, all Norwegian municipalities were under pressure to find ways to implement the SDGs in their local contexts. Municipalities had been highlighted as "key players to realise sustainable social development and attainment of the sustainable development goals" by the national government in national expectations towards municipal planning (Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation, 2019, p. 6). So far, however, the municipalities were having a hard time to operationalise the global SDGs at the local level. Among other problems, they reported that they were lacking tools such as relevant, local indicators to help establish a baseline and to measure potential progress being made (Lundberg et al., 2020; Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities, 2021a).

No one said no, and by the spring of 2021, all 24 municipalities in Møre og Romsdal county had been benchmarked with the UN indicators and had been awarded a sustainability certificate from the United Nations through the U4SSC initiative, just like those awarded to hundreds of other cities and towns across the world, including metropoles like Moscow, Singapore and Dubai (International Telecommunication Union, 2021). The sustainability certifications showed that the municipalities were mostly sustainable, but with challenges on certain issues such as transport and physical infrastructure related to water supply. Moreover, the many certifications in Møre og Romsdal also showed that the proposition made by the county authorities had a profound influence on how the municipalities spent their time in the year that followed,

as they spent much time digging up the data that was required to be benchmarked by the UN.

The proposition had been made with reference to the national expectations that municipalities and regional authorities implement the SDGs. More importantly, this example, coming from a subcase which will be further explored in this thesis, shows how local action and implementation of the SDGs is not merely a local matter but is part of a larger policy landscape, involving not least the UN machinery itself. Moreover, it illustrates how different actors shape and channel policy ideas through alliances, using persuasive arguments, sticks, and carrots – or rigid 48-hour deadlines. With increasing attention and importance given to cities and local governments to fulfil the SDGs, and with calls to "localise" the SDGs both by political authorities and scientific communities, the pressure is clearly on municipalities to find local fixes to their problems.

Given the powerful narrative of the UN's 2030 Agenda as a pathway to a more sustainable planet (Messerli et al., 2019; Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation, 2021; Sachs et al., 2022; United Nations, 2015b), this thesis is concerned with how this global policy agenda moves from global to local sites of implementation. This is primarily a question of power: Who has the power to move the agenda? How does the agenda change and "mutate" along the way (Peck & Theodore, 2010)? In whose interests are these movements? And how, if at all, does the 2030 Agenda contribute to shaping local priorities when it is localised? Put differently: Is the local path leading us in the right direction?

1.2 Problems of localisation

Times of crisis require collective action. Against the background of looming catastrophes like climate change, massive loss of biodiversity, increasing inequality within and across countries, growing urban slums and the upsurge in interstate wars, the UN is the main coordinating body for global action. In 2015 the UN General

Assembly adopted unanimously, for only the third time in its history, an ambitious agenda for change: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The agenda is a "call for action to change our world" (United Nations, 2015b, p. 12) as a pathway to sustainable development for "people, planet and prosperity" (ibid., p. 1). Part of the agenda is 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets that will guide action on all scales and levels toward necessary changes, considering that business as usual is not a viable option (Messerli et al., 2019).

As indicated in the example above, this thesis is concerned with local action on the SDGs – both how it is framed and how it is enacted. Local-level action is widely recognised as crucial for implementing the SDGs. The 2030 Agenda points to the need for national governments to work closely with regional and local authorities in implementing the agenda (United Nations, 2015b, p. 9). However, the specific role of local governments is vaguely formulated in the 2030 Agenda (Krantz, 2022). While the inclusion of SDG 11 ("sustainable cities and communities") is a recognition of the key roles of cities and local governments (Barnett & Parnell, 2016), there are also calls to take local action across the entire agenda, as all the 17 SDGs are said to have a local component (Kanuri et al., 2016).

As such, there are calls to *localise the SDGs*. While there is no agreed-upon definition of localisation, it is often understood to mean processes of translating globally defined goals to local contexts "in ways that make them appear recognizable, urgent, and meaningful" (Ansell et al., 2022, p. 42). Localisation of the SDGs is promoted by a range of policy actors, from global organisations like UN-HABITAT and UNDP, and regional actors like the EU and OECD, to transnational organisations representing the interests of local governments, like ICLEI (Local Governments for Sustainability) and UCLG (United Cities and Local Governments), as well as by governments (e.g. Huynh, 2023; OECD, 2020; Schuthof et al., 2019; United Cities and Local Governments, 2016, 2019). Martinez (2022, p. 10) shows how calls to localise the SDGs are forcefully made by municipal actors themselves, in a study of how UCLG has framed localisation "as a

political opportunity" for its members in ways that highlights the role of cities and local governments in responding to global problems, and thus also elevates its own importance for the achievement of the global agenda.

Localisation is, however, a paradox. On the one hand it is understood to be about bottom-up approaches based on local challenges and opportunities that will help to ensure legitimacy and accountability for the global agenda. On the other hand it is also intended to ensure policy coherence and comparability on an agenda that comes equipped with 17 goals, 169 targets, and 231 mostly quantitative indicators (Reuter, 2023). Following from this, local action on global goals necessarily involves tensions and trade-offs between the global call for change and local possibilities. At the same time, it has been argued that a *local* framing of sustainable development "occludes questions of international responsibility and justice" that need to be addressed at scales other than the local (Lawhon & Patel, 2013, p. 1048).

In this thesis I explore localisation in Norway, where the government has decided that municipal and regional planning should be based on the SDGs (Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation, 2019, 2021). The municipal sector's interest organisation KS likewise argues that localisation is a "crucial factor for the success of Agenda 2030" (Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities, 2021b, p. 3). At the same time, KS points out that there is little knowledge about what localisation entails (ibid., p. 7). More than halfway through the implementation period (2015–2030), this indicates a need for research that unpacks what localisation is about, both as an overall strategy for implementing sustainable development and in practical terms, on the ground, where the SDGs need to be translated into local contexts in order for them to make sense. In the next section, I outline how this thesis will approach this in relation to the current state of knowledge.

1.3 Localisation as a research problem

While there is no general agreement about what localisation means (Lucci, 2015), both in research (Fox & Macleod, 2021) and in practical guides for local governments (United Cities and Local Governments, 2016) it is often conceptualised as a process of policy or knowledge *translation*. Krantz (2022), in a study of Swedish municipalities, refers to localisation as "the process of translating the SDGs into the local context and the municipal organisation" (p. 4), while (Egelund, 2022), drawing on neo-institutional organisational theory, discusses local engagement with the SDGs in Danish municipalities as examples of different types of translations.

The idea of translation suggests a non-linear process of implementation in which changes to the policy agenda are seen as unavoidable or even expected (Stone, 2012; Yanow, 2004). Studies of translation of the SDGs from the local perspective highlight local challenges and opportunities of making the global goals locally meaningful (e.g. Ansell et al., 2022; Gustafsson & Ivner, 2018; Leavesley et al., 2022). At the same time, the broader political contexts where localisation occurs risks slipping away, including the influences of travelling policy models, as illustrated in the example above. The importance of placing local sustainability policies in a broader context have been emphasised (Bulkeley & Betsill, 2005). Studies of the SDGs have also emphasised that actors operating beyond the local level are involved in localisation (Perry et al., 2021; Valencia et al., 2019). Croese et al. (2021, p. 437), for example, point to the "different and complex multi-level governance arrangements involved in and required for SDG localisation". In another study, Croese and Duminy (2023, p. 2) bring in *policy mobility* as a theoretical approach to shed light on how SDG localisation "may be co-produced and mobilized by a constellation of actors involved in the advancement of global development policies".

As it is mainly policies and ideas from elsewhere that must be translated, translation is closely related to movement. The drive to localise the SDGs has also been characterised as a global "movement" promoted by actors at all scales (Bilsky et al., 2021, p. 714).

Studying localisation as a movement, moreover, calls for a more "mobile" approach than has so far been present. This thesis will therefore investigate key processes involved in moving the SDGs along from the UN to municipal plans. In this I follow the observation that the movement of anything – people, things, ideas – is never neutral, but infused with meaning and power (Cresswell, 2010). This suggests that movement has a politics. A similar argument is made by Purcell and Brown, who, in the context of localisation of sustainable development, point out that the outcome of localisation will depend on whose interests and agendas it serves (Purcell & Brown, 2005).

To develop these arguments, I draw on concepts and theories from the *policy mobilities* literature. This approach to the study of policy emerged a few years ago with one foot in the sociology of mobility and the other in policy transfer research. In short, policy mobilities research aims to "explore the processes, practices and resources brought together to construct, mobilize and territorialize policy knowledge" (Baker & Temenos, 2015, p. 825). It is concerned with the tensions between policy ideas as something that flows and something that needs to be fixed in place, seeing local policymaking as a tension between global and local forces (McCann & Ward, 2011; Peck & Theodore, 2010). It is attuned to the actors and institutions involved in the circulation of policy ideas, and the local politics and translations of making these ideas actionable (Healey, 2013; McCann, 2011; Temenos & McCann, 2012). Using policy mobilities as a framework allows me to explore the processes involved when the SDGs are shaped as a local agenda, mobilised locally, and the tensions that arise in translating the goals into locally meaningful policies. Getting this view on the matter is important in order to critically assess the actual effects of policy ideas that are presented as a universally good thing, and as a way to discuss the tensions around the SDGs as a discursive force, and their local impact. Later, in Chapter 3, I use ideas like these to develop a theoretical framework for studying how the SDGs are localised.

1.4 Purpose, aim and research questions

So far, little is known about the local impact of the SDGs, as research on local implementation is still limited (Llanos et al., 2022). As a contribution to filling this knowledge gap, this thesis aims to generate knowledge about how the SDGs are localised in a national case. As a thesis in environmental sociology, moreover, the thesis aims to make a scholarly contribution to this discipline through its novel exploration of the SDGs as mobile policy. At a more overarching level, the purpose of this thesis is to contribute to a better understanding of what localising the SDGs entails and the implications of this for Norway's response to the 2030 Agenda. This can again contribute to a broader discussion of where we are going with localisation (cf. Flyvbjerg, 2001), and as such to a more targeted approach to the 2030 Agenda and more sustainable development. Following this, the **overarching research question** is:

- **How are the SDGs localised in Norway, and what are the implications for Norway's response to the 2030 Agenda?**

To help me answer this research question, I ask three sub-questions (SQs) which together examines three processes of localisation: *framing*, *mobilisation*, and *translation*. The SQs are explored across four empirical papers in the thesis. SQ1 is concerned with the framing of localisation in a national political context, and asks:

- SQ1: How are the SDGs framed as a local planning agenda?

The first sub-question concerns localisation within the national political framework. The question is motivated by what seems like a tension between how local action on the SDGs is emphasised as crucial, while at the same time national governments determine a great degree of the political and legal frameworks for this local action. SQ1 is explored in **Paper 1**.

In addition to discursive framing, policies are also mobilised through *practices*, which is the concern of SQ2, that asks:

- SQ2: How are the SDGs mobilised locally?

SQ2 is concerned with the actions and actors that carry the SDGs to Norwegian municipalities. The question is motivated by the emphasis in the policy mobilities literature on the micro-movement of policies – including the detours and power relations involved – in contrast to approaches which see policy transfer as a more or less rational movement (Peck & Theodore, 2015). This involves both exploring the official policy tools, such as guidelines, and more informal ways of travelling, for example through policy networks of various kinds. SQ2 is explored in **Papers 1, 3** and **4**.

The third sub-question focuses on the "translation experiences" (Healey, 2013, p. 1520) as the SDGs are made to make sense locally. It asks:

- SQ3: What are the experiences of translating the SDGs into local planning needs?

The policy mobilities literature emphasises that policy ideas do not move as a "complete package", but instead "in bits and pieces" (Peck & Theodore, 2010, p. 170). Similarly, the concept of translation suggests that policy ideas change when they move and enter new contexts. The question seeks to examine the local experiences of implementing the SDGs in planning. In this way, the question contributes with insights about the consequences of localisation. SQ3 is explored in **Papers 2, 3** and **4**.

There is a logical connection between the three sub-questions, with the frames of SQ1 mobilised in SQ2, and then translated in SQ3. Together they provide answers to the overall research question. Thei relationship between RQ and SQs is shown in Figure 1, on the following page.

Figure 1 *Relationship between overarching research question and sub-questions*

1.5 Research strategy

I explore the questions through an embedded case study (Yin, 2009). The main case in this study is *localising the SDG in Norway*. Norway can be considered a "most likely" case (Flyvbjerg, 2006) of localisation. From the outset, it seems like a welcoming environment for the localisation of global agendas centred on sustainable development. For one thing, Norway was a global advocate for adopting the Agenda 2030, with the Norwegian prime minister co-chairing the SDG advocacy group – and subsequently there has been much national attention around the agenda. Norway also has a tradition for progressive environmental policies (Ingeborgrud, 2018), and the idea of sustainable development has been inscribed into a range of regulations, including the Planning and Building Act (Jerkø, 2009). Moreover, Norway has a tradition of strong local government and local autonomy, with a municipal sector that has historically been a laboratory for decentralisation, democracy and reform (Baldersheim & Rose, 2014, p. 9). Finally, as a highly developed, industrialised country, Norway seems to have much in place already. In 2022, it was ranked as number four on the global SDG index, with a goal achievement of 82 per cent – and only surpassed by the other Nordic countries (Sachs et al., 2022). On the other hand, this might also present a challenge in terms of making the SDGs a usefully or meaningfully *new* local agenda, if business as usual is good enough.

The main case is explored through four embedded subcases, which capture different aspect of framing, mobilising, and translating the SDGs. Combined, the main case is then able to present a picture of localisation that incorporates global, national and local dimensions of localisation. I return to the research strategy in more detail in Chapter 4.

1.6 Structure of the thesis

This thesis consists of four empirical research papers and a an introductory text (the "kappe" in Norwegian). Paper 3 is sole authored, while the other three are co-authored (Papers 1, 2 and 4). Each of the papers has its own set of research questions that together contribute to answering the thesis questions. Table 1 on the next page shows how each of the papers contributes to the sub-questions of the thesis.

The rest of the introductory text is structured as follows: Chapter 2 provides context to the phenomenon of localising sustainable development, as well as description of the Norwegian case. In Chapter 3 I present my theoretical framework based on the policy mobilities approach. Then follows Chapter 4 on methodology and methods, which includes descriptions of the research strategy, data collection techniques and analytical choices. In Chapter 5, the papers are summarised, while the overall findings from the thesis are addressed in Chapter 6. In Chapter 7, I conclude by highlighting how the thesis contributes to the knowledge problems and practical problems of localisation, including its contribution to environmental sociology. The four papers follow the concluding chapter.

Table 1 *Papers and contribution to thesis*

Paper (publication status)	*Contribution to thesis*	*Thesis SQs*	*Key concept*
Paper 1: **Framing the scale** (Manuscript submitted to *Journal of Environmental Policy and Planning*)	Shows how local action has become an important part of the national response to the SDGs, with local autonomy as a key justification	1, 2	Scale framing
Paper 2: **Goals à la carte** (Published in *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management*)	Explores how municipalities selectively engage with the SDGs when they are translated into local planning needs	3	Policy translation
Paper 3: **Moving metrics** (Manuscript submitted to *Cities: The International Journal of Urban Policy and Planning*)	Shows the practical work and establishment of global-local alliances to mobilise local sustainability indicators	2, 3	Policy mobilisation
Paper 4: **Mye styr, lite styring? [All show and no go?]** (Published in *Bærekraft, Fjordantologien 2022*)	Identifies a discrepancy between top-down policy signals and bottom-up perceptions concerning implementation of the SDGs	2, 3	Competing governance logics

2 Context and case

In this chapter, I present the context and case of this study. The context is the localisation of global agendas of sustainable development, while the case is localisation of the SDGs in Norway. I begin with a short history of the emergence of sustainable development as a global and local aspiration before I describe the Norwegian case. One aim of this chapter is to situate the contribution of the thesis in the wider academic literature on localisation of sustainable development.

2.1 Sustainable development as a global and local aspiration

In the 1960s, environmental problems were being becoming more and more visible, and by the turn of the decade, sustainability – a concept from the field of nature conservation– began to gain strength as a reaction to environmental damages caused by industrial society (Caradonna, 2014). As such, sustainability was from the beginning an idea that was linked with a return to the small and local, the decentralisation of responsibility being an "ethos of duty and empowerment" (ibid., p. 18). In 1972, the Club of Rome predicted that "the limits to growth will be reached sometime within the next 100 years" (Meadows et al., 1972, p. 23), based on trends of population growth, industrialisation, food production, pollution, and resource depletion. From this perspective, a return to local agriculture, local business and local decision-making was considered more sustainable based on the assumption "that people, grouped into local communities (because of the idealistic way these are perceived), will not act contrary to sustainable development" (Voisey & O'Riordan, 2010, p. 40). Following this line of thinking, it was assumed "that men organized in small units will take better care of their bit of land or other natural resources than anonymous companies or megalomaniac governments" (E.F. Schumacher, 1973, cited in Caradonna, 2014, p. 18).

With critical studies like this looming in the background, sustainability moved into political circles, and through its uptake in the United Nations, sustainability would become "not only a buzzword but also a galvanizingly powerful term" (Caradonna,

2014, p. 3). As a political term, sustainability was brought onto the international agenda at the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in 1972 (Adams, 2020, p. 51). Here it mutated and became linked with development. This was, to begin with, a pragmatic move. Assembling support for the UN conference was a challenge, as different countries had opposing viewpoints on what the major issues were. While industrialised countries had started to feel the effects of environmental problems, developing countries had other problems, first and foremost related to poverty. Ultimately the conference was sold in as an opportunity to "'point the way towards the achievement of industrialisation without side-effects'" (Clarke & Timberlake, 1982, p. 7, cited in Adams, 2020, p. 51).

In the years that followed, the idea that there was a "positive-sum game" (Whitehead, 2007, p. 16) between economic development and environmental protection became increasingly popular. The idea was crystallised in the concept of sustainable development, introduced in the World Conservation Strategy published in 1980 before breaking out into the mainstream with the release of *Our Common Future* in 1987. This latter report was published by World Commission on Environment and Development, which was chaired by the Norwegian prime minister Gro Harlem Brundtland and famously defined sustainable development as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (WCED, 1987, p. 41). The report recommended that the principles of sustainable development include the notion of inter-generational justice and the interdependence of economic development and environmental protection. As such, it cemented the hegemonic idea that sustainability concerns more than environmental issues (Whitehead, 2007, p. 24).

The role of local government is mentioned briefly in *Our Common Future,* which includes a chapter on "the urban challenge". The chapter highlights the importance of supporting local government in addressing sustainability issues, arguing that since the world is becoming increasingly urbanised, cities should be central in the pursuit of

sustainable development (WCED, 1987). As such, the report marked the point at which cities began to be taken seriously as sites for sustainable development (Bulkeley & Betsill, 2005). It prepared the ground for the inclusion decades later of a standalone goal focusing on cities and local government in the 2030 Agenda (Aust & Du Plessis, 2018).

Following up the recommendations from *Our Common Future*, the United Nations Commission for Sustainable Development was established in 1992, twenty years after the first UN environmental conference. The Earth Summit was organised in Rio that same year. At this conference, the member states of the UN adopted Agenda 21 – a programme for sustainable development for the twenty-first century (UNCED, 1992). Agenda 21 included a chapter dedicated to the role of local authorities which emphasised that "the participation and cooperation of local authorities will be a determining factor" in achieving the agenda (ibid., p. 285). Moreover, "as the level of governance closest to the people, they play a vital role in educating, mobilizing and responding to the public to promote sustainable development" (ibid., p. 285). It was not specified what exactly local governments were supposed to do, and the rest of Chapter 28 was concerned with local processes, encouraging local governments to initiate dialogue with their residents about issues relevant to the environment and development.

In the next decades, sustainable development became the topic of several UN conferences and programmes (Adams, 2020). In 2000, UN member states agreed to eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that should be achieved by 2015, targeting the Global South. Of these, goal seven was to ensure environmental sustainability (United Nations, 2015a). However, the local perspective was largely missing from the MDGs (Reddy, 2016). Approaching 2015, it was time for a new global agreement and the UN conducted a comprehensive process wherein a range of actors from individuals to countries were invited to provide feedback to a global plan of sustainable development (Biermann et al., 2022). The outcome was the 2030 Agenda

for Sustainable Development, adopted by the UN General Assembly in September 2015 (United Nations, 2015b).

According to the United Nations itself, the 2030 Agenda is a "supremely ambitious and transformational vision" (United Nations, 2015b, p. 3). In adopting the agenda, the member states made "a historic decision on a comprehensive, far-reaching and people-centred set of universal and transformative Goals and targets" (ibid.). Central to the agenda are 17 SDGs, along with 169 targets and 231 indicators. Together, the 17 SDGs are often understood as "a holistic representation of the complexity of sustainable development" (Valencia et al., 2019, p. 5). The goals cover a broad range of challenges focused on economic issues such as eradicating poverty (SDG 1) and promoting economic growth (SDG 8), environmental issues such as the protection of nature (SDG 14 and 15) and combating climate change (SDG 13), and social issues such as gender equality (SDG 5) and peace and justice (SDG 16). In addition, there is an "implementation goal" (SDG 17) focused on global partnerships and collaboration in order to achieve the agenda.

While generally perceived as a necessary agenda for global change (Messerli et al., 2019), the 2030 Agenda has also been criticised on multiple accounts. Like the concept of sustainable development itself, the agenda and the 17 goals have been criticised for promoting a business-as-usual paradigm through its neoliberal framing of the need for continuous economic growth (Adelman, 2018). Another criticism concern how the agenda effectively shuts off political contestation by framing its version of sustainable development as "common sense" (Hope, 2021). The SDGs are also said to be useful for greenwashing practices, as they can conveniently be used to make an impression of action (Gneiting & Mhlanga, 2021), or through the cherry-picking of goals that do not challenge status-quo (Forestier & Kim, 2020). While critical objections like these help to tone down the most enthusiastic spokespersons, the importance of taking the political lives of buzzword serious is however an important sociological task (Ratner,

2004). Given the real effects the SDGs are having – for good or bad – on local administration, the local spread of the SDG warrants critical investigations.

Unlike Agenda 21, however, the 2030 Agenda does not contain a chapter dedicated to local government. According to the 2030 Agenda, "[g]overnments and public institutions will also work closely on implementation with regional and local authorities" (United Nations, 2015b, p. 11). Similar to "the urban problem" identified in *Our Common Future*, the 2030 Agenda includes a goal – SDG 11 – that aims to "make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable" (ibid., p. 21). Many of the targets associated with SDG 11 concern cities and larger urban areas, highlighting problems associated with rapid urbanisation. However, as proponents of localisation argue, localising the SDGs goes beyond just SDG 11, as "[a]ll of the SDGs have targets that are directly or indirectly related to the daily work of local and regional governments" (United Cities and Local Governments, 2016, p. 2). According to a widely cited estimate, that is strategically used in framing a local agenda (see Paper 1), two-thirds of the 169 targets depend on action from subnational governments (Kanuri et al., 2016). These proponents include different actors. The inclusion of SDG 11 was considered a victory for city lobbyists (Barnett & Parnell, 2016). For some, like UCLG, the 2030 Agenda has become key part of their policy agendas: "Making this global agenda our own is what we understand by *localization* [as it] places us at the heart of the international development policy, and is the only guarantee for its accomplishment" (United Cities and Local Governments, 2019, p. 4).

Krantz (2022) notes that in the 2030 Agenda the role of municipalities in implementing the SDGs is vague, and SDG localisation can be understood in many ways. There have been quite a number of studies exploring localisation in cities in general (Fox & Macleod, 2021; Leavesley et al., 2022; Valencia et al., 2019) and related to SDG 11 in particular (Aust & Du Plessis, 2018; Berisha et al., 2022; Grossi & Trunova, 2021; Klopp & Petretta, 2017). While there is "no comprehensive mechanism" for localising the SDGs (Osman et al., 2021, p. 2), it is often framed as a bottom-up approach that is both

more democratic and inclusive compared to more top-down implementation. That is, rather than "a simple, one-way implementation strategy [...,] city-representatives foreground the need for 'local participation and their vision of our global future'" (Immler & Sakkers, 2022, p. 263). Fox and Macleod explore localisation in Bristol based on a four-step localisation process developed by United Cities and Local Governments consisting of awareness raising, advocacy, implementation, and local monitoring (Fox & Macleod, 2021; United Cities and Local Governments, 2016). What these studies indicate, is that localisation is not one thing. As Lucci (2015, p. 4) notes, "ultimately, it is for individual countries to work out what 'localising' means". This point underlines the importance of exploring national cases of localisation, which is what I do in this thesis.

2.2 Localising sustainable development in Norway

Norway has a history of progressive environmental legislation and policies, among other things as the first country to establish a Ministry of Environmental Protection in 1972 (Ingeborgrud, 2018). In the first years after the Earth Summit in 1992, Norway was however hesitant to get started with LA21. One reason was an ongoing national reform programme that gave Norwegian municipalities the opportunity to employ their own environment officers (Hovik & Johnsen, 1994). As far as the government saw it, LA21 had little new to offer in terms of local planning (Bjørnæs & Lindseth, 2006). After a few years, critical voices and increased awareness, guided by ICLEI and the Norwegian municipal sector's organisation the Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS), eventually led to the government encouraging municipalities to start working with LA21 (ibid., pp. 68–69).

LA21 in Norway was characterised by close cooperation between the Ministry of the Environment and KS, including cooperation on establishing networks and a formal agreement on collaboration (Bjørnæs & Lindseth, 2006, pp. 71-75). These "soft" measures were characteristic of the Norwegian approach, and included a scepticism by the government towards instructing municipalities directly about what their LA21

work should centre on. The government instead found its place as a facilitator for knowledge exchange, including establishing websites, networks, conferences, and different publicity material (ibid., p. 84). With this, the hope was that having been sufficiently informed and motivated, the municipalities would initiate processes and projects themselves leading to more sustainable development. While many local measures were indeed implemented, a criticism was however that in Norway LA21 was fragmented, unplanned and poorly institutionalised. This was due among other things to a lack of national coordination and a *national* agenda 21 (Aall et al., 2006).

In the years since the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio, sustainable development has also been inscribed into a range of laws (Jerkø, 2009). Already in 1992, the Norwegian Constitution was amended to include an environmental article reflecting the ideals and principles of sustainable development as outlined in *Our Common Future* (Fauchald, 2007). The environmental article in the Constitution (which was revised in 2014) states that "[n]atural resources shall be managed on the basis of comprehensive long-term considerations which will safeguard this right for future generations as well" (Norwegian Constitution, 1814, §112). Sustainable development has also been inscribed into laws regulating local government, including the Local Government Act and the Planning and Building Act (PBA). When the PBA was revised in 2008, a similar inter-generational perspective was included to ensure that planning "promote sustainable development in the best interests of individuals, society and future generation" (Planning and Building Act, 2008, § 1-1). With this, both societal and land-use planning should support the aim of sustainable development.

While experiences from implementing LA21 in Norway were mixed, the country has been a longtime, strong supporter of UN initiatives. It was as such an early advocate of the 2030 Agenda. In 2013, then Prime Minister Erna Solberg was for example appointed co-chair of the SDG Advocacy Group. After the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, Norway was among the first countries to report status in a so-called National Voluntary Review (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2016). In 2019, the government made an explicit

move to make local and regional authorities responsible for working with the SDGs as part of planning when it included the SDGs as a steering signal in the national "expectation document" towards municipal and regional planning (Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation, 2019). This is a political document, issued every fourth year by the government, which lays out the direction of subnational planning, "[i]n order to promote sustainable development" (Planning and Building Act, 2008, §6-1).

Early on the document that was issued in 2019 declares that the SDGs "shall provide the main direction for Norway's policy to address the greatest challenges of our time", and therefore it is "important that the sustainable development goals are incorporated as part of the basis for social and land-use planning" (Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation, 2019, p. 3). According to the document, "[c]ounty and municipal authorities are key players to realise sustainable social development and attainment of the sustainable development goals in Norway", among other things because they are "closest to the local population, businesses and organisations" and responsible for much social and physical infrastructure. Therefore "[t]he government attaches importance to work to meet the sustainability goals having broad anchoring through regional and municipal planning (ibid., p. 11). This resembles the justifications of local action found in chapter 28 of Agenda 21. At the same time, the fact that the SDGs are framed as an issue for *planning* also means that local implementation of the SDGs occurs within an institutionalised system with mechanisms for following up overarching goals and ambitions in more binding plans, including economic and land-use plans. This suggest that the current approach to localising the SDGs promises to be more efficient than the experiences from LA21.

2.3 Prior research on SDG localisation in Norway

Research on the Norwegian response to the 2030 Agenda is focused on different issues, including development policy (Hagen & Selbervik, 2022; Nygård, 2017), health policy (Lillehagen et al., 2020), ocean governance (Fasoulis, 2021), as well as normative

grounds to act (Pedersen, 2021). There are few studies on the national response to the SDGs in domestic politics. Based on survey findings, Fløttum et al. (2022) argue that the SDGs are well known among Norwegian citizens and that the Norwegian awareness-raising campaign have been relatively successful, but do not explore how this strategy of domestic awareness-raising has been conducted.

At the subnational level, there are a few studies exploring localisation of the SDGs. The Norwegian Planning and Building Act was evaluated in 2014–2018, but the two-volume book (Hanssen & Aarsæther, 2018a, 2018b) only briefly mentions the SDGs, noting how the Norwegian concern with sustainable development is in line with international agendas. A few studies focus more explicitly on the role of the SDGs in municipalities (Aspen & Amundsen, 2021; Bardal et al., 2021; Fuller, 2023; Nerbøberg & Busengdal, 2023). Others focus on sustainability indicators, using Norwegian municipalities as cases (Ibrahim, 2022; Nerland et al., 2023). A few popular scientific contributions have also linked the SDGs to local planning (e.g. Grut, 2016; Hofstad & Vedeld, 2017; Holden & Linnerud, 2018).

Much of the knowledge of local implementation is found in different reports (e.g. DOGA, 2019), as well as from local and regional authorities themselves (e.g. Asker Municipality, 2018; Viken County Authorities, 2020). A study from 2020, which I participated in and from which this thesis partly draws it material (see Chapter 4), mapped how the SDGs were being implemented in local and regional planning in Norway (Lundberg et al., 2020). The study found, among other things, that working with the SDGs generated both enthusiasm and frustration among local and regional planners: enthusiasm in being part of something new that was considered important, frustration from the difficulties in operationalising the global locally relevant goals.

Much of the Norwegian literature is focused on small municipalities, highlighting challenges of SDG implementation at this scale (Nogueira et al., 2020; Singsaas, 2020; Skavhaug et al., 2022). Mineev et al. (2020) argue that it is particularly difficult to address the SDGs strategically in rural municipalities in North Norway, a sparsely

populated region characterised by large distances and small municipal administrations. Other studies also emphasise that small municipalities have specific sustainability challenges that must be reflected in how they approach the SDGs. Groven and Aall (2020), for example, question the relevance of SDG 11 ("sustainable cities and communities") in rural municipalities given the goal's primary focus on large cities. They point out that four of the ten indicators associated with this goal might be useful in small municipalities, drawing attention to the need for local decisionmakers to selectively engage with the SDGs in order to make the goals relevant at a local level.[1]

2.4 Chapter summary

The 2030 Agenda emerged as part of a fifty-year-old UN tradition of global agenda setting around the idea of sustainable development. While resembling earlier agendas, like Agenda 21, the 2030 Agenda goes further in operationalising sustainable development through 17 SDGs, targets and indicators, as well as a system for reporting on progress. In Norway, the government has made municipal planning a key site for implementing the SDGs. As such, the SDGs are put into effect in a system developed to follow up and turn overarching goals into action. This suggest that the Norwegian experience with localising the SDG will be different than earlier experience from LA21, which was characterised by many fragmented efforts. In the next chapter I develop a theoretical framework for studying localisation in the case of Norway.

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[1] Several master theses have also, in the last years, explored different aspects of local implementation, drawing on data from a variety of Norwegian municipalities. These theses have emerged from within various disciplines, including geography, planning, political science, law, and business and administration, which illustrates that research on the SDG is highly multidisciplinary.

3 Theoretical framework

3.1 Arriving at policy mobilities

The key tension explored in this thesis is between the SDGs as a globally circulating policy idea and at the same time as something that can only be materialised by being fixed in place. This has required a need to assemble theoretical concepts that can help me discuss these tensions. Throughout the empirical papers I have tried out different approaches, and some of these constitute the basis for the discussions in some of the papers, as described later in this chapter. While these work for each paper individually, I also needed an overarching framework to help me discuss the findings of the thesis taken together and, in that way, allow me to answer the main research question.

When I encountered the policy mobilities approach at a PhD course at Oslo Summer School, it seemed promising. The lecturer was also a much-cited scholar within the field, which bolstered the credibility of the approach. More importantly was that the literature contained the kind of global-local tensions I was interested in. However, I could not simply open a "toolbox" of policy mobilities and find a readymade framework that I could apply, because concepts required reworking to be applicable for studying SDG localisation in the Norwegian case. Therefore, developing the theoretical framework has involved testing out concepts, aligning ideas with papers already in the making, reworking, and modifying the approach. Overall, the theoretical ambition of the thesis consists of drawing together relevant ideas and concepts from the policy mobilities approach and other fields so as to develop an analytical framework for the study of localisation of the SDGs in Norway.

In this chapter, I present relevant literature and develop the theoretical framework, drawing on ideas from the policy mobilities literature and other approaches to policy analysis. The remainder of this chapter is divided into three sections. First, I present some key ideas of the policy mobilities approach and discuss its social constructivist underpinning. Second, I introduce and discuss my engagement with the literature. And

third, I develop the theoretical framework, linking it to the four empirical papers in the thesis.

3.2 A social constructivist approach to policy analysis

As noted in Chapter 1, the policy mobilities approach is concerned with the flows and fixing of policy ideas (Baker & Temenos, 2015; McCann & Ward, 2011; Peck & Theodore, 2010). In section 3.4, I employ these categories to develop a framework consisting of three processes of localisation: framing the policy idea, mobilising the policy idea, and translating the policy idea. Before that, I will discuss some of the key premises of this approach, including its social-constructivist approach.

It is important to note that it is difficult to speak about *one* specific approach of policy mobilities. Rather, the literature is a repository of ideas and concepts concerning the movement of policy ideas across borders and jurisdictions from a social constructivist perspective. Fundamentally, it is an approach that tries to understand local policymaking in light of broader trends and influences, seeing local policymaking as both relational and territorial (McCann & Ward, 2011). While the language of *flows* and *mobility* might suggest that everything is seen as unstable and in motion through a policy mobilities lens, equally important is the *fixing* of policies in specific contexts. A policy idea is therefore only "actionable" and productive when it is translated into specific institutional contexts (McCann, 2011, p. 123). When analysing mobile policies, maintaining a dual perspective on both the local and the global is therefore essential. According to Peck and Theodore, "[t]he questions of how policies-from-elsewhere are put to work by local actors, and how they are translated, contextualized, and embedded, must always be on the table" (Peck & Theodore, 2012, p. 25).

Before presenting my approach and the specific concepts used to answer the research questions, I will discuss how the social constructivist underpinnings of policy mobilities relate to my research object. As a social constructivist approach to policy studies, the policy mobilities approach emphasises how policies are constructed and reconstructed

in time and space (Baker & Walker, 2019; Peck, 2011). Such an approach to policy analysis is focused on what type of *meanings* policy ideas take, and "explore[s] how policies work in practice, the conditions that create and sustain them and the kinds of relations they produce" (Shore, 2012, p. 94). In this perspective, "[p]olicy designs, technologies, and frames are […] regarded as complex and evolving social constructions rather than as concretely fixed objects" (Peck & Theodore, 2012, p. 23).

Berger and Luckmann (1967) describe the social construction of reality as the result of social practices and interactions. Through these social practices, social reality becomes stabilised and taken for granted by collectives of people (Tjora, 2021). As discussed in Chapter 2, the idea of localising sustainable development emerged at a specific time and place, where it served some political aims rather than others. The implication is that this is not the only way to think about issues of global environmental governance. Just as the merging of environmental protection with development was a pragmatic move, framing sustainable development as a local policy agenda is a social and political construction, which serves some aims. The social constructivist asks who is constructing these meanings (of sustainability, of localisation), and why certain constructions of sustainability gain global traction instead of others (Whitehead, 2007, p. 26). Therefore, a social constructivist perspective is useful to explore what is taken for granted, including the conditions for sustaining dominant discourses and making change possible.

Following this, "constructivists focus on the role of ideas, norms, knowledge, culture and argument in politics, stressing in particular the role of collectively held 'intersubjective' ideas and understandings on social life" (Finnemore & Sikkink, 2001, p. 392). While the ontological stance of social constructivism is that "social reality does not exist independent of interpretation", epistemologically it "tasks researchers with understanding the world through the cognitive, textual and representational interpretations of research subjects" (Baker & Walker, 2019, p. 7). For this study, this means that in order to understand SDG localisation it is necessary to focus on the ideas

and arguments involved in framing and (de)stabilising the SDGs as an agenda for local planning. This perspective is all the more useful considering the study's focus on an early stage of SDG implementation, before the policy has settled.

Emphasising the constructions and the politics of circulating policy ideas, "social constructivist accounts are intent on locating policy as situated, contested and constitutive of the social world" (Baker & Walker, 2019, p. 7). This implies that not only is the circulating policy idea a result of specific interests and agendas, but that their movement is also conditioned by certain interests and agendas. According to Peck (2011, p. 791), "the field of policy transfer is itself socially and institutionally constructed, being populated by a wide array of actors and institutions". This means that, for example, the spread of a policy and the pace of its uptake is seen to be less about some inherent quality of the policy itself but a result of how it is being mobilised and framed as a solution to socially constructed problems, that is, making the incoming policy solution speak to a locally recognised problem (Tait & Jensen, 2007). The example in the introduction in Chapter 1 illustrates this policy mobilisation in action.

An example of this social constructivism at work can be found in Paper 2. Here we find that through quantitative mapping most Norwegian municipalities have referred to the SDGs in their municipal master plans. This might lead to the conclusion that the SDGs are "setting the strategic direction" in local policymaking (Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities, 2021a, p. 26). However, when we supplement this mapping with a qualitative exploration focused on what the SDGs are made to mean in strategic municipal planning –e.g. exploring the constructions of the SDGs in this specific planning context – we are able to nuance the picture.

Having outlined the social constructivist underpinnings of the policy mobilities literature, I will now situate my thesis in this evolving field of research.

3.3 The evolving field of policy mobilities research

The policy mobilities approach is not only concerned with mobility as an object of study – it is itself a highly mobile theory. Far from being a fixed framework, it is moving in different directions and mutating along the way through the efforts of a growing community of researchers from different disciplines. Cook (2015) notes that "policy mobilities accounts tend to borrow, adapt and fuse ideas from different parts of the social sciences" (p. 835). It has been called "a rolling conversation rather than a coherent paradigm" (Peck, 2011, p. 774). As such, it is an approach that is moving forwards in different directions. Importantly, sustainability itself cannot be sufficiently grasped from within disciplinary boundaries but requires cross-cutting research approaches (Irwin et al., 2018). As a work of sociology concerned with the local implementation of sustainable development goals, this thesis takes it in a new direction.

Although it has no canon (Baker & Temenos, 2015), the policy mobilities approach does have a history. Many of the early, foundational contributions came from economic and urban geography (Jacobs, 2012; McCann, 2011; McCann & Ward, 2013; Peck, 2011; Peck & Theodore, 2010). From a geographical perspective, policy mobilities emerged partly in contrast to the policy *transfer* approach in political science (McCann, 2011). Three main critiques were launched against the policy transfer approach by these geographers. First, they criticised the narrow typologies of the kind of actors that are involved in policy transfers, arguing that these typologies might get in the way of analysing the actual processes of policy movement. Second, they criticised the tendency to focus on transfer mainly at the national scale. Third, they criticised the concept of *transfer* itself, which they argued suggested that policies travel in straight lines from A to B in complete packages with little happening to the policy along the way (McCann, 2011, p. 111).

While being inspired by and criticising policy transfer, the policy mobilities approach also draws inspiration from the "mobility turn" in sociology (McCann 2011).

Sociologists of mobility are concerned with movement of people, things and ideas (Giddens & Sutton, 2017, pp. 699-700). The "mobility turn", according to Hannam et al. (2006), is "putting into question the fundamental 'territorial' and 'sedentary' precepts of twentieth-century social science" (2006, p. 2). Mobility researchers are as such concerned with the "diverse mobilities of peoples, objects, images, information and wastes" (Urry, 2000, p. 185). Key concepts involve flows and networks, mobilities and moorings, which are argued to be better suited to capture modern-day experiences. Policy mobilities studies draw on the mobilities' conceptualisation of "mobility as a process infused with meaning and power", including "the practices, the politics and the power embodied in the mobility" (Ward, 2018, pp. 275-276).

Since its emergence, the policy mobilities approach has spread to disciplines such as planning (Blanc, 2023), political science (Lovell et al., 2023), criminology (McMenzie et al., 2019), and education (Lewis, 2021). This has widened the types of policy ideas that are being explored using the approach. As this thesis is concerned with how the SDGs are being localised in municipal planning, policy mobilities in planning studies is of particular relevance. In planning, there is a subfield concerned with "travelling planning ideas", focused on similar type of same issues as policy mobilities researchers – namely the travel and "landing" of planning ideas (Healey, 2012; Healey & Upton, 2010). The policy mobilities literature has been criticised for not recognising this planning literature instead framing policy mobilities as something new (Clarke, 2012; Jacobs, 2012). Gómez and Oinas (2022, p. 3) note however that these two literatures share an interest in how "ideas are spread by various carriers, adopted around the world, and adapted to local circumstances while maintaining a relation with extralocal actors and developments". Healey (2013, p. 1519) likewise emphasises the usefulness of a policy mobilities approach in exploring travelling planning ideas, in particular emphasising how the approach is attuned to "the ways in which policy ideas and techniques may change as they travel".

My approach to SDG localisation is within the institutional context of municipal planning. This means that as much as I am interested in how the SDGs move, I am interested in how they become locally fixed in planning. When the SDGs become part of municipal planning, these global goals are embedded in an institutional context that is both enabling and limiting. According to Moodley, "there has been insufficient emphasis on understanding the role of municipal institutional factors in enabling global policy translation" (Moodley, 2021, p. 1). This study as such contributes to generate knowledge about the institutional capacity of municipal planning as a framework for localising the SDGs.

Having situated the thesis within the broader policy mobilities literature and introduced some key ideas, I now proceed to develop the theoretical framework that I will use in the analysis.

3.4 Developing a theoretical framework

This thesis' point of departure is that many people discuss and promote localisation but that these discussions concern different bits and pieces of the "localisation package". My aim is therefore to unpack localisation through empirical investigations that explore different aspects of localisation and to bring these different pieces of the puzzle together to develop a clearer picture of what we talk about when we talk about localisation. To do this, I draw on ideas and concepts from the policy mobilities literature in combination with other concepts from interpretive policy analysis. Specifically, three concepts constitute the main theoretical framework: framing, mobilisation, and translation. Figure 2, below, presents the relationship between these concepts and the research questions.
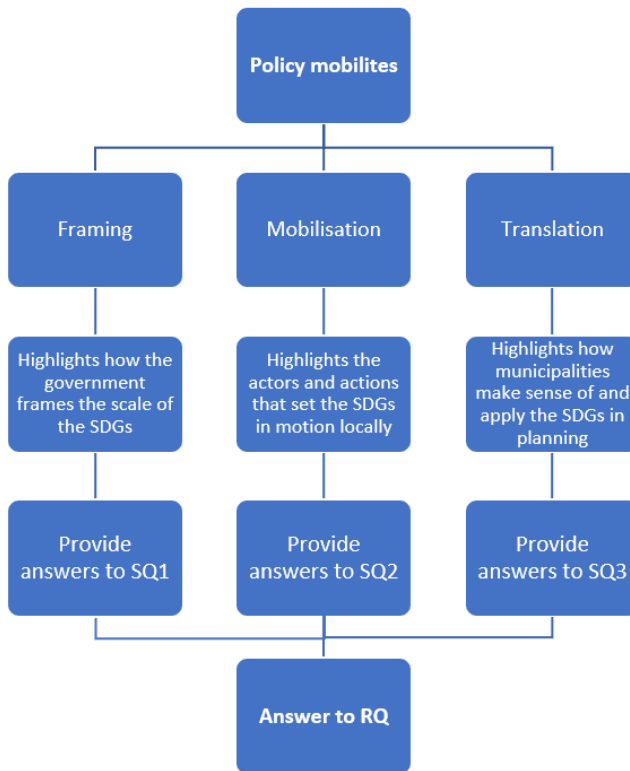
Figure 2 *Relationship between key concepts and research questions*

The figure shows how the theoretical concepts are used to answer the sub-questions, which again answer the main research question. The first concept, *framing*, is concerned with how the SDGs are established and justified as a local policy agenda at an overarching level – in this case by the national government. The second concept, *mobilisation*, is used to highlight the micro-movements of the SDGs as their travels are helped along by concrete actions and concrete actors. The third concept, *translation*, directs attention to the sensemaking by local actors as they put the SDGs to work in the context of municipal planning. In the real world, the different processes overlap. As analytical categories, however, they provide useful entrance points to try to make sense of the data (Reed, 2011). The concepts are presented in more detail in the following sections, while more discussions on the theoretical concepts can be found in each of the papers.

3.4.1 National framing

Answers to SQ1 are provided through an analysis of frames. A frame can be seen as "a persuasive, widely accepted and powerful simplification of the world" (McCann, 2004, p. 1913). Framing is an important mechanism of moving policies around (Temenos & McCann, 2012). New approaches, especially, "have to be framed in ways that are convincing" (Kingfisher, 2013, p. 62). Through framing, powerful actors like national governments "authoritatively define and naturalise certain meanings" (Lillehagen et al., 2020, p. 3). How a mobile policy is framed at the national level can, moreover, influence uptake at lower levels (Varró & Bunders, 2020, p. 217). Framing involves representing a problem in a certain way and therefore designating who should fix the problem, including situating the problem at specific scales. Framing is a key element of localisation because it establishes important parameters for local action. As the SDGs flow from the UN, they must be fixed somewhere to be actionable. National framing is way of fixing them.

In **Paper 1**, Aase Kristine Lundberg and I draw on the concept of *scale framing* to explore how the SDGs have been framed as a problem for local governments in Norway. Through processes of scale framing, actors create connections between the scale where a problem is experienced and where it can be politically addressed (Kurtz, 2003). In the paper, we explore how the government has framed the scale of the SDGs by investigating how the problems of the SDGs and the responsibility for solving them have been described in national policy documents and by national-level actors. More details on how we use the concept can be found in the conceptual section of Paper 1.

3.4.2 Mobilising frames

While framing defines the problems of the SDGs, in this framework mobilisation is conceived as the process through which these understandings travel to the municipalities. It involves actions that set ideas, tools, and models in motion and point them in specific directions. Mobilisation can as such be seen as the bridge between the discursive frames and the local translations. This practical work involves actors

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attempting to persuade audiences (i.e., municipal planners, managers, mayors, and so on) of the relevance of specific policy ideas. This persuasion involves making claims about the local relevance of policies from elsewhere, presented, for example, as "best practices" (Prince, 2012).

Policy ideas can be mobilised in many ways, with policy mobilities studies often focusing on the "circuits of knowledge" whereby policies are moved and disseminated to new audiences (Healey, 2013; McCann, 2011). In **Paper 3**, I employ the concept of *informational infrastructures* (McCann, 2011) to conceptualise the sites that the policy model travels through as it is channelled to the municipalities. To get a sense of what this might be, think of where you last heard about an idea promoted as *the next big thing*. Examples discussed in the policy mobilities literature include conferences, websites, the media, professional journals, and various networks, which facilitate knowledge dissemination, exchange of ideas, persuasion and pressure (Andersson & Cook, 2019; Cook & Ward, 2012; Temenos, 2016).

In addition to these arenas, the mobilisation of policy depends on the actors doing argumentative work, including persuading audiences (Kennedy, 2016). Policy mobilisation is therefore also the result of the practical work of *transfer agents*, conceptualised as those who "move a policy from one place to another" (Cook & Ward, 2012, p. 140). These include both the "travelling technocrats" and the "middling" bureaucrats (Larner & Laurie, 2010), operating both inside and outside the municipal organisation. Successful policy mobilisation often depends on alliances between different transfer agents, through converging interests and agendas (Baker et al., 2016, p. 465). For example, the incoming policy model might be seen to support a local political project and is therefore helped along the way by public officials; see Paper 3 for further descriptions of these concepts.

3.4.3 Local translations

If framing and mobilisation refer mostly to the supply side of policy, then translation refers to the demand side (McCann & Ward, 2010). The idea of translation is used

across different disciplines in the social sciences, including actor-network theory (Callon, 1984; Tait & Jensen, 2007), organisational theory (Czarniawska & Sevón, 2005; Røvik, 2016) and interpretive policy analysis (Clarke et al., 2015; Healey, 2013). In all cases, it points to change. From the perspective of interpretive policy analysis, the idea of translation points to "both the context-specificity of knowledge and the extent to which change is anticipated and even, at times, desirable in order to render a concept from one culture meaningful in another one" (Yanow, 2004, p. 15). It involves not just the interpretation but the active transformation of policy through various processes and techniques. It emphasises agency, creativity and the distortion of meaning in the process of implementing policy.

In this study, translation refers to the primarily *local* processes of putting the SDGs to work in municipal planning. In the policy mobilities literature, this is also referred to as a process of territorialisation (McCann & Ward, 2012). This highlights the importance of contextual factors when translating policy ideas and, as illustrated by the subcase presented in **Paper 3**, that context clearly matters. The concept of translation is frequently used in the SDG literature to describe the processes of making the SDGs actionable (e.g. Egelund, 2022; Hustad, 2022). I follow Healey's use of "translation experiences" as processes where ideas are "adapted and inserted into struggles over discourse formation and institutionalization in new contexts" (2013, p. 1520).

In **Paper 2**, Aase Kristine Lundberg and I use *policy translation* as an analytical concept for exploring how municipalities engage with the SDGs in the context of strategic municipal planning. We are particularly interested in how municipalities select goals that they find most locally relevant and useful in their political settings. The idea of translation is useful as it emphasises that policy movement is a "selective and active process in which meanings are interpreted and reinterpreted to make them fit in new contexts" (Clarke et al., 2015, p. 35). Further detail on how we use policy translation is provided in Paper 2.

Moreover, the concept of translation draws our attention to how imported policy ideas need to make sense locally. While policy issues and implementation processes are framed as one thing at one level, there is no guarantee that this will be a persuasive framing further down the implementation line (Liu, 2017). When these frames do not make sense, this leads to resistance and contestation (McCann & Ward, 2011, p. xxiv). In **Paper 4**, Kyrre Groven, Aase Kristine Lundberg and I use the concept of *governance logics* to help explain these tensions and frictions. This is not a concept that is usually part of the policy mobilities approach, although several have argued that a logics approach is a useful approach to explain the tensions – and the failures – of policy mobilities (Andres et al., 2022; Oliveira & Pal, 2018). In the paper, we analyse multilevel governance of the SDG both as examples of hierarchical governance, which emphasises legal instruments, and of network governance, which emphasises partnerships and voluntary arrangements (Meuleman, 2021). The concept of conflicting governance logics is one way that this thesis adds to the policy mobilities approach. More information about the analytical approach is found in Paper 4.

3.5 Chapter summary

Taken together, the four papers in this thesis discuss different elements of localisation. I have argued for the use of the social constructivist approach to study global policy agendas and situated my research within the policy mobilities literature. To do this, I have developed a theoretical framework that draws on concepts and ideas from this literature as well as concepts from other constructivist approaches to policy analysis. This theoretical framework allows for an analysis of localisation from different angles, and I have pointed to how the different empirical papers relate to this framework. In the next chapter, I discuss the methodology and the methods I have used.

4 Methodology and methods

Tjora (2021), following Berger and Luckmann (1967), notes that qualitative research based on a social constructivist perspective must find ways to investigate how the social phenomenon in question becomes stable or taken for granted. As a social constructivist approach to policy analysis, the policy mobilities approach is concerned with the social production of circulating policy ideas (Cook, 2018). Moreover, the ability of a policy idea to circulate and gain traction is not only a result of the innovation of the policy (the supply side) but also of the needs and aspirations of local governments (the demand side) (Peck & Theodore, 2010). The mobilisation of policy ideas involves the practical work of aligning general policy ideas with specific contexts. Investigating these processes points to specific methodological choices, and in this chapter, I discuss the choices I have made to explore the social constructions of localisation, including how the SDGs make sense locally and how the SDGs are made to make sense.

I begin with a discussion about the research strategy, including the iterative process that has characterised the research process. I proceed to discuss the case selection and the embedded cases, methods for data collection and analysis, before, finally, I conclude with reflections on my research, positionality, and ethics.

4.1 Research strategy and process

The focus on SDG localisation as a main research topic emerged inductively in this project through my involvement in two other research projects. These projects, which both concerned local-level implementation of the SDGs in Norway, explored (mainly) municipal planners' experiences with working with the SDGs. In this work I became aware of – and increasingly interested in – the tension between how the SDGs were talked about as requiring local action and the local experiences of localising the goals. While municipal action was emphasised as important, not least by municipalities themselves, challenges of interpretation, as well as a lack of tools, in practice left it to already pressured planners to figure out how the SDGs should unroll locally in ways

that should incorporate both global and local concerns. Data gathered through interviews with planners, planning documents, workshops, and informal conversations allowed me to explore these issues at an early stage of the PhD project and contributed to shape the design of this study.

As noted in Chapter 3, throughout the research process there have been feedback loops between theory and data. Through engagement with literature, different concepts and ideas were tried out, which led me to ask new questions to the empirical material and pointed me in the direction of new kinds of data. Concepts have been tested out in papers, and data from case studies have informed the analytical approaches, which have again led me to look for new things. For example, exploring the research on SDG implementation made me aware of the concept of policy translation, which we used this concept in Paper 2. This interpretive approach to policy analysis again led me to the policy mobilities approach, with policy movement becoming an overarching theme for the thesis, and to develop further subcases. This research approach thus involved paying attention to "the reality of unexpected connections, mutations, and research sites emerging during the projects" (McCann & Ward, 2012, p. 43).

The research follows an *abductive logic* characterised by a continuous movement back and forth between theoretical ideas and empirical data throughout the research process (Blaikie, 2007). This also means that the research process has been more cyclical than linear. I did not start with fully formed research questions that have guided the research process, but questions and themes have emerged throughout the process. A reflection from doing this project is that researching ongoing efforts to localise the SDGs involves studying a moving target. The meaning of localising the SDGs is an ongoing stabilisation process (Tjora, 2021), something which is reflected in the research process. The process can be summarised in four phases, illustrated in Figure 3 and described in more detail below.
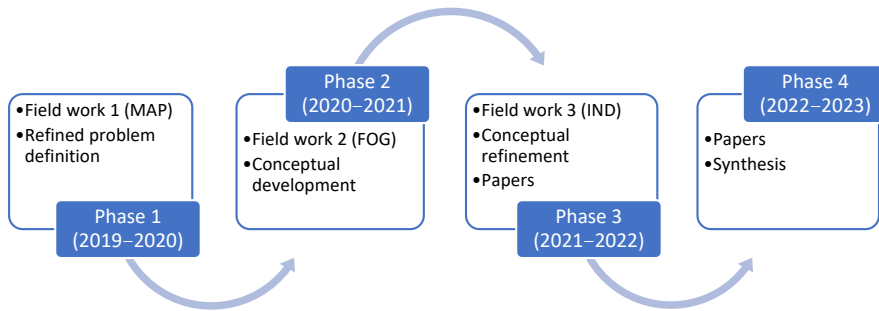
Figure 3 *Research phases 1 to 4*

I started the PhD project with a plan to study urban sustainability in a small-town context. Phase 1 consisted of framing the PhD project, which included broad readings related to urban sustainability, planning, and sustainable development. During this phase I became part of a research project at Nordland Research Institute. In the project we mapped the status of SDG implementation in municipal and regional planning in Norway and gathered a lot of data through a literature review, a quantitative survey, and case studies of local and regional experiences of SDG localisation. The project resulted in a report (Lundberg et al., 2020).[2] Since this was a broad mapping, I decide to call this project **MAP** from now on. My participation in MAP gave me ideas that I did not have when I started my PhD project, as well as a lot of interesting and useful data. The main output from Phase 1 was a revised problem definition, with the SDGs as the main object of research. The subcase reported in Paper 2 emerged in this phase.

Phase 2 involved targeted reading related to local implementation of global policy ideas in general, and local-level engagement with SDGs in particular. Through this reading, and the courses I took, key concepts like policy translation and localisation emerged. In this phase, the research questions became more clearly articulated. I also became part of another research project – a collaboration project with municipalities

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[2] Strekk i laget. En kartlegging av hvordan FNs bærekraftsmål implementeres i regional og kommunal planlegging (2020) (https://nordlandsforskning.no/nb/publikasjoner/report/strekk-i-laget-en-kartlegging-av-hvordan-fns-baerekraftsmal-implementeres-i)

and regional authorities focused on developing a framework for implementing the SDGs in planning. Because this project was called *Field of goals* I call this project **FOG**.[3] Participation in the project involved being part of a network of practitioners and researchers and learning about what they saw as challenges and opportunities in working with the SDGs. The subcase reported in Paper 4 emerged during this phase.

Phase 3 involved more targeted data collection in light of the revised problem definition and research questions. This meant more intensive and independent fieldwork related to the PhD project. Because this work was independent from other two projects, I call this project **IND**. Meanwhile, I continued to be involved in different network activities while analysing data and writing papers. The subcases reported in Paper 1 and Paper 3 emerged during this phase. This phase also involved presenting paper drafts at different writing workshops and international conferences on urban planning. Phase 4 involved finishing writing papers, as well as more conceptual work and synthesising findings in the introductory text of the thesis. A result of the collaborative nature of the research process is that three of the four papers in this thesis are co-authored, while Paper 3 is single-authored.

4.2 An embedded case study approach

In this section I discuss the case study approach of the thesis before I go on to discuss the concrete methods. Exploring the social constructions of policy ideas requires a focus on how social phenomena are given specific *meanings* (Reed, 2011). This points to a qualitative research approach that can capture the interpretations of research subjects as they orient themselves in the policy landscape. Moreover, as I have been interested in both the perceptions of actors and the more general representations of policy – and to analyse the tensions between these – I needed a research design that

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[3] Field of goals: Co-production and implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in regional and local planning (https://nordlandsforskning.no/nb/project/field-goals-co-production-and-implementation-sustainable-development-goals-regional-and)

allowed for different types of data. I have therefore approached this as an embedded case study.

Yin (2018) argues that the case study approach is useful for answering "how" and "why" questions about contemporary events, by drawing on different methods. In an embedded case study, the main case is investigated through analysis of several subcases (ibid.). In this thesis, the main case (unit of analysis) is localisation of the SDG is Norway. This case is explored through four subcases. The first subcase is on the national level, with the *state* as the main unit of analysis. The second and third subcases are on the local level, with *municipalities* as the main unit of analysis. The fourth subcase concerns the relationship between national and local levels of government, making *multilevel governance* the main unit of analysis. Together, the four subcases in this thesis provide insights on SDG localisation in Norway by exploring both how the SDGs are mobilised as a local planning agenda and how the SDGs are translated into the institutional contexts of municipal planning. The main case and subcases are presented in Figure 4 and described in the following paragraphs.
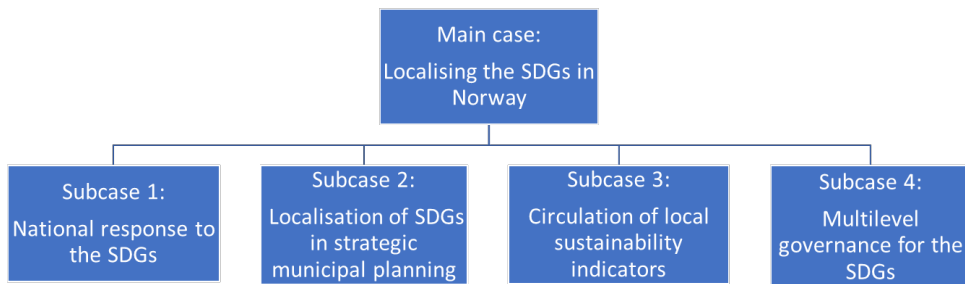

Figure 4 *Main case and subcases in the thesis*

Each of the subcases is reported on in an individual research paper. In each of the subcases I have collected data from different empirical *sites*. In Subcase 1 the sites are mainly national ministries (Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Ministry

of Local Government and Modernisation [4]) which had issued the relevant policy documents for the analysis, including status reports to the UN, national budget documents, and steering signals to municipalities. In Subcase 2, the sites are strategic planning processes in the four Norwegian municipalities Asker, Arendal, Lunner and Narvik. They have all been part of the original MAP project, where they had been included on the basis of the following criteria: different size, population, location, urban and rural municipalities, and different experiences from municipal merging processes. The MAP project was designed in 2019, when local implementation of the SDGs was at an early stage. The selection therefore also included two municipalities identified as "first movers" in a Norwegian, and Nordic, context (Sánchez Gassen et al., 2018). In Subcase 3, the sites are the UN, Norwegian county authorities and municipalities. The paper follows the circulation of a specific policy model, and the empirical sites were included on the basis of their involvement in the circulation of this model. They were the county authorities of Møre og Romsdal and Trøndelag, and the municipalities of Asker, Narvik, Sande, Sykkylven, Volda and Ålesund. In the case of Asker and Narvik, I included these as I had useful data from previous interviews from these municipalities when I developed the subcase, while the rest of the sites were included as the subcase developed. In Subcase 4, the sites are the Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation, two county authorities (Nordland, Vestland) and seven municipalities (Bodø, Bømlo, Gloppen, Narvik, Sortland, Sunnfjord, Vestvågøy). All the county authorities and municipalities in this subcase were part of the FOG project. They had been recruited to this collaboration project through criteria such as location In proximity to research partner institution[5], their capacities to participate in a collaboration project for several years, differences in progress on the SDGs, and the researchers' knowledge of local challenges.

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[4] The ministry switched name from "… and Modernisation" to "… and Regional Development" when a new government coalition took power in autumn 2021.

[5] They were both located in the same geographic regions as the two research institutions in the project – Nordland Research Institute and Western Norway Research Institute.

According to Yin (2009, pp. 52-53), embedded subcases can "add significant opportunities for extensive analysis, enhancing the insights into the single case". The risk, however, is focusing all analytical effort on the subcases and therefore ending up with a situation where the original phenomenon has become context instead of the case of the study (ibid.). To avoid this it is necessary to return to the main case and show how the subcases together contribute to shed light on the original case – how they are all pieces of the same puzzle. I do this in Chapter 6, where I synthesise the findings and answer the main research question, and in the concluding Chapter 7.

4.3 Data collection

4.3.1 Triangulation and credibility

A strength of case-study research is the opportunity to combine different methods of data as a way of *data triangulation* (Yin, 2018, p. 126). In this thesis I have generated data from different sources and within different contexts to help strengthen the credibility of the research (Bryman, 2016). I draw on different methods of data generation, including interviews, quantitative and qualitative document analysis as well as informal network involvement in the "field".

Combining data from different sources can strengthen an argument if, for example, what is said in interviews is also confirmed in documents. Besides this *converging* approach to triangulation (Yin, 2018), triangulation can also be used to *compare* data from different sources. According to Blaikie and Priest, it is "the comparison of data produced in different ways that is of greatest value" (Blaikie & Priest, 2019, p. 216). This means that data pointing in different directions is not necessarily a problem, but an indication that the phenomenon is understood differently in different contexts and is something that can be explored further (ibid.). In this thesis, exploring tensions between official and unofficial statements has been a key motivation. As such, generating data that offer different representations of the same phenomenon has been particularly useful. For example, in **Paper 2** we compare results from a quantitative content analysis of municipal master plans (N=57) with a qualitative

content analysis of a few municipal master plans and information from interviews to scrutinise how the SDGs are guiding municipal planning.

The four papers in the thesis draw on both interview data and document analysis. These two methods do different things. I have used documents mainly to identify the ways the SDG have been incorporated into official policies, both at the national level (**Papers 1** and **4**) and in municipal plans (**Paper 2**). While documents in this way provide evidence of the framings and translations of the SDGs, interviews with practitioners – mostly planners – have been used to gain access to the "behind-the-scenes" work that constructs or contests these frames. In addition, by participating in a collaborative research project throughout the process (FOG), I have been able to test ideas in the "field", which has influenced my decisions along the way. For example, the idea of **Paper 3** emerged through informal studies of the "'atmosphere' of situations in which policy knowledge is shared" (McCann & Ward, 2012, p. 48), in project meetings and webinars. Table 2, on the next page, shows the methods used in the different papers.

Table 2 *Overview of sites and methods in the different papers*

Empirical sites	Interviews	Documents	Paper
The United Nations		✓	3
Norwegian ministries	✓	✓	1, 4
KS	✓		1, 3
Møre og Romsdal county authority	✓		3
Trøndelag county authority	✓		3
Nordland county authority	✓		4
Vestland county authority	✓		4
57 Norwegian municipalities		✓	2
Asker municiapality	✓	✓	2, 3
Arendal municiapality	✓	✓	2
Lunner municiapality	✓	✓	2
Narvik municiapality	✓	✓	2, 3, 4
Sande municiapality	✓		3
Sykkylven municiapality	✓		3
Volda municiapality	✓		3
Ålesund municiapality	✓		3
Bodø municiapality	✓		4
Bømlo municiapality	✓		4
Gloppen municiapality	✓		4
Sortland municiapality	✓		4
Sunnfjord municiapality	✓		4
Vestvågøy municiapality	✓		4

4.3.2 Interviews

The interview material consists of interviews with planners and civil servants in 14 municipalities, four regional authorities, and two national actors – the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development, and the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities. In total, the papers draw on information from 26 interviews with at total of 41 informants. 18 of the interviews I conducted myself, three in teams with colleagues, while five of the interviews were conducted without me participating in the

actual interview setting. Consistency across the interviews was ensured through collaboration when developing the interview guides and through ongoing discussions among projects group members. All the interviews were transcribed verbatim, so I also read the full transcripts of the five interviews which I did not participate in. Table 3 shows the distribution of the informants across the three projects.

Table 3 Overview of interviews

Project	Number of informants	Individual interviews	Group interviews	Paper
IND	14	14	-	1, 2, 3
MAP	8	2	3	2, 4
FOG	19	-	7	4
TOTAL	41	16	10	-

The interviews were conducted at different stages, following the different phases of the research (see Figure 3, page 37). The MAP interviews were conducted in early 2020; most of the FOG interviews were conducted in the spring of 2021; while most of the IND interviews were conducted in the spring of 2022. Four of the interviews from spring of 2020 were followed up two years later, which made it possible to ask follow-up questions (reported on in Paper 2).

The general advice in policy mobilities research is to interview those who move, shape and adopt the mobile policy (Wood, 2016, p. 397). While policy mobilities was not part of the project from the start, the main criteria for recruiting informants were to talk to policy actors (planners, municipal officials) to explore their experiences with working with the SDGs in their daily operations. Most of the informants were public officials employed either as planners or in other positions related to planning and development in local or regional governments. The interviewees were recruited differently in the different projects. In the MAP project, we recruited interviewees from municipalities and regional authorities that had been working with the SDGs from an early stage. In the collaboration project FOG, the interviewees were for the most part planners who were our contact persons in the project. In the IND project I recruited interviewees

both through selective sampling and snowballing techniques, where I was pointed to new people to talk to by the first interviewees (Repstad, 2007).

The interviews were semi-structured, meaning that they followed an interview guide with themes and questions while at the same time opening for flexibility in pursuing topics that emerged during the interview (ibid.) While the guides for the MAP and FOG cases were developed in collaboration within the research teams, the guides for the IND cases were developed by me with input from colleagues. The fact that the IND interviews were conducted after the other interviews also meant that I could build on experiences from these interviews in developing the guide and doing the interviews. After I learned more about the field, I relied less on the specific questions in the guides, and the interviews became more unstructured. Because different interview guides were used in exploring different subcases, two different guides are attached in **Appendix B1** and **B2**.

The interviews were a mix of individual and group interviews. The group interviews provided an opportunity for the group members to reason among themselves, and answers to our questions would often involve a conversation between the interviewees. Tjora (2021) notes that interactions between informants in group interviews can lead to different meanings being constructed during the interview setting, making them useful approaches in social constructivist research. Group interviews also have some challenges, like "groupthink", where the desire for consensus within the group might prevent alternative opinions from being expressed (Fontana & Frey, 2005). Unequal power relations are also an issue, especially where the participants are a mix of junior and senior officials. During the interviews, we tried to minimise these risks by making sure all the interviewees were allowed to speak by asking questions directly to specific interviewees and asking follow-up questions to the whole group if "this is something you all agree on", and so on.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, all interviews, except one, were held digitally. One benefit of digital interviews is their low cost – both in terms of money and time

(Thunberg & Arnell, 2022). They were also relatively easy to book, especially since they were all with bureaucrats with office jobs, meaning they could be reached during normal working hours. The flexibility of digital interviews has some trade-off, however. In one instance, I asked for an interview and was given a time slot 20 minutes later, which did not fit in with my schedule. In another instance, I scheduled an interview several times, but the interviewee dropped out at the last minute every time, and the interview eventually had to be dropped from the study. Both had practical consequences for the study, as I had to rely to a greater degree on documents in order to fill in the gaps. It is reasonable to think that if the interviews had been set up as physical interviews, they would have been carried through. Another limitation of digital interviews is a lack of informal talk before the interview begins, which I have experienced to be useful for allowing interviewees to relax.

4.3.3 Documents

I have used documents collected from the UN, the Norwegian government and municipalities. The UN documents have been used to reconstruct the chain of events when a policy model – a set of UN sustainability indicators – was mobilised in Norwegian municipalities (reported in Paper 3). The national-level documents can be placed into two categories. First are the documents I used to identify the formal positions of the government on the SDGs (reported in Paper 1). This included national budget documents and white papers. Second are national policy documents aimed at practitioners in the form of planning guidelines and documents declaring the government's expectations towards lower levels of government (reported in Paper 4).

I used municipal documents to get an overview of which SDGs Norwegian municipalities had selected as part of their strategic planning. This involved searching the websites of all 356 Norwegian municipalities and finding the latest adopted municipal master plans. This was followed up with more detailed qualitative analysis of municipal plans in a few municipalities (reported in Paper 2). All the documents are publicly available, although in one of the consultations processes I had to contact the

municipality to get access to the documents (Paper 2). In addition to the documents that are part of the analysis, other documents were used for background and context information for the different studies. Of particular importance were documents from the UN, like the 2030 Agenda resolution (United Nations, 2015b), and other documents that have initiated policy mobilisations (part of Paper 3).

Table 4 provides an overview of the documents, while details about which documents have been analysed can be found in the method sections in each of the papers.

Table 4 *Overview of documents examined*

Type of document	Number of documents
National policy documents	20
Municipal master plans, written consultations to municipal plans	260
UN documents	4
National planning guidelines, written feedback to national action plan, governments' web page for planning	25
Total	309

4.3.4 Learning from networks

Wood (2016) highlights learning as a research method of policy mobilities, and as a third method I therefore want to emphasise how network involvement has been an important method throughout the research process. During the PhD project I have been moving in and out of situations where SDG localising has been a learning experience for researchers and planning practitioners. I have organised meetings between researchers, planners and other stakeholders concerning SDG localisation, including monthly webinars and workshops with participants from Norwegian and Nordic municipalities. To give an idea of what kind of arena this could be, I have attached an announcement to the Nordic workshop, which took place in Stockholm in October 2022, in **Appendix C**. The event was hosted by Nordregio, and I co-hosted it as part of my stay there as a guest researcher.

Participating in these networks has been an important part of the research activity as a site of learning and as such has informed my thinking about the case. It has been part of the iterative process of framing the research project and finding interesting

questions and topics for further investigation. Unlike the formal interviews and document studies described in the previous sections, network involvement is informal and as such not as easy to discuss according to phases of collection and analysis. Nevertheless, it has been an important way to shape my thinking and decisions during this research, not least in pointing me in the direction of interesting sites to do "formal" data collection.

Network involvement has therefore been an important way to anchor my project in real-world problems, as I have been able to follow the challenges of localising the SDGs as expressed by practitioners. Examples of discussions in meetings include how to measure sustainability, what kind of indicators to use at the local level, how to select the relevant SDGs for the municipality, and how to align the global SDGs with what the municipalities were doing. It has also helped to give flesh to some of the theoretical concepts in the scientific literature on SDGs, such as translation. Several of these concerns form the basis of the papers in this thesis. Without my involvement in these networks, this thesis PhD would have looked very different.

4.4 Data analysis

Following the abductive logic (Blaikie, 2007), data analysis has involved switching back and forth between the data and concepts. Different analytical strategies have been employed in the different papers, reflecting how the papers emerged at different stages of the process. In this section I describe the key elements of the data analysis in each of the four papers. Further discussions can be found in each of the papers.

In the first subcase (**Paper 1**), we were interested in understanding localisation from the national perspective. The analysis was therefore focused on how the SDGs have been framed as a local policy agenda in a national political context. The key data for this analysis were national policy documents where the government outlined its response to the 2030 Agenda – either to a domestic audience (national parliament and the municipal sector) or an international audience (through status reports to the

United Nations). In analysing the documents, we drew on the concept of *scale framing* (van Lieshout et al., 2012; 2017), which led us to specifically search for how the government justified its localisation strategy and how this scale framing involved emphasising specific *problems* of the 2030 Agenda, as well as how the government points to specific *actors* as responsible for addressing the problems. We included documents from the whole period since the 2030 Agenda was adopted, 2015–2022. In addition to documents, we also drew on interviews with two key informants at the national level, who provided insight into the reasoning behind some key justifications of the local scale in the policy documents. During the analysis we became increasingly aware of how the government's framing of the local scale had changed throughout this period. This change from a largely global to a largely local scale thus became the key narrative in the paper.

In the second subcase (**Paper 2**), we wanted to pursue a finding from the MAP project, which suggested that many municipalities selectively engage with the SDGs, something which seemed to be in opposition to the intention of the supposed indivisibility of the 17 SDGs. We therefore wanted to understand this selectivity as part of the localisation agenda and the need for municipalities to make sense of the global goals. The analysis therefore focused on which goals municipalities selected, how and why they selected those goals, and how this selection translated into local planning needs. To get an overview of which goals municipalities selected, we first did a *quantitative content analysis* (Bratberg, 2021) of municipal master plans in the 57 Norwegian municipalities which had selected SDGs as part of their strategic planning. This produced an overview of goal selection which suggested that municipalities choose goals that are closely aligned with their service areas. As a way to contextualise these statistics (Moses & Knutsen, 2007*)* we proceeded to do a *qualitative content analysis* (Bowen, 2009) of planning documents in four municipalities, which included examining what was emphasised in the written statements from public consultations. In this analysis we were interested in identifying what kind of local issues the SDGs were aligned with and to compare plans with SDGs to earlier plans without SDGs. Finally, we analysed the

interviews to gain a better understanding of how municipalities had worked with relating the SDGs to a local planning context, focusing on how interviewees had reasoned around the need to make local adaptions to the SDGs to make them fit.

In the third subcase (**Paper 3**), the analysis was guided by my wish to understand how certain policy models appear as "best examples" for others to follow. The analysis aimed to identify the origin story, the travels and the local translations (Healey, 2013) of a set of local sustainability indicators. To do this, the main part of the analysis is based on interviews with actors who had been involved in circulating the indicators between Norwegian municipalities and in applying them locally. In analysing the interviews, I searched for patterns in how the informants talked about their experiences with the indicators, while also noting how they differed. Through this coding, several key *themes* were identified (Braun & Clarke, 2006). These were then refined with help of theoretical concepts from the policy mobilities literature. In addition to the interviews, documents were used to supplement the interviews in reconstructing the chain of events when the indicators travelled from the UN to Norwegian municipalities.

In the fourth subcase (**Paper 4**), our aim with the analysis was to get a better understanding of the tensions between national and local levels of government when it came to localisation of the SDGs. To this end, interviews provided insight into what municipal planners considered challenging with local implementation, together with written feedback to the national action plan. National policy documents provided insight into what the national steering signals were. Inspired by the thematic analysis, the data was analysed to identify common themes and to relate these to the analytical perspectives of competing governing logics.

4.5 Research quality and positionality

The aim of this thesis is to produce new knowledge, and the question of research quality is essential to reach this aim. There is no broad agreement about how to

evaluate the quality of qualitative research, although there are many suggestions (Hammersley, 2007). Trustworthiness has been suggested as one criterium for assessing quality, with credibility, transferability, and dependability as critical aspects (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Credibility concerns whether the findings are congruent with reality (Stahl & King, 2020). One strategy for ensuring credibility is through triangulation, as discussed in section 4.3.1. Another way to pursue credibility is through involvement of informants, Throughout the PhD project I have presented preliminary findings and paper drafts to peers and practitioners. The feedback I have received has led me to reinterpret findings, introduce new theoretical perspectives, and sharpen up my methodological arguments to better speak with the research community. As such, participation in networks helps to increase the confidence in the findings as it has been a way to calibrate findings from interviews and documents with experiences of planners in the field.

Transferability concern whether research findings from one context can be applied also to other contexts. To evaluate transferability, methods need to be accurately described, as well as the context of the research and the phenomenon itself (Stahl & King, 2020). While transferability is not up to the researcher to decide, but of those who might want to use it, taking steps to make the research process transparent is one way of allowing others to utilise the research result in other settings. The detailed descriptions in this methodology chapter are one way I have tried to make the research transparent and as such allowed others to evaluate its relevance for other contexts. Moreover, in Chapter 7, I address the findings from the Norwegian case in relation to the wider literature and suggest that the findings from Norway can also be relevant in the Nordic context.

A third perspective on trustworthiness is dependability, or the extent to which the research can be trusted (Stahl & King, 2020). One way of pursuing this, is through peer reviews of various sorts – also called communicative validity (Tjora, 2021). This has been occurring in different ways thought the research process. Importantly, three of

the research papers have been written in collaboration with senior researchers, and together we have developed the analysis and arguments. I have also presented paper drafts at various seminars and scientific conferences [6], and drafts have been commented on by peers and papers have been in peer reviews as part of their process to become published. The PhD programme at Nord University also have mechanism for ensuring trust in the research, including guidance by two supervisors and mid-way and final seminar where my work has been assessed by senior peers.

Yet another important way of pursuing quality in research, is through "reflexive auditing" (Stahl & King, 2020, p. 28). Reflecting on who I am or who I was when I made important decisions during the research is an essential part of the research process (Holmes, 2020). For me, a sense of urgency underlies this research. I do not think society have much time to change its current unsustainable course, whether it concerns our over consumption, carbon emissions or nature degradation. But while it is easy to feel powerless in face of all these crises, as a researcher I can make meaningful contributions by producing socially relevant knowledge – the "'fundamental' job of researchers" (Haarstad et al., 2018, p. 197). The important question is how to account for how my role as a social member of society with political meanings has influenced my role as a researcher. At the same time, it has clearly influenced my critical approach in this research and led me to pose critical questions concerning who has the power to frame the sustainability agenda and delegate responsibility. On the other hand, the steps taken to ensure quality of research are important to keep my interpretations and conclusions from being influenced by my social "orientations" (Holmes, 2020, p. 3).

Doing this research while also following my political inclinations, has however been somewhat involved some friction. I started this project in the spring of 2019, and in the autumn that year, I was elected deputy representative to Bodø City Council for the

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[6] Paper drafts have been presented at the following conferences: EURA 2021: Contradictions Shaping Urban Futures; Storbykonferansen 2021: Byens krise(r); Plannord 2022: Planning Sustainable Futures.

Green Party. While my role as a deputy involved few formal duties, I did regularly participate in local party meetings. While I did my best to participate in the political discussions, my mind usually kept an analytical distance, and at times I felt like an ethnographer observing political talk – what Freeman describes as policy movement in practice (Freeman, 2012). This distance probably made me a terrible politician. At the same time, my actual field in this research did not include interviews with politicians. In this way, my political career partly compensates for my empirical focus during data collection.

Wood (2016, p. 397) notes that previous participation in the field gives the researcher "'insider' access to important policy actors and an 'outsider' outlook to critically appraise their learning". One advantage of being an "insider" is knowledge of the organisational culture, which makes it easier to ask meaningful questions and to gain access. Drawbacks include being overly sympathetic to the people being studied as well as not asking "dumb" or provocative questions, something which may lead to a loss of information from the interviews (Holmes, 2020). As a hobby politician I have been an insider with some knowledge and experience of political work in a medium-sized Norwegian municipality, while as a researcher I have the benefit of having worked in a municipal administration in my previous job as performance auditor in Oslo municipality. Overall, these experiences both from the political and the administrative side of local government has kept me constantly reflecting on my own positionality and different roles while doing this research, something which I think is a valuable practice in qualitative research and as such helps to strengthen the trustworthiness of this work.

4.6 Ethical considerations

All three research projects that have generated data for this thesis were approved by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD[7]) before the data collection started. The approval for the IND project as well as the information letter sent out to the informants,

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[7] *Sikt* from 2022.

are attached in **Appendix A1** and **A2**. All interviewees were given information about what participation in interviews entailed, how information would be stored, and how they could withdraw their consent at any time and have any personal information deleted. All interviewees provided written consent of their participation in the research projects, including having the interviews recorded.

Interviewees were also promised anonymity. When interviewing municipal employees in small municipalities, ensuring anonymity can be challenging as the pool of potential informants is limited. Stating that you talked to a planner in a municipality with 2000 inhabitants can be revealing. One possible solution is to refrain from disclosing which municipalities are part of the study. In some cases this might be unproblematic, such as when the phenomenon of concern can be specified more broadly, for example as a "thematic *field* of municipal policy development" (Lo, 2015, p. 39). Not saying which municipalities are involved could however reduce the quality of the research, if this means that local characteristics – historical, geographical, cultural – are lost to the reader. I have ended up naming all the municipalities that are part of the study, but when interviewees are quoted in the papers, I do not specify which municipality they represent. I have however differentiated between the municipalities, depending on their size. When it comes to the larger municipalities that are part of the study, like Asker, Arendal, and Ålesund, stating that I have interviewed a planner is less revealing. In this way, I have tried to ensure both anonymity of interviewees and quality of the research. Despite this, there is no complete guarantee for anonymity. For instance, some of the informants were recruited through the snowball technique, meaning I was pointed in their direction by someone else that I talked to. However, considering the topics discussed in the interviews and the measures I have taken to ensure anonymity, there is little reason to think that this study can cause harm.

4.7 Chapter summary

In this chapter I have discussed the methodological choices I have made in this project, and presented in detail the methods that have enabled me to explore the social

constructions of SDG localisation in Norway. I have argued for the usefulness of an embedded case study approach, and I have discussed the steps I have taken to ensure quality of the research, including triangulation. Furthermore, I have reflected on my own position as a researcher, in particular the tension between my role as researcher and local politician during the research process. In the following chapter I summarise the findings in each of the four research papers that are the outcome of my methodological choices.

5   Summary of papers

Four scientific papers make up the core of this thesis: two papers are published while two are submitted to journals. **Paper 1** is co-authored with Aase Kristine Lundberg and has been submitted to *Journal of Environmental Policy and Planning*. **Paper 2** is also co-authored with Aase Kristine Lundberg, and has been published in *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management*. **Paper 3** is single-authored and has been submitted to *Cities: The International Journal of Urban Policy and Planning*. **Paper 4** is co-authored with Kyrre Groven and Aase Kristine Lundberg and has been published in Norwegian in the anthology *Fjordantologien: Bærekraft* [The Fjord Anthology: Sustainability]. In the following sections I present the papers and show how they contribute to answer the research questions posed in this thesis.

5.1   Paper 1: Framing the scale

Reference: Reinar, M. B., & Lundberg, A. K. "Everything the state does not want to do, we leave to the municipalities": Framing the scale of the Sustainable Development Goals in Norwegian national policy. [Manuscript submitted to *Journal of Environmental Policy and Planning*]

Paper 1 is a study of how the SDGs have been framed at the national level and how this, in turn, has led to certain types of actions being seen as appropriate responses to the global agenda. The study aims to gain a better understanding of the reasons and arguments used in localising the SDGs in Norway, seen from the perspective of national policy actors who influence and shape policies at lower levels. The paper analyses national-level policy documents to explore the discursive constructions of the SDGs as a local issue in Norway. Moreover, it supplements the document analysis with interviews of national-level actors from the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development as well as the Association for Local and Regional Authorities (KS).

In Paper 1, we use the concept of *scale framing* to discuss how national actors strategically frame the problems of the SDGs and the responsibility for solving them with particular actors situated at different scales. We identify a shift in how the SDGs have been framed: From being largely oriented towards Norway's international obligations, including global poverty reduction, attention was increasingly given to the domestic response. Furthermore, we argue that the domestic reorientation of the government concerning the implementation of the SDGs was closely linked with a "local turn", where local and regional governments were ascribed with a particular responsibility in following up on the SDGs. This limits the scope of the SDGs to issues and solutions within municipal borders, while simultaneously reduces the pressure for national authorities to take action. This framing makes action on the SDGs less about systemic change and more about local priorities. While the local frame aligns with the broader SDG localisation discourse advocated by local government proponents, we question whether it is sufficient to achieve a sustainable transformation, since it excludes issues and solutions that lie beyond the reach of local policymaking. The findings in this paper led us to question if the current framing of the SDGs as a primarily local policy agenda can deliver on the scope of change needed.

While it is a national-level paper, our findings point to issues that are explored in more detail in the other papers, which explore the practical effects of the localisation agenda. Paper 1 is placed first in the thesis to introduce the discussion about what localisation in Norway entail and anchor some of the key issues of this thesis, including the tension between local autonomy and standardised solutions. It contributes to answer **Sub-question 1:** How are the SDGs framed as a local planning agenda?, and **Sub-question 2:** How are the SDGs mobilised locally?

5.2 Paper 2: Goals à la carte

Paper 2 is a study of localisation in Norwegian municipal planning and examines the implications of a localisation agenda that emphasises local autonomy in following up on the SDGs. The paper critically explores how municipalities select the SDGs that are considered most relevant for their local concern and critically discusses this selectivity in light of the supposedly integrated and indivisible 2030 Agenda. Empirically, it draws from a review of municipal master plans in all Norwegian municipalities and a closer examination of planning processes in four municipalities through interviews and document analyses.

We draw on the concept of *policy translation* to discuss how municipalities selectively engage with the SDGs during localisation. This involves adjusting the policy framework to best meet their needs while excluding the parts that do not fit. We find that municipalities prioritise goals that support existing policies and exclude other more challenging goals. We argue that while selectivity reduces complexity at the local level, it also hinders an integrated approach to the SDGs by not allowing conflicts and interactions between goals to be adequately considered. Furthermore, we explore the outcome of these SDG selections through institutionalisation in the municipal planning system. We argue that while the planning system provides an institutional framework for implementing the SDGs, a course change requires more than adding the SDGs to strategic plans. Importantly, we find that the SDGs do not generate much public debate concerning actual policy choices, suggesting their de-politicised application in planning. While localisation emphasises the role of local decision-makers and might in one way contribute to engagement around global issues, our findings suggest there is reason to

warn against the SDGs becoming just another box to tick in a municipal plan rather than being a tool to inspire policy changes.

Paper 2 problematises the local autonomy frame identified in Paper 1 by highlighting the practical effects of a frame that leaves much leeway for local decision-making. As the need for contextualisation and institutionalisation of the SDGs are important elements of the localisation agenda, the paper contributes critical reflections on these issues at an early stage of implementation. As such, the paper contributes to the thesis through its critical discussion of the implications of localisation. Paper 2 contributes to **Sub-question 3:** What are the experiences of translating the SDGs into local planning needs?

5.3 Paper 3: Moving metrics

Reference: Reinar, M. B. Moving metrics: the global mobilisation and local translations of sustainability indicators in Norwegian municipal planning. [Manuscript submitted to *Cities: The International Journal of Urban Policy and Planning*][8]

Local governments across the world look for ways to engage meaningfully with the 2030 Agenda. This has created a market for different policy models that promise to help localise the goals. Sustainability indicators have been noted to be a particularly powerful mobile policy as they help to "focus attention on certain definitions of governance problems and associated solutions" (Temenos & McCann, 2012, p. 1391). Against this backdrop, Paper 3 is a study of the movement and circulation of a set of sustainability indicators among a group of Norwegian municipalities.

In the paper, I use concepts from the policy mobilities literature, including *informational infrastructure* and *transfer agents*, to explore the practical work of policy

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[8] What eventually became this paper, was originally submitted as a course assignment in the course *Global Urban Policy Mobilities* at Oslo Summer School, June 2021 https://www.uio.no/studier/emner/sv/sv/OSS9106/). Its development into a scientific paper has involved major revisions, both conceptually and empirically. Comments from course lecturer Kevin Ward were helpful in the early stages of revision.

actors in moving policy models around. The data comes from interviews with municipal and county-level policy actors involved in this policy circulation as well as analysis of policy documents. The paper shows that, while promoted as locally relevant, the indicators were challenging to utilise in a Norwegian municipal context. This concerned both issues of size and standards of sustainability. Thus, I illustrate some limitations of SDG 11 as an ideal for municipal planning in peripheral areas. Despite this lack of substantive relevance, the indicators circulated quickly. I argue that this was due not only to what the indicators offered but had as much to do with what the demand-side needed. The paper shows how, given the lack of operative guidance following calls to "localise" the goals and the government's expectations for local and regional planning, municipalities are under pressure to find approaches to implement the SDGs. An interesting finding is that despite a lack of substantive relevance of the indicators in a Norwegian context, they are made meaningful as a common project across the municipalities in the county, where networks for the sharing of knowledge were established. In this way, the indicators acquired a function and kept circulating.

With its focus on how policy models that enter vertically become influential in shaping local responses, Paper 3 contributes a perspective on SDG localisation that has rarely been examined. Discussing the relationship between the supply side and the demand side of policy circulation, I highlight how localisation of the SDGs is not only a local strategy but also part of a broader, global movement consisting of actors and organisations pursuing their agendas. As such, Paper 3 problematises the local autonomy frame identified in Paper 1 by suggesting that localised decision-making does not necessarily lead to locally anchored solutions. Paper 3 provide answers to **Sub-question 2:** How are the SDGs mobilised locally?, and **Sub-question 3:** What are the experiences of translating the SDGs into local planning needs?.

5.4 Paper 4: Mye styr, lite styring? [All show and no go?]

Reference: Reinar, M. B., Groven, K., & Lundberg, A. K. (2022). Mye styr, lite styring? Implementering av FNs bærekraftsmål i samfunns- og arealplanlegging [All Show and

No Go? Implementing the UN Sustainable Development Goals in Societal and Land-use Planning"]. In *Bærekraft: Fjordantologien 2022* (pp. 298-317). Universitetsforlaget. https://doi.org/10.18261/9788215062938-2022-1

Paper 4 departs from the important role that local and regional planning authorities have been ascribed in national planning guidelines, which give planners a key role in translating the SDGs into local and regional contexts. Based on interviews with a total of 22 planners in the counties of Nordland and Vestland and an analysis of policy documents, including national steering signals, we examine how top-down signals from the national level are perceived by practitioners as well as the kind of bottom-up signals that are sent back.

Theoretically, the paper makes use of the concept of competing *governance logics* to discuss the tension between the signals from the top and below. Counterintuitively, we find signs of the hierarchical logic most articulated at the local level, where more guidance and clarifications are called for. From the top, however, national steering signals suggest a soft mode of implementation whereby national responsibility for implementation is limited and local autonomy is highlighted. We argue that the drive to implement the SDGs in Norway is characterised by the government's lack of willingness to govern beyond general instructions. Instead, local and county-level authorities are left to find solutions in collaboration through networks and knowledge sharing – as discussed in Paper 3. In Paper 4, we argue that it is problematic to base the Norwegian effort mostly on voluntary work where networks and partnerships are seen to solve the sustainability challenges, especially given the crises underlying the 2030 Agenda and considering earlier experiences of promoting environmental policies, like Local Agenda 21.

Through its discussion of the tensions between levels of government in implementing the SDGs, Paper 4 picks up threads from the three previous papers. It shows how the national autonomy frame identified in Paper 1, while becoming a dominant frame, does not travel frictionlessly on its way down towards lower levels of implementation.

In addition, several of the challenges of localisation highlighted in specific planning processes in Paper 2 and Paper 3 are articulated by planners in Paper 4 as they reflect on how they are working with the SDGs. In this way, Paper 4 contributes to answer sub-questions related both to how the SDGs are mobilised and how they are translated. Paper 4 contribute to **Sub-question 2:** How are the SDGs mobilised locally?, and **Sub-question 3:** What are the experiences of translating the SDGs into local planning needs?.

6 Synthesis of findings

In this thesis I have investigated how the Sustainable Development Goals have been localised in municipal planning in Norway. I have done this by focusing on three localisation processes: *framing*, *mobilisation* and *translation*. These three processes have been explored in different ways in four empirical papers. While the papers include other questions, together they contribute to answer the overarching research question and sub-questions posed in this thesis. In this chapter, I present the key findings to answer my research questions, which are summarised in Table 5. The findings are discussed in more detail in the following sections.

Table 5 *Main findings*

Questions	Main findings
How are the SDGs framed as a local planning agenda? (SQ1)	Initially a global framing of the SDGs, where local action was linked with action on SDG 11 ("sustainable cities and communities"), and as such of little relevance for Norwegian municipalities.
	Increasingly the government took a more domestic approach in national politics, including making institutional changes, and strategically framing the municipal sector a key site for the implementation of all the SDGs.
	In both frames, implementation should take place within ordinary policy development, emphasising how local autonomy in deciding what local action should look like.
How are the SDGs mobilised locally? (SQ2)	The local autonomy frame was followed with few instructions about what local implementation could entail.
	The local mobilisation of the SDGs instead relied mostly on soft measures, including knowledge sharing, networks and increased planning competence. KS becomes an important actor in the for local mobilisation of the SDGs.
	Lack of tools also created a market for sustainability indicators developed elsewhere, which was framed as solutions to local problems and promoted by transfer agents in local-global alliances.

What are the experiences of translating the SDGs into local planning needs? (SQ3)	The municipalities engaged with the SDGs selectively, prioritising goals that aligned closely with core areas of municipal service provision.
	Indicators provided a useful starting point, as they were perceived as an operationalisation of sustainable development. Decontextualised indicators were however difficult to apply in local contexts.
	The government's local autonomy frame was criticised locally for leaving it up to municipalities themselves to translate the SDGs, with little support.
	At the same time, local translation processes involved new collaborations between municipalities, which was valued for raising awareness about the SDGs in the local communities.
How are the SDGs localised in Norway, and what are the implications for Norway's response to the 2030 Agenda? (*RQ*)	Localisation of the SDGs involves the strategic framing of policy agendas, the active movement of ideas and tools into the sphere of municipal planning and the institutional uptake and processing of these ideas in local contexts.
	In Norway, local autonomy is a key justification for localisation. This leaves little scope for setting national criteria for what progress should look like.
	An implication of localisation is as such little overall direction to the national effort to achieve the 2030 Agenda.
	While the SDGs in general are appreciated as a framework for local planning, the local autonomy frame is also contested locally, where clearer guidance is called for.
	This makes localisation approaches rely on solutions from elsewhere which to a little extent reflect the sustainability challenge of many Norwegian municipalities.
	Moreover, addressing the SDGs within existing policy frameworks involves path-dependencies. As such, progress on the SDGs largely become what municipalities make of it.

6.1 Framing the local

The first sub-question concerns how the SDGs are established as a local concern in the first place, and asks: *How are the SDGs **framed** as a local planning agenda?*

The question is explored in Paper 1, which shows that the role of the local has changed through the years. Initially, the Norwegian response was largely focused on the global scale, linking the SDGs with the previous major UN Agenda – the Millennium Development Goals – emphasising the need to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger. In this framing, the local response was similarly limited to the issues covered by SDG 11. This meant that Norwegian municipalities initially played only a limited role, with only a few of the largest cities in Norway included in the understanding of the problem.

With pressure to take more action domestically, the Norwegian government increasingly turned to how the SDGs should be followed up in national politics, which resulted in a national action plan in 2021. Along with this came institutional changes within the government, with the Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation taking over as the coordinating body for the SDGs. With this, the SDGs became a part of the ministry's dialogue with the municipal sector. The paper shows that the government's references to a more holistic approach to the 2030 Agenda from around 2019 were closely linked with a local turn, pointing directly to the responsibility of local governments.

In this local turn, the government broadened the scope of SDG 11 to encompass the whole municipal sector, reframing it into a meaningful goal in a Norwegian context, where large cities are an exception, and emphasising that local and regional authorities had a particular responsibility in following up on the SDGs. Increasingly, the idea that local action was required to achieve a larger share of the SDGs became articulated. These arguments drew on the ideas from the international localisation agenda about the role of local governments and were formulated by the government and KS in tandem.

In framing the local scale of implementation, the SDGs were moreover seen as part of ordinary policy development in Norwegian municipalities, not requiring extra support, in the tradition of strong local government and reflecting political values concerning local autonomy and self-governance.

6.2 Mobilising localisation

The second sub-question explores the actions and actors involved in moving the SDGs into the sphere of municipal planning, as it asks: *How are the SDGs **mobilised** locally?* The question is addressed in Papers 1, 3 and 4, which demonstrate how the localisation frame has been mobilised mostly through soft measures through the efforts of different policy actors and tools.

Paper 4 examines the governing implications of the national localisation frame and finds that the government has limited itself to playing a facilitatory role. The paper shows that the national "expectation document" clearly stated that local and regional planning should be based on the SDGs, but that this direct instruction was an exception to the way the SDGs have been mobilised. The government has to a greater extent relied on softer measures, and the national expectations were only followed up to a limited degree through further clarifications of what local implementation should imply. An important finding in this paper is therefore a lack of steering signals from the national level concerning the SDGs.

Paper 1 shows how localisation was mobilised through a formal agreement between the governments and KS, concerning the follow-up of the SDGs. The paper shows how KS became a mechanism for mobilisation, and how local implementation revolved around issues like knowledge sharing and developing sustainability indicators for measuring progress, supplemented with a focus on raising local planning capacity. Among other things, KS facilitated sustainability networks, part of the *informational infrastructures* that keep policy in circulation (Cook & Ward, 2012). As such, Paper 1 highlights the important role of KS as a *transfer agent* for a localisation frame that does not interfere with local priorities and local autonomy.

Paper 3 shows in more detail how the idea of measuring sustainability has been set in motion. The paper highlights how the national localisation frame, with its clear expectation that something should happen, while at the same time its limited guidance

on what this should be, creates a local demand for fixes that can be met by persuasive policy models – in this case, a set of sustainability indicators. The paper shows how the sustainability indicators were mobilised through the tandem work of UN technocrats and locally embedded transfer agents, including municipal and regional authorities. In practice, this involved establishing networks where the indicators could be disseminated alongside other lessons on working with the SDGs in municipal planning.

Together, the findings of SQ2 show how alliances across sectors and levels of government within both a national and a broader international frame moved the SDGs from the UN to Norwegian municipalities. The papers document how the mobilisation of the SDGs was the work of a variety of transfer agents, from international emissaries out to promote specific tools to *middling technocrats* (Larner & Laurie, 2010), including regional-level bureaucrats in charge of planning networks. However, common to all is their role as suppliers of policy ideas to meet local demands.

6.3 Translation experiences

While the previous SQs concerned how the SDGs have been discursively fixed as a local agenda and the practical work involved in moving the goals to local audiences, the third question is concerned with the local reception. It asks: *What are the experiences of translating the SDGs into local planning needs?* The question is explored in Papers 2, 3, and 4, which all illustrate the tensions between the SDGs as a global aspiration and its local manifestations in different local planning contexts: Paper 2 in strategic municipal planning, Paper 3 in a study of the circulation of local sustainability indicators, and Paper 4 in the context of multilevel governance.

Paper 2 finds that local translation work involved constructing meanings to the global goals, which was expressed through a selective engagement with the SDGs. This involved narrowing the scope of the SDGs to the goals considered most locally relevant, 69ase don local assessments of where municipalities have the greatest influence. The paper demonstrates that the goals that make the most sense locally align closely with

core areas of municipal service provision, including health (SDG 3) and education (SDG 4). Translating the SDGs in this case also meant "filling in" (Kortelainen & Rytteri, 2017) the SDGs with local content and linking them with other policies. In this way, the SDGs were translated to fit locally. Moreover, the paper shows that the goals did not stir debate locally but supported the consensus that characterises strategic municipal planning in Norway, suggesting that the selected SDGs largely support the type of goals that strategic municipal plans in Norway aim for.

Paper 2 shows how translating the global goals in strategic municipal planning involved many degrees of freedom for municipal planners, while Paper 3 shows how working with indicators offered the opposite experience. In this case, the content was predefined with few possibilities for making local adjustments. The paper finds that the indicators were perceived both positively and negatively by municipal planners. On the positive side, the indicators were an operationalisation of the SDGs that gave the municipalities a useful starting point. This was especially the case for the smaller municipalities, with little capacity to do development work on their own. For them, the possibility to join a common project that was both thought out and financed by someone else, was enabling. At the same time, it was for these small municipalities that the content of the indicators provided the least fit, given the indicators' focus on *urban* sustainability.

While the sustainability indicators seemed to provide little knowledge beyond what was already known, the indicators made more sense locally as part of a bigger collaboration project between municipalities. This *mobilising effect* was also highlighted by the municipalities in Paper 2, where the process of selecting goals was said to be a way to create awareness around the global goals. While interviewees problematised the need to simplify the SDGs, this simplification – through selecting a few goals or applying predefined indicators – was also valued for how it created local engagement and spurred collaboration across municipalities and political divides as a unifying project and "common language". In this way, the local experiences aligned

well with the national localisation frame, which emphasised issues like awareness raising and knowledge sharing rather than substantive shifts in political priorities.

Papers 2 and 3 are studies of specific planning processes at the local level, while Paper 4 shows how municipal planners more generally reflected on the SDGs as a steering signal to planning. The paper finds on the one hand that the municipalities were eager to work with the SDGs and that the national expectations had been perceived as a clear marching order to the municipalities. At the same time, they both called for more specific guidelines and tools and not least clear political clarifications about what implementing the SDGs in Norway should entail. The three papers show how the local translations were never only local but also under the influence of what was being done elsewhere (Temenos & McCann, 2013). For example, informants talked about how they had used the "Asker model" when they assessed the local relevance of the SDGs (Paper 2), while Ålesund's application of U4SSC indicators led these indicators to spread to other municipalities (Paper 3).

Overall, the three papers that contribute to SQ3, show that the SDGs were in general welcomed as a framework for municipal planning, who saw it as a useful supplement to the existing expectations in the Norwegian Planning and Building Act concerning the need to plan for sustainable development. The findings do reveal some tensions, however. This is most clearly articulated in Paper 4, which points to some of the limitations of a localisation frame that isolates action to what can be managed locally.

6.4 Implications of localisation for progress on the SDGs in Norway

This brings me to the main research question: How are the SDGs localised in Norway, and what are the implications for Norway's response to the 2030 Agenda?

The findings show that localisation is not one thing but a series of actions that take place at different places and involve different actors. I highlight how localisation involves the strategic framing of policy agendas, the active movement of ideas and tools into the sphere of municipal planning and the institutional uptake and processing

of these ideas in local contexts. At the same time, localisation is an ambiguous steering signal to the municipalities. It is promoted as a bottom-up approach, where local priorities should guide implementation. In practice, however, municipalities are also seeking solutions through external policy fixes.

From this, there are several implications of localisation for progress on the SDGs in Norway. One implication is that it gives little overall direction to the national effort. With the elevation of the local, the pressure on the national level is similarly reduced. As Paper 1 shows, the Norwegian approach to the 2030 Agenda has been to embed the agenda into existing frameworks of policy development. Locally, this means that the problems of the SDGs are something to be solved within local capacities, as part of ordinary policy development in the municipalities. This, moreover, leaves little scope for national sanctions as this would require the government to set criteria for what implementation should entail. Furthermore, this is convenient for the government, which does not have to commit resources, while at the same time it is encouraged by a municipal sector that is elevated to the status of a key problem solver.

Overall, this suggests that progress on the SDGs becomes largely what municipalities make of it. Localisation enables the moulding of the SDGs into a shape that makes sense locally and can as such contribute to legitimacy as the framework is not enforced from above. The findings show that local room for manoeuvre was valued, and the papers illustrate how the process of selecting SDGs contributed to local engagement and awareness raising, with the SDGs becoming a united goal across political divides (Paper 2). While the findings show few indications that localisation has led to substantive effects on policymaking, they draw attention to how they have a mobilising effect locally. At the same time, the findings also point to path-dependency, where the SDGs are used as illustrative categories for existing policies rather than contribute to new priorities. This is even more so the case as the translation of the SDGs is easier at the most overall and non-binding parts of municipal planning, while it becomes more

difficult in binding spatial plans and financial plans, which concern issues that not everyone necessarily agrees on.

While the national localisation frame has been firmly established (Paper 1), findings from the other papers illustrate how this is a contested frame locally. Together, the findings suggest that there is an expressed need for more guidelines and clarifications. Another implication of localisation is, therefore, the construction of policy markets for best practice and learning that arrives "horizontally" (Haarstad, 2016, p. 5). The findings in Papers 2 and 3 show that a few municipalities have taken the lead in developing methods and approaches to implementation, while others follow. In Paper 3, the urban indicators from the UN worked to a certain degree in the city of Ålesund and were subsequently applied as a standard for sustainable development in more peripheral municipalities – with less fit. Common to both the approaches that were emulated by others was that they provided a place to start, but with a need for adjustments along the way (Papers 2 and 3). This illustrates a paradox with localisation as a political strategy: While its rhetoric of local autonomy legitimises a hands-off approach at the national level, it simultaneously constructs markets for persuading policy models coming from elsewhere to shape local responses.

7 Conclusion

In this final chapter, I return to the aim and purpose of the thesis, presented in Chapter 1, to discuss the way the thesis contributes to knowledge and practice. Through these discussions I take a step back from the concrete findings discussed in the previous chapter to reflect more broadly on what this understanding of localisation means in the ongoing project to localize sustainable development. I also point to on some of the limitations of the study and reflect on possibilities for future research that can follow up this thesis.

7.1 Contribution to knowledge about localisation

The aim of this thesis has been to generate new knowledge about how the SDGs are localised. Hence, I have focused on the politics involved in moving the SDGs from a global to a local agenda, highlighting the frames, practices and actors involved in shaping the 2030 Agenda into a local agenda in Norway. Through four empirical papers, the thesis brings new insights to the problem of localising sustainable development, which has been of concern of both academics and practitioners for decades.

One of the key contributions consists in generating new knowledge about localisation in a national case. Historically, Norway has been a strong supporter of UN agendas, including the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. The UN is often called a cornerstone of Norwegian foreign policy (Svenbalrud, 2012) and, as Paper 1 shows, the Norwegian government has been active in promoting the implementation of the SDGs on a global scale. At the same time, the domestic response has been slow (The Office of the Auditor General, 2020). This thesis shows how closely the national response has been associated with a local response. As such, a key contribution of the thesis has been to analyse localisation as a national political strategy, not just as single instances of local implementation. This approach has been enabled by a research design covering several empirical sites at different levels of government. As a first study of a national case of localisation, a contribution of this thesis therefore lies in its combination of

perspectives from both local and national levels in ways that supplement other empirical studies on how the SDGs have been implemented in Norwegian municipalities (e.g. Fuller, 2023; Nerbøberg & Busengdal, 2023).

The findings from the Norwegian case confirm other findings that highlight the lack of clarity concerning the SDGs as a steering signal to local governments (Krantz & Gustafsson, 2021). Moreover, the thesis shows how the SDGs have been approached as part of ordinary policy development in Norway, both nationally and locally. The strategy of embedding the SDGs into existing policy frameworks has been identified as a common strategy in other national cases as well (Okitasari et al., 2019). Masuda et al. (2021) develop a framework for analysing the *mainstreaming* of the SDGs at the local level, which encompasses several of the issues explored in this thesis, including: vertical institutional coordination (Paper 1 and Paper 4), the prioritisation of specific SDGs in local plans (Paper 2) and the adaptation of indicators (Paper 3). However, as we argue in Paper 1, pursuing the SDGs as part of ordinary policy development also risks reducing the transformative potential of the 2030 Agenda as it limits more radical policy options to be considered. While recognising how SDG mainstreaming might be useful, this thesis problematises this approach through its discussion on the motivations and justification of making the SDGs about "everything", and in particular about everything happening locally (Paper 1) instead of a more honed policy agenda targeting key challenges in a Norwegian context. The policy mobilities approach has been a useful entrance point for this problematisation.

Considering localisation in other national cases, the Norwegian case is comparable with those of other Nordic countries. All the Nordic countries are top-ranking when it comes to their overall performance on implementing the SDGs, while they perform poorly when it comes to *spillover* effects. These are the effects each country has – positive or negative – on other countries' abilities to achieve the SDGs (Sachs et al., 2022; Sustainable Development Report, 2023). In other words, it is the footprint that (most often) rich countries put on poorer countries, from imports and so on. When it comes

to spillovers, the Nordic countries are not at the top anymore; with Finland ranking highest at number 128 and Norway at number 154. As such, there is no shortage of problems to tackle. All the Nordic countries have also reported on progress to the UN High-Level Political Forum twice in Voluntary National Reviews, suggesting they are eager to follow up the 2030 Agenda internationally, while they also place much emphasis on the role of local government. As Huynh (2023, p. 46) notes, the efforts of local and regional actors "have increasingly been pushed up in the Nordic sustainability agenda", with local and regional associations playing important roles. All this suggests that Norway does not represent a unique case. Studies of local implementation in Sweden (Krantz, 2022) and Denmark (Egelund, 2022) reveal similarities in how municipalities approach the SDGs, focused among other things on the importance given to cross-sectorial cooperation in implementing the goals locally. Like Norwegian municipalities, Swedish municipalities are however also asking for more concrete tools that can help them put the SDGs to work (Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions, 2021). A common challenge for all the Nordic countries is therefore to understand the SDGs in a Nordic context and demonstrate "genuine and significant new efforts in respect of Agenda 2030" (Halonen et al., 2017, p. 64).

Another important contribution of this thesis comes from its application of a policy mobilities approach in the case of SDG implementation. The "mobile" approach taken in this thesis has allowed me to study localisation as movement from the global to the local and to focus on the various stages at which the SDGs have been attempted to be *fixed* locally. Moreover, this thesis contributes to the field of environmental sociology in several ways. Lockie (2016, p. 4) has argued that the 2030 Agenda offers environmental sociologists important future avenues for research: "We can do more than monitor progress towards the 'social' targets agreed through multilateral negotiations. We can engage more directly with questions of what ought to be sustained alongside questions of who decides, who acts and who benefits". The thesis has contributed to this by critically examining the politics of localisation with a focus on what kind of policy issues the SDGs are translated into when they become local

issues, who makes the agenda local, and who is given responsibility to act on the SDGs when they become localised. I have done this by bringing in theories and concepts from the policy mobilities literature, thus making a theoretical contribution to the field of environmental sociology.

Despite emerging from the *sociology of mobility*, sociologists have not made many contributions to the policy mobilities literature (Cook, 2015). Within environmental sociology, there have been a few contributions. For example, Chewinski (2016, p. 349) draws on policy mobilities to show how the Canadian state has mobilised discourses on corporate social responsibility to facilitate "the flow of travelling technocrats, minerals and capital". In an assessment of approaches to study climate risk, Blok (2018) points to policy mobilities' "distinct advantage of bringing attention to the complicated routes along which knowledge travels and the key role this plays in framing dominant forms of urban climate risk politics" (p. 48). The explicitly political orientation of a policy mobilities approach – insisting that policy ideas move because of the actions of actors and institutions – should therefore make it a useful contribution to the sociologist's toolbox when seeking to understand how and why some environmental policy ideas become dominant. Importantly, both policy mobilities and environmental sociology share an interest in the concept of *flows* – of pollution, waste, greenhouse gases, or environmental policy agendas like the SDGs. In what they call a sociology of flows, Mol and Spaargaren (2006, pp. 77-78) argue that "the mobility of environmental ideas, information, and interpretative frameworks flowing between networks and nodes around the globe, can be interpreted in much the same way as material flows". This thesis can be seen as a contribution along these lines, with its emphasis on the flow of a sustainability agenda both within a country and at a global scale.

7.2 Limitations and future research

The findings and conclusions in this thesis are based on a study of a national case with four subcases and several empirical sites. Through this broad approach I have been able to collect and analyse data concerning different localisation strategies and the

relationship between different approaches, thus making it possible to draw conclusions based on the Norwegian case as a whole. A limitation of this broad approach is the possibility to produce knowledge of a greater depth. Through single case studies, it would for example be possible to explore in more detail how different SDGs have been operationalised beyond overall strategic planning. While my focus has provided information on how the SDGs have been approached at the overarching level in municipal planning, it could be the case that they are translated differently in other types of municipal plans, and not least further down the line of implementation. Current evidence of the state of nature in Norway does not suggest that nature preservation has been top priority in Norwegian municipalities.[9] The question of what role the SDGs could play in municipal land-use planning could therefore be explored further.

Another limitation of this thesis is its "administrative focus", where the key translators of the SDGs have mostly been municipal planners. Including elected officials and others beyond municipal organisations would add perspectives on the processes of localisation. It is likely that local politicians have other opinions than planners do about the need for national steering. Potentially important conflicts of interest between the political-administrative divide could therefore be explored through the lens of the SDGs. Doing more comparative case studies would also be interesting as a way to "test" what effects the SDGs actually have in policy outcomes. This could also be done in a broader context, for example in the Nordic region referred to above: Is there a specific Nordic approach to localisation?

When it comes to the theoretical framework, some of the papers in this thesis draw more directly from the policy mobilities literature than others (Paper 3 most clearly). My attempt has been to shape policy mobilities into an overarching conceptual

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[9] For example as documented by the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation (NRK) in January 2024: https://www.nrk.no/dokumentar/xl/nrk-avslorer_-44.000-inngrep-i-norsk-natur-pa-fem-ar-1.16573560

umbrella. Although the umbrella leaks a bit, it has been useful as a thinking tool and as a "specific research disposition" (Lewis, 2021, p. 322). Given that the policy mobilities has been a novel approach to the study of the SDGs, its flexibility as an analytical approach has been valuable. The three key concepts of framing, mobilisation, and translation have helped direct my attention to the different ways that policy ideas promoting sustainable development are moved around in space and fixed in place by actors and institutions pursuing their own agendas. In future research, the policy mobilities approach could be used to study the different transfer agents involved in moving the ideas of the SDGs around. In this study, KS is one such actor. Given this, it would be interesting to study in greater depth how KS works to bridge international and national discourses on localisation. The implications of the close relationship between the government and KS in making the SDGs a local agenda, including whose interests are being served, could also be explored. Supplementing the traditional interviews-and-documents methods used in this thesis, through for example ethnographic approaches (through both physical and digital observations) would be especially valuable.

7.3 Contribution to sustainable development

The overall purpose of the thesis has been to contribute to a better understanding of what localising the SDGs entails, and through these insights contribute to a more targeted approach to achieve sustainable development. The adoption of the 2030 Agenda in 2015 called on the world to take "bold and transformative steps" (United Nations, 2015b, p. 1). It is "a new paradigm", as the Norwegian government has called it (Norwegian Government, 2016, p. 5). However, it has been observed that while the Norwegian government emphasises the 2030 Agenda as a transformational agenda abroad, domestically it is seen as something to be resolved within the existing system (Lillehagen et al., 2022). As this thesis argues, this is the case both at national and local levels of government. This thesis argues that through its emphasis on voluntary contributions, partnerships and other soft measures, the Norwegian government's

approach to localisation leans heavily on the mechanisms outlined in the 2030 Agenda itself. As demonstrated in Paper 2, the flexibility of the SDGs means that they can be used to support most policy initiatives. Their ability to influence change therefore largely depends on the willingness and abilities of the translators, be they policy actors at the national or local level. While recognising that localisation based on voluntary efforts can invigorate local action on sustainable development and potentially lead to locally anchored solutions, the findings in this thesis suggest that this voluntarism is not sufficient if the goal is actual policy change. This applies not least when it comes to the ability of smaller municipalities with limited capacities.

As pointed out in this thesis, Norway has difficulties meeting a number of the SDGs. Among the most challenging is the goal of preserving nature (SDG 15). When it comes to nature preservation, local authorities have much power as they decide over the majority of land-use issues. As pointed out in Paper 4, the power balance between local authorities and developers is often in favour of the developers, leading nature to lose out to the promise of local economic gain and job creation. The fact that SDG 15 ("life on land") is of only medium interest when Norwegian municipalities select SDGs, as shown in Paper 2, suggests that this is not a policy framework that will contribute to local change, especially considering a lack of political will at the national level to take measures that challenge local autonomy on land-use issues (see Paper 1). Considering the Norwegian tradition of strong local government, SDG localisation as a national strategy can be seen as a "safe" approach which requires little innovation or political courage.

One problem of localisation is that decision-making on sustainable development is confined to relatively small geographic areas, where, for obvious reasons, policymakers are mostly concerned with serving their own constituencies (Purcell & Brown, 2005). While the delegation of responsibility to the local level is often based on arguments of subsidiarity (Baldersheim & Rose, 2014), some of the most pressing issues concerning sustainable development require a more holistic policy response.

There are some positive signals. The national expectation document for municipal and regional planning for the years 2023–27 is for example structured around the different SDGs (Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development, 2023), and a new White Paper is expected in 2024. However, it remains to be seen if these measures can contribute to a change in course instead of merely painting the current path in new colours.

With 17 goals, 169 targets, 231 indicators, and a regime for reporting on progress, the 2030 Agenda comes equipped with many mechanisms for ensuring progress on the agenda, thereby differentiating it from earlier attempts to localise sustainable development. At the same time, the experiences from localising the 2030 Agenda are surprisingly similar to those from Local Agenda 21 from the 1990s. Back then, as now, local projects and processes were initiated under the umbrella of the UN agenda, with KS playing a key facilitatory role. Both then and now, the national government was satisfied with a limited role, leaving it up to local authorities to act on the agenda. Critics say that this resulted in a fragmented and poorly institutionalised approach to LA21 (Aall et al., 2006). This critique partly holds for the local implementation of the SDGs as well. At the same time, the drive to implement the SDGs through the planning system, points to a possible way that the global agenda can contribute also to substantive policy change. As we argue in Paper 2, localising the SDGs in municipal planning make the goals part of a system where they are operationalised and followed-up in economic plans and binding land-use plans. This offers an opportunity to make the SDGs into more than words on paper.

However, this requires more than making minimum translations with the SDGs becoming just another box to tick. The findings in this thesis show that greenwashing – or SDG washing – is a real risk. This applies to the government labelling progress as being "on track", to municipalities selecting a few SDGs that do not challenge existing practices, and to the import of sustainability standards that paint local efforts green. If Norway wants to make progress on sustainable development, the path forward needs

to be more emphatic than this. Norway's historic role as a high-consumption polluter, together with its advantageous position in the world economy, means it has a responsibility to go beyond these minimum standards. Considering the spillovers referred to above, the Nordic region seems long away from becoming "the most sustainable and integrated region in the world by 2030", as envisioned by actors like the Nordic Council of Ministers (2020, p. 4).

The findings in this thesis can contribute to a better and more targeted approach to the SDGs by bringing new knowledge of relevance to policy actors from the local to the national level. To return to where this thesis started, the offer made to the municipalities in Møre og Romsdal by the county authorities and the travelling UN respresentative would maybe never had a chance to succeed. The tension between global standardisation and local relevance is inherent to the design of global agendas. What we could learn from this is that standardised solutions are more likely to succeed if they are developed inside national contexts and supplemented by both sticks and carrots. In this case, the urban sustainability focus of the circulating policy model was clearly not adjusted to the largely rural municipalities. Given that these more rural municipalities make out large parts of the Norwegian municipal landscape, this should be a lesson for decision-makers at the national level of government to make efforts to develop standards that take into account the realities on the ground.

Overall, a more general lesson is that there is no quick fix to the localisation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Counting on initiatives from below to take care of things is not a silver bullet. At the same time, the national government has not been interested in taking measures that traverse the local line of autonomy. Paradoxically, the soft approach that has characterised the first half of the 2030 Agenda's implementation period (2016–2023), have been efficient in mobilising municipalities to action. As we enter the next half, the approach needs tightening. A lesson from this thesis is that the SDGs could be strategically employed by the government to establish criteria for Norway's performance at all scales, utilizing the momentum the SDGs have

locally. However, this would require the "call to change" outlined in the 2030 Agenda to be taken seriously. Acting on this call would require the political will to take unpleasant but necessary actions. This would make sustainable development less about a finding a "common language" for a future everyone can agree on and more about the messy politics that determine our common future. While imposing stricter requirements on local development makes localising sustainable development less pleasant, times of crisis require more than small steps in all directions.

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Appendices

A1 – Approval from NSD/Sikt

Sikt

Vurdering av behandling av personopplysninger

Referansenummer	Vurderingstype	Dato
887995	Standard	07.10.2020

Tittel

Global bærekraft og lokal planlegging: fra normer til praksis

Behandlingsansvarlig institusjon

Nord Universitet / Fakultet for samfunnsvitenskap / Internasjonale relasjoner, nordområder og miljø

Prosjektansvarlig

Mathias Brynildsen Reinar

Prosjektperiode

01.11.2020 - 31.03.2023

Kategorier personopplysninger

Alminnelige

Særlige

Lovlig grunnlag

Samtykke (Personvernforordningen art. 6 nr. 1 bokstav a)

Uttrykkelig samtykke (Personvernforordningen art. 9 nr. 2 bokstav a)

Behandlingen av personopplysningene er lovlig så fremt den gjennomføres som oppgitt i meldeskjemaet. Det lovlige grunnlaget gjelder til 31.03.2023.

Meldeskjema

Kommentar

Det er vår vurdering at behandlingen av personopplysninger i prosjektet vil være i samsvar med personvernlovgivningen så fremt den gjennomføres i tråd med det som er dokumentert i meldeskjemaet den 07.10.2020 med vedlegg, samt i meldingsdialogen mellom innmelder og NSD. Behandlingen kan starte.

MELD VESENTLIGE ENDRINGER
Dersom det skjer vesentlige endringer i behandlingen av personopplysninger, kan det være nødvendig å melde dette til NSD ved å oppdatere meldeskjemaet. Før du melder inn en endring, oppfordrer vi deg til å lese om hvilke type endringer det er nødvendig å melde:
https://nsd.no/personvernombud/meld_prosjekt/meld_endringer.html
Du må vente på svar fra NSD før endringen gjennomføres.

TYPE OPPLYSNINGER OG VARIGHET
Prosjektet vil behandle særlige kategorier av personopplysninger om politisk oppfatning og alminnelige kategorier av personopplysninger frem til 31.03.2023.

LOVLIG GRUNNLAG
Prosjektet vil innhente samtykke fra de registrerte til behandlingen av personopplysninger. Vår vurdering er at prosjektet legger opp til et samtykke i samsvar med kravene i art. 4 nr. 11 og art. 7, ved at det er en frivillig, spesifikk, informert og utvetydig bekreftelse, som kan dokumenteres, og som den registrerte kan trekke tilbake.

Lovlig grunnlag for behandlingen vil dermed være den registrertes uttrykkelige samtykke, jf. personvernforordningen art. 6 nr. 1 bokstav a, jf. art. 9 nr. 2 bokstav a, jf. personopplysningsloven § 10, jf. § 9 (2).

PERSONVERNPRINSIPPER
NSD vurderer at den planlagte behandlingen av personopplysninger vil følge prinsippene i personvernforordningen om:

- lovlighet, rettferdighet og åpenhet (art. 5.1 a), ved at de registrerte får tilfredsstillende informasjon om og samtykker til behandlingen

- formålsbegrensning (art. 5.1 b), ved at personopplysninger samles inn for spesifikke, uttrykkelig angitte og berettigede formål, og ikke viderebehandles til nye uforenlige formål

- dataminimering (art. 5.1 c), ved at det kun behandles opplysninger som er adekvate, relevante og nødvendige for formålet med prosjektet

- lagringsbegrensning (art. 5.1 e), ved at personopplysningene ikke lagres lengre enn nødvendig for å oppfylle formålet

DE REGISTRERTES RETTIGHETER

Så lenge de registrerte kan identifiseres i datamaterialet vil de ha følgende rettigheter: åpenhet (art. 12), informasjon (art. 13), innsyn (art. 15), retting (art. 16), sletting (art. 17), begrensning (art. 18), underretning (art. 19), dataportabilitet (art. 20).

NSD vurderer at informasjonen som de registrerte vil motta oppfyller lovens krav til form og innhold, jf. art. 12.1 og art. 13.

Vi minner om at hvis en registrert tar kontakt om sine rettigheter, har behandlingsansvarlig institusjon plikt til å svare innen en måned.

FØLG DIN INSTITUSJONS RETNINGSLINJER

NSD legger til grunn at behandlingen oppfyller kravene i personvernforordningen om riktighet (art. 5.1 d), integritet og konfidensialitet (art. 5.1. f) og sikkerhet (art. 32).

Microsoft OneDrive er databehandler i prosjektet. NSD legger til grunn at behandlingen oppfyller kravene til bruk av databehandler, jf. art 28 og 29.

For å forsikre dere om at kravene oppfylles, må dere følge interne retningslinjer og eventuelt rådføre dere med behandlingsansvarlig institusjon.

OPPFØLGING AV PROSJEKTET

NSD vil følge opp ved planlagt avslutning for å avklare om behandlingen av personopplysningene er avsluttet.

Lykke til med prosjektet!

Kontaktperson hos NSD: Simon Gogl
Tlf. Personverntjenester: 55 58 21 17 (tast 1)

Vurdering av behandling av personopplysninger

Referansenummer	Vurderingstype	Dato
887995	Standard	11.04.2023

Tittel

Global bærekraft og lokal planlegging: fra normer til praksis

Behandlingsansvarlig institusjon

Nord Universitet / Fakultet for samfunnsvitenskap / Internasjonale relasjoner, nordområder og miljø

Prosjektansvarlig

Mathias Brynildsen Reinar

Prosjektperiode

01.11.2020 - 31.12.2023

Kategorier personopplysninger

Alminnelige
Særlige

Lovlig grunnlag

Samtykke (Personvernforordningen art. 6 nr. 1 bokstav a)
Uttrykkelig samtykke (Personvernforordningen art. 9 nr. 2 bokstav a)

Behandlingen av personopplysningene er lovlig så fremt den gjennomføres som oppgitt i meldeskjemaet. Det lovlige grunnlaget gjelder til 31.12.2023.

Meldeskjema

Kommentar

Personverntjenester har vurdert endringen i prosjektsluttdato.

Vi har nå registrert 31.12.2023 som ny sluttdato for behandling av personopplysninger.

Vi vil følge opp ved ny planlagt avslutning for å avklare om behandlingen av personopplysningene er avsluttet.

Kontaktperson: Sturla Herfindal

Lykke til videre med prosjektet!

Sikt

Vurdering av behandling av personopplysninger

Referansenummer	**Vurderingstype**	**Dato**
887995	Standard	05.01.2024

Tittel

Global bærekraft og lokal planlegging: fra normer til praksis

Behandlingsansvarlig institusjon

Nord Universitet / Fakultet for samfunnsvitenskap / Internasjonale relasjoner, nordområder og miljø

Prosjektansvarlig

Mathias Brynildsen Reinar

Prosjektperiode

01.11.2020 - 30.06.2024

Kategorier personopplysninger

Alminnelige
Særlige

Lovlig grunnlag

Samtykke (Personvernforordningen art. 6 nr. 1 bokstav a)

Uttrykkelig samtykke (Personvernforordningen art. 9 nr. 2 bokstav a)

Behandlingen av personopplysningene er lovlig så fremt den gjennomføres som oppgitt i meldeskjemaet. Det lovlige grunnlaget gjelder til 30.06.2024.

Meldeskjema

Kommentar

Personverntjenester har vurdert endringen i prosjektsluttdato.

Vi har nå registrert 30.06.2024 som ny sluttdato for behandling av personopplysninger. Hvis det blir nødvendig å behandle personopplysninger enda lengre, så kan det være nødvendig å informere prosjektdeltakerne.

Vi vil følge opp ved ny planlagt avslutning for å avklare om behandlingen av personopplysningene er avsluttet.

Kontaktperson: Sturla Herfindal

Lykke til videre med prosjektet!

A2 – Information letter to informants

Vil du delta i et forskningsprosjekt om kommunal/regional planlegging og bærekraft?

Dette er et spørsmål til deg om å delta i et forskningsprosjekt som handler om hvordan bærekraftig utvikling forstås og implementeres i lokal og regional planlegging. I dette skrivet gir vi deg informasjon om målene for prosjektet og hva deltakelse vil innebære for deg.

Formål
Formålet med prosjektet er å skaffe kunnskap om hvordan bærekraftig utvikling forstås og implementeres i lokal og regional planlegging. Mange konsepter og politiske mål knyttet til bærekraftig utvikling, f.eks. FNs bærekraftsmål, krever «oversettelsesarbeid» og lokal tilpasning. Studien tar utgangspunkt i tidligere og pågående planprosesser for å undersøke hvordan ideer som dette forstås og tas i bruk. Studien vil bl.a. belyse hvilke muligheter lokale aktører ser i disse globale målene, samt dilemmaer og spenninger som dukker opp når de skal tas i bruk.

For å få svar på dette, er det nødvendig å snakke med personer som er involvert i ulike planprosesser, som planleggere, politikere og andre samfunnsaktører. Dette vil gjøre både gjennom enkelt- og fokusgruppeintervjuer. I tillegg vil det være aktuelt å gjøre observasjoner under politiske møter, workshoper, høringsmøter o.l.

Undersøkelsen inngår i doktorgradsstudien til Mathias Brynildsen Reinar, som er stipendiat i sosiologi ved Nord universitet.

Hvem er ansvarlig for forskningsprosjektet?
Det er Nord universitet som er ansvarlig for prosjektet.

Hvorfor får du spørsmål om å delta?
For å belyse prosjektets problemstillinger, er det nødvendig å snakke med personer som er involvert i ulike sider ved lokale/regionale planleggingsprosesser. Eksempler på dette er offentlig ansatte planleggere, lokalpolitikere, representanter fra lokal næringsliv og frivillige organisasjoner.

Du får spørsmål om å delta fordi du vil kunne bidra med verdifull informasjon for å bedre forstå hva som skjer i en planleggingsprosess når overordnede ideer skal tas i bruk. Utvelgelsen av personer som er aktuelle å intervjue er gjort gjennom kjennskap i nettverk, tidligere kontakter, nettsøk og «snøballmetoden», der andre personer har pekt meg videre i din retning. Anslagsvis 20 personer vil bli bedt om å delta i et personlig intervju.

Hva innebærer det for deg å delta?

Dersom du velger å delta i intervju, vil rådata fra intervjuene oppbevares hos Nord universitet og vil kun være tilgjengelig for prosjektleder og veileder. Det vil gjøres lydopptak av intervjuet dersom du tillater det. Intervjuet vil vare i ca. 60 minutter.

Data vil bli anonymisert i formidlingen av resultatene fra prosjektet.

Det er frivillig å delta

Det er frivillig å delta i prosjektet. Hvis du velger å delta, kan du når som helst trekke samtykket tilbake uten å oppgi noen grunn. Alle opplysninger om deg vil da bli anonymisert. Det vil ikke ha noen negative konsekvenser for deg hvis du ikke vil delta eller senere velger å trekke deg.

Ditt personvern – hvordan vi oppbevarer og bruker dine opplysninger

Vi vil bare bruke opplysningene om deg til formålene vi har fortalt om i dette skrivet. Vi behandler opplysningene konfidensielt og i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

Nord universitet er ansvarlig for prosjektet og stipendiat Mathias Brynildsen Reinar er prosjektleder. Under prosjektperioden vil opplysninger

Datamaterialet vil oppbevares og behandles hos Nord universitet, vil kun være tilgjengelig for prosjektleder og veileder, og vil lagres på en server hos Nord universitet.

Navnet og kontaktopplysningene dine vil jeg erstatte med en kode som lagres på en egen navneliste adskilt fra øvrige data.

Data vil bli anonymisert i formidlingen av resultatene fra undersøkelsen.

Hva skjer med opplysningene dine når vi avslutter forskningsprosjektet?

Opplysningene vil inngå i en doktorgradsavhandling som etter planen skal være ferdig våren 2023. Lydopptak av intervju vil da bli slettet, og alle data fra prosjektet blir anonymisert.

Dine rettigheter

Så lenge du kan identifiseres i datamaterialet, har du rett til:
- innsyn i hvilke personopplysninger som er registrert om deg, og å få utlevert en kopi av opplysningene,
- å få rettet personopplysninger om deg,
- å få slettet personopplysninger om deg, og
- å sende klage til Datatilsynet om behandlingen av dine personopplysninger.

Hva gir oss rett til å behandle personopplysninger om deg?
Vi behandler opplysninger om deg basert på ditt samtykke.

På oppdrag fra Nord universitet har NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS vurdert at behandlingen av personopplysninger i dette prosjektet er i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

Hvor kan jeg finne ut mer?
Hvis du har spørsmål til studien, eller ønsker å benytte deg av dine rettigheter, ta kontakt med:

- Nord universitet ved stipendiat Mathias Brynildsen Reinar (mathias.b.reinar@nord.no, tlf. +47 452 17 202).
- Personvernombud ved Nord universitet er Toril Irene Kringen som kan kontaktes på personvernombud@nord.no.

Hvis du har spørsmål knyttet til NSD sin vurdering av prosjektet, kan du ta kontakt med:

- NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS på epost personverntjenester@nsd.no eller på telefon: 55 58 21 17.

Med vennlig hilsen

Prosjektansvarlig

Mathias Brynildsen Reinar
Stipendiat i sosiologi
Fakultet for samfunnsvitenskap
Nord universitet

Samtykkeerklæring

Jeg har mottatt og forstått informasjon om prosjektet *Planlegging og* og har fått anledning til å stille spørsmål. Jeg samtykker til:

☐ å delta i intervju

Jeg samtykker til at mine opplysninger behandles frem til prosjektet er avsluttet

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(Signert av prosjektdeltaker, dato)

B1 – Interview guide from MAP project

Ansvarsområder

- Hva er dine ansvarsområder innenfor kommunal planlegging/styring?

Bærekraftsmålene som rammeverk

- Har innføringen av FNs bærekraftsmål som rammeverk innebåret noe kvalitativt/substansielt nytt for planarbeidet i kommunen?
- Inneholder bærekraftsmålene noe nytt sammenlignet med hvordan dere har jobbet med bærekraftig utvikling før? (Nye arbeidsformer, samarbeid på tvers av fag og avdelinger, andre prioriteringer, mv.)
- Har kommunen valgt å prioritere enkelte av hovedmålene/delmålene foran andre?
  - Hvordan har denne prosessen vært?
  - I hvilken grad har dere fått fram synergier og konflikter mellom målene?

Organisering av arbeidet

- Hvem er involvert i arbeidet med FNs bærekraftsmål i kommunen/fylkeskommunen? (Hvordan er arbeidet forankret i organisasjonen?)
- Har innføringen av FNs bærekraftsmål som rammeverk innebåret noen nye arbeidsformer, ny type samarbeid på tvers av avdelinger eller lignende innad i kommunen/fylkeskommunen?

Metoder, verktøy, indikatorer

- Hvilke metoder, modeller og verktøy for implementering av bærekraftsmålene har dere tatt i bruk?
- Har dere – og i så fall hvordan – utviklet egne verktøy og indikatorer tilpasset lokale eller regionale forhold?
- Hvordan forholder dere dere til indikatorene som allerede er utviklet for å måle utviklingen innenfor de 17 målene og 169 delmålene?
- Hvordan måler dere framgang/effekten av bærekraftsmålene?
- På hvilken måte kan indikatorene fungere som et styringsverktøy?
- Opplever du at eksisterende statistikk og indikatorer er relevante for å måle framgang i arbeidet med bærekraftsmålene?

Plandokumenter

- Hvordan har bærekraftsmålene inngått i prosessen med kommunal/fylkeskommunal planstrategi og andre planer?

Kompetanse og kapasitet

- Er det noen type kompetanse som er spesielt nyttig/viktig i implementering?
- Medfører arbeidet med bærekraftsmålene noen kompetanseutfordringer? (sammenlignet med før?)
- Medfører arbeidet med bærekraftsmålene noen kapasitetsutfordringer? (sammenlignet med før?)

Kunnskap

- Hva slags veiledningsmateriell bruker dere i arbeidet med bærekraftsmålene?
- Har dere noen særskilte modeller eller forbilder (nasjonalt eller internasjonalt) til inspirasjon?
- Har dere brukt eksterne fagmiljøer i arbeidet med å implementere bærekraftsmålene (forskningsmiljøer, konsulenter e.l.?)
- Er kommunen/fylkeskommunen med i noe nettverk eller annet samarbeid som har vært nyttig (f.eks. KS-nettverk, FN-sambandet, andre regionale/nasjonale/internasjonale nettverk)?
- Medfører arbeidet med bærekraftsmålene behov for ny type kunnskap i organisasjonen? Og har dere denne?

Politiske prosesser

- Hvordan er arbeidet med å implementere bærekraftsmålene forankret i politiske prosesser og øvrige styringsdokumenter i kommunen/fylkeskommunen?
- Hvordan fungerer samspillet med det politiske nivået? (er politikerne med i prosessene? Er de opptatt av dette?)
- Har bærekraftsmålene bidratt til å endre politikk og prioriteringer i kommunen/fylkeskommunen?
- Hva slags dialog eller samarbeid er det mellom kommunal og fylkeskommunalt nivå i arbeidet med å implementere bærekraftsmålene?

Plansystemet

- Hvordan vurderer du plansystemets egnethet til å implementere FNs bærekraftsmål?
- Ser du det noen hindre i dagens plansystem for å implementere bærekraftsmålene?

Medvirkning

- Hvilke medvirkningsprosesser har vært gjennomført og hvilke aktører (bedrifter, organisasjoner og statlige aktører etc.) har medvirket?

- Har bærekraftsmålene bidratt til å tenke nytt rundt medvirkning?

- I hvilken grad har FNs bærekraftsmål blitt brukt for å skape engasjement blant kommunens befolkning?

Barrierer

- Hva er de største barrierene for bruk av FNs bærekraftsmål som planverktøy i kommunen?
- Er det noen eksempler på at dere har overkommet barrierer? Hvordan?

Hvis aktuelt: ny kommune/fylkeskommune

- Har bærekraftsmålene spilt en rolle i sammenslåingsprosessene og i etableringen av ny kommune/fylkeskommune? Hvilken?
- Er det noen spesielle utfordringer eller muligheter ved sammenslåingsprosessene som bærekraftsmålene kan aktualisere/adressere?

Hvis aktuelt: Smart by

- Brukes bærekraftsmålene inn i Smart by-satsningen? På hvilken måte?

Oppsummert – erfaringer

- Hva slags positive erfaringer har dere med implementeringen av FNs bærekraftsmål?
- Har dere noen negative erfaringer med implementeringen av FNs bærekraftsmål? Hvilke?
- Hvilke forhåpninger har dere til bruken av bærekraftsmålene i framtidig planlegging?

B2 – Interview guide from IND project

<u>Overordnet</u>

Kan du si litt om deg selv og hva du jobber med?

<u>U4SSC-rammeverket</u>

Kan du fortelle om hvordan dere kom i gang med dette KPI-rammeverket og hva det innebærer å gjennomføre en «benchmark»? Hvem, hva, hvor?

Hvordan kom dere i kontakt med de som driver med dette i FN?

Hvem har dere forholdt dere til i prosessen? Hvem har vært involvert fra andre steder (OiER, BDO, andre?)

Hva har fylkeskommunen og kommunen forpliktet seg til i dette samarbeidet?

<u>Dialog med kommunene</u>

Kan du fortelle om hvordan dere fikk med alle kommunen på dette? Hvem, hva, hvor?

Hvilken rolle har fylkeskommunen hatt i å bidra til at kommunene i regionen har tatt i bruk rammeverket? Hvorfor tok dere på dere denne rollen?

Har du inntrykk av at indikatorer for bærekraft er noe kommunen har etterspurt?

Hvordan har dialogen med kommune vært? I forkant? Underveis? I etterkant?

Hvem i kommunen har vært kontaktpunktet for KPI-arbeidet? (plan, økonomi, andre?) Har det vært politisk forankret i kommunen?

Hva slags tilbakemeldinger har kommet fra kommunene (positive og negative)? Eksempler?

Har det at det er «offisielle» FN-indikatorer hatt noe å si?

<u>Prosessen</u>

Kan du fortelle litt om prosessen med å gjennomføre kartleggingen – utfordringer underveis, behov for tilpasninger og slikt?

Har dere måttet gjøre noen justeringer i rammeverket/med indikatorene underveis? Hvilke? Hvorfor?

Har det vært noen utfordringer i å gjøre tilpasninger? *Er det et fleksibelt rammeverk?* Er dette kommunisert oppover i FN-systemet?

I hvilken grad treffer indikatorene den virkeligheten disse småkommunene står i? Treffer de bedre noen type kommuner enn andre?

Er det noen type indikatorer som ikke er relevante? (kultur, andre?) hvorfor?

Er det noen temaer/områder som blir borte?

<u>Resultater</u>

Kan du fortelle litt om hvordan dere tenker å bruke resultatene? Og gjerne noe om hvordan kommunene bruker resultatene, hvis du kjenner til det?

Hvordan bruker fylkeskommunen resultatene? Hva slags ny styringsinformasjon gir de sammenlignet med det dere har tilgang til fra før? *Hvilken nytte gjør de?*

Hvordan har du inntrykk av at kommunene bruker resultatene? *Oppleves de som relevante?*

Er det variasjoner i hvordan kommunene bruker resultatene? Eksempler?

Hvilken nytte har dere av disse sammenligningene?

Veit du hvilken nytte har kommunene har av å sammenligne seg med andre?

På hvilke områder fungerer de ikke?

Måtte det gjøres noen justeringer underveis? Hva er handlingsrommet til å gjøre lokale tilpasninger?

<u>Erfaringer</u>

Hva er de viktigste erfaringene med dette kartleggingsprosjektet?

Hva tenker du er KPI-enes rolle i å implementere bærekraftsmålene?

Hvilken rolle spiller indikatorer i arbeidet med lokalt og regionalt bærekraftsarbeid? Hvor viktig er det?

Hvor viktig er indikatorer i prosessen med å implementere bærekraftsmålene?

Hva er den viktigste funksjonen til KPI-ene? (gir en retning, overvåke, rapportere, sammenligne?)

Er det noen ulemper ved å sette i gang med en slik kartlegging?

På hvilken måte tenker du at KPI-ene kan bidra til å realisere FNs bærekraftsmål*? Er det noen fare for at man ser seg blind på disse resultatene når man skal jobbe med hele 2030-agendaen?*

Treffer KPI-ene bedre noen deler av bærekraftsmålene/bærekraftig utvikling enn andre? Miljø, sosial, økonomi?

Har det noe å si når i prosessen indikatorene kommer inn?

Tror du KPI-ene bidra til å endre politiske prioriteringer? På hvilken måte?

Veit du hvem andre som jobber med KPI-ene nå?

Spiller fylkeskommunen en rolle i å bidra til at det blir tatt i bruk flere steder? Hvordan?

Hvem andre bør jeg snakke med?

Eksempler på kommuner det kan være nyttig å snakke med – gjerne hvis du kjenner til at noen kommuner har ulike erfaringer med bruken av KPI-ene

Noe annet jeg burde ha spurt om / som du har lyst til å si?

C – SDG localisation-workshop announcement

Agenda 2030: Workshops & matchmaking for Nordic municipalities in Stockholm

Agenda 2030 for municipalities: Welcome to Nordic matchmaking in Stockholm!

We welcome Nordic municipalities to Stockholm 13-14 October to make this the decade of action! Whether you are just getting started or already well on the way with SDG implementation – join us for this two-day event of practical workshops, networking, and matchmaking activities. The aim is to take your SDG work to the next level through peer-to-peer learning!

When: Thursday-Friday 13-14 October, 2022 (lunch to lunch)
Where: Stockholm, Nordregio's premises
Whom: Representatives from municipalities and regions working with Agenda 2030
Price: Free of charge. Travel reimbursements are available for participation in matchmaking activities.
Organizers: Nordregio, in collaboration with SKR/ Glokala Sverige, KS, KL, Kuntaliitto and Samband

 PROGRAMME

13 October workshops: No PowerPoint marathons but hands-on workshops – bring your laptops! Based on our summer survey, the topics will include: governance and steering, citizen and other stakeholder engagement, indicators and monitoring, climate policies and the SDGs. There is still room for more ideas so let us know in the registration form. The workshops will be followed by social events in the evening, including dinner and inspirational talks.

14 October matchmaking: On the second day, we will continue with in-depth matchmaking activities; This is a unique opportunity for municipalities to build relationships with other Nordic municipalities and enable mutual learning and collaboration.

Register for the workshops and matchmaking session by the 26th of September via the link below. There is a limited number of places available, so the "first come – first served" principle applies. Nordregio confirms all registrations within a few days.

If you are not able to join us 13-14 October, but interested in the matchmaking activities which will continue in 2023, please fill in the registration form and tick the suitable box. You may still be able to join the process.

REGISTER: https://www.lyyti.in/Agenda_2030_Workshops_matchmaking_for_Nordic_municipalities_in_Stockholm_3991

 Why join the matchmaking?

Each municipality is different and there is no one solution that fits all. These matchmaking activities are meant to adjust solutions to unique local contexts and provide support for participants.

Have you developed a strategy, a specific approach, or tool to work with the SDGs and would like to share this with other municipalities? As a mentor, you can pass on your valuable experiences and help others to speed up their sustainability work and make your expertise known!

Are you looking for guidance and support to develop or start local Agenda 2030 implementation? As an apprentice, you will shorten your learning curve and get answers and tools to help in your daily work.

The matchmaking event on October 14th will kick off a series of facilitated peer-to-peer sessions planned for 2023. The pairs and small groups formed during the event, will continue their learning process through 3 more sessions.

- Matchmaking session 1 (14 October, Stockholm): Framing the challenges and need for support – creating a roadmap with milestones for the joint learning process.
- Matchmaking sessions 2-3 (Winter + Spring 2023, digital): Collaboration continues – learning and adjusting tested tools and approaches, follow-up on the milestones and identifying challenges and progress
- Matchmaking session 4 (Fall 2023, TBD): Follow-up and possibly re-evaluating the milestones. (If the municipalities find it beneficial to meet in-person they may apply for additional travel grants)

The programme will be updated during September.

This is event is part of Nordregio's Localizing Agenda 2030 knowledge exchange activities funded by the Nordic Council of Ministers, in line with the Nordic "Our Vision 2030". The vision aims at making the Nordic region the most integrated and sustainable in the world by 2030. More of our Agenda 2030 work here: https://nordregioprojects.org/agenda2030local/#

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Papers

Paper 2 : Reinar, M. B., & Lundberg, A. K. (2023). Goals à la carte: selective translation of the Sustainable Development Goals in strategic municipal planning in Norway. *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management*, 1-17. https://doi.org/10.1080/09640568.2023.2191816

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Goals à la carte: selective translation of the Sustainable Development Goals in strategic municipal planning in Norway

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The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are promoted as a global action plan for transformational change. Through calls to localise the global agenda, local governments have been made key actors in implementing the agenda. In Norway, the government ascribes municipalities a formal role in the national effort to implement the SDGs. Drawing on the concept of policy translation, we explore localisation processes at the strategic level of planning in Norwegian municipalities. Through analysis of municipal master plans and interviews with planners, we find that municipalities use a selective approach, prioritising goals that largely support existing policies, while more challenging goals become lost in translation. We argue that while the Norwegian planning system provides an institutional framework for implementing and following up on the SDGs, new rounds of translation will be needed to also handle difficult goals, if the SDGs are to create actual and much-needed policy change.

Keywords: Sustainable Development Goals; strategic planning; policy translation; municipalities; Norway

1. Introduction

Sustainable development has been called "a notoriously difficult, slippery and elusive concept to pin down" (Williams and Millington 2004, 99). While "superficially simple," it is also "capable of carrying a wide range of meanings and supporting sometimes divergent interpretations" (Adams 2001, 4). It can legitimate business as usual, while it also holds a "radical potential" for societal transformation (Brown 2016, 125). It has become a ubiquitous political concept, but to avoid that it becomes "everything and nothing" (Connelly 2007, 260), it must be translated into action. The 2030 Agenda, including 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets, is an attempt to make clear what sustainable development should be about in the 21st century (United Nations 2015). The 2030 Agenda was adopted by the United Nations (UN) in 2015 after years of intergovernmental negotiations and dialogue with civil society, business, local governments, interest groups and others (Biermann *et al.* 2022). The SDGs are framed as universal and applicable to all countries, and should be achieved by 2030.

The 2030 Agenda takes as its point of departure that sustainable development must be approached holistically and that the three core dimensions, economic, social and

environmental, are interlinked and indivisible. As such, its 17 SDGs and 169 targets should be addressed as a coherent whole (United Nations 2015). By stressing the integrated nature of the SDGs, Agenda 2030 encourages implementation that is not "siloed" (McGowan *et al.* 2019, 43). In this holistic view, implementation needs to take into account the interactions between different goals instead of focusing on individual goals and targets, as this "would imperil progress across multiple elements of the 2030 Agenda" (Messerli *et al.* 2019, xxi). However, while an integrated and indivisible framework is one of the underlying commitments of the 2030 Agenda (Long 2018), the agenda also acknowledges that countries, according to their own realities, capacities and development levels, may define their own priorities and focus on specific needs at national and sub-national levels to ensure consistent development pathways (Kulonen *et al.* 2019; United Nations 2015).

There is, in other words, a tension between the indivisibility of the SDGs on the one hand and the need to make room for national and local priorities on the other. This tension risks unbalanced attention being given to some goals and targets instead of others (Long 2018). A selective approach, moreover, opens up for cherry-picking, where only the goals that support existing priorities are selected, thus reducing the 2030 Agenda's potential to leverage change (Fukuda-Parr 2016; Forestier and Kim 2020; Stafford-Smith *et al.* 2017, Gneiting and Mhlanga 2021). Through selective mobilisation of the goals, the SDGs might "add another layer of legitimacy to policies that were already identified as key for national development before the ratification of Agenda 2030" (Horn and Grugel 2018, 82).

These studies point to a risk of selectivity at the national level and in the private sector. However, implementation of the SDGs is increasingly happening at the local level, and there is a need to explore these tensions from a local perspective. What has come to be known as "SDG localisation" requires that the global goals "be translated into local contexts in ways that make them appear recognizable, urgent, and meaningful" (Ansell, Sørensen, and Torfing 2022, 42). Selective engagement with the global goals is encouraged as part of this translation, as local governments are advised to make "choices and prioritize those goals and targets that best respond to their specific contexts and needs" (Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments 2016, 25). In a case study from England, Perry *et al.* (2021) observe that local-level actors in principle acknowledged the SDGs as a holistic framework, but that the complexity of the framework, combined with a lack of national support and resources, increased the pressure to prioritise between the goals. There are, however, few studies that explore this selectivity in depth. The purpose of this paper is therefore to critically examine selectivity in municipal localisation processes.

In a literature review focused on subnational implementation, Ordóñez Llanos *et al.* (2022) highlight that while much research is oriented towards how the SDGs *could* be implemented, there is a lack of studies providing examples of implementation in local contexts. While there is a growing body of literature on localisation (Krantz and Gustafsson 2021; Fox and Macleod 2021; Valencia *et al.* 2019; Ansell, Sørensen and Torfing 2022; Egelund 2022), there have been few attempts to critically assess how local governments are localising the SDGs and the consequences these distinct processes have for transformational change. We contribute to addressing this gap through an empirical examination of how the SDGs are localised in Norwegian municipalities, with a focus on what happens when local governments are relating the global goals to different contexts.

Norway presents an interesting case for investigating localisation processes, as the Norwegian government has ascribed a formal role to the country's 356 municipalities

in achieving the 2030 Agenda. According to national planning guidelines, the SDGs should be incorporated into social and land-use planning (Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation 2019). Following this, municipalities have largely been localising the SDGs in strategic planning (Lundberg *et al.* 2020). Our contribution therefore also lies in examining the possibilities and challenges when SDG localisation is framed as an issue for planning. We ask the following research questions: 1) How are the SDGs localised in strategic municipal planning in Norway? 2) What are the benefits and limits of localising the SDGs in strategic planning?

The rest of the paper is structured as follows. In Section 2, we present the analytical approach, centred on policy translation in strategic municipal planning. In Section 3, we describe the methods used. Through document analysis and interviews, we provide both an overview of the output of SDG localisation processes among Norwegian municipalities and an in-depth understanding of localisation processes in four municipalities. In Section 4, we present the results. In Section 5, we discuss localisation through the lens of policy translation, and in Section 6 we conclude by suggesting where more research is needed.

2. Translating the SDGs in strategic municipal planning

While the universality of the 2030 Agenda might risk that the framework is not experienced as relevant at the local level, it might also inspire action, as it forces "the users to interpret the concept/goals according to their ambitions and understanding" (Gustafsson and Ivner 2018, 305). To explore localisation of the SDGs in strategic municipal planning, we draw on the concept of policy translation (Stone 2012). Policy translation emphasises the need for making adjustments to global policy frameworks, keeping in mind that policymaking is "intensely and fundamentally local, grounded and territorial" (McCann and Ward 2011, xiv). Mukhtarov (2014, 6) defines policy translation as "the process of modification of policy ideas and creation of new meanings and designs in the process of cross-jurisdictional travel of policy ideas." Through its emphasis on the creation of new meanings, the translation perspective is an interpretive approach to policy analysis, seeking to explore how actors make arriving policies "meaningful and workable" (Kortelainen and Rytteri 2017, 361).

A policy such as the SDGs brings with it certain pre-defined problem definitions, which act as "discursive frames that focus attention to specific realms of possibility in which solutions might be sought or constructed" (Temenos and McCann 2012, 1393). At the same time, the policy should also "speak to a recognized problem" in environment (Tait and Jensen 2007, 124). The translation process involves creating linkages between these policy frames. It involves "selecting aspects of a concept (and thus rejecting, reframing, or modifying others) or adding new elements" (Gómez and Oinas 2022, 5). Policy translation is, moreover, an ongoing process (Kingfisher 2013), consisting of a "successive chain of translations" (Kortelainen and Rytteri 2017, 368). This means that what is meaningful and workable at one point might not be later, when other actors are drawn into the translation process. In this paper, this means that localisation of the SDGs in strategic municipal planning is seen as only the first translation, and that new rounds of translations are needed in other types of plans, which can involve modifications to the SDGs in new ways.

Healey (2013, 152) notes that translation is a process where ideas are "drawn down, adapted and inserted intro struggles over discourse formation and institutionalisation in

new contexts." This points to the importance of the institutional context where the translation is happening, including the actors involved in the translation. In this paper, we explore localisation in the context of strategic municipal planning. Municipal planning in Norway is regulated by the Planning and Building Act (PBA). The PBA provides municipal planning with an institutional framework that aims to ensure sustainable development and coordination between the interest of different sectors and government levels, as well as predictability, public participation and openness (Planning and Building Act 2008). Through this inclusiveness, planning can add politics to policy, including the mobilisation of counterhegemonic ideas (Temenos and McCann 2012; McCann and Duffin 2023). As such, planning presents an opportunity to politicise what is often referred to as a de-politicised policy framework (Fisher and Fukuda-Parr 2019).

In addition to the PBA, municipal planning is also guided by planning guidelines and steering signals from national and regional authorities. National planning guidelines are revised every fourth year, and in 2019 they emphasised that county and municipal authorities should base their social and land-use planning on the SDGs (Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation 2019). At the local level, this has led municipalities to incorporate the SDGs in their strategic planning (Lundberg *et al.* 2020). Strategic planning can be seen as "a first step to systematically gather 'information about the big picture and using it to establish a long-term direction and then translate that direction into specific goals, objectives, and actions'" (Poister and Streib 2005, cited in Krantz and Gustafsson 2021, 4). Strategic planning concerns overarching and comprehensive political clarifications and visions, and it aims to arrive at a normative consensus about which values should guide future development (Holsen 2017). According to Albrechts (2004, 751), strategic planning is "selective and oriented to issues that really matter." In other words, the aim is not to cover all possible challenges, but to prioritise what is most important for the local community (Ringholm and Hofstad 2018).

At the top of the municipal planning hierarchy in Norway, is the municipal master plan. The municipal master plan contains both a social and a land-use element. In this paper we focus on the social element, a key strategic plan in the Norwegian planning system (Aarsæther and Hofstad 2018). According to the PBA, this plan "shall determine long-term challenges, goals and strategies for the municipal community as a whole and the municipality as an organisation" (Planning and Building Act 2008, § 11–2). The plan should, in principle, form the basis for other municipal plans and strategies, including budgets and legally binding land-use plans. However, while the strategic plan should be a tool for strategic and political steering, in practice, it has been criticised for being too overarching and consensus-oriented, lacking clear priorities and being difficult to translate into concrete policies at later stages (Kleven 2012; Ringholm and Hofstad 2018; Bang-Andersen, Plathe, and Hernes 2019; Plathe, Hernes, and Dahle 2022).

3.   Methods

Since 2019, we have been involved in different research projects with the aim of both understanding and contributing to the localisation processes of the SDGs at the local and regional levels in Norway. In 2020, we conducted a study on behalf of the Ministry for Local Government and Modernisation to document how municipalities were working with the SDGs in their planning and the challenges involved

(Lundberg *et al.* 2020). One finding indicated that municipalities that were quite different in terms of size, location, population and local challenges selected similar SDGs. As the finding was based on survey responses from municipalities early in the implementation stage, we were curious to know whether we would find the same tendency if we looked at adopted plans.

In this paper, we combine methods to provide both an overview and an in-depth understanding through a case study of four municipalities. To gain an overview of goal selection at the strategic level, we went through all municipal master plans adopted from 2019 to 2021 (from now on called strategic plans). We began by searching the websites of all 356 Norwegian municipalities and found that 116 plans had been adopted during this period. Using the SDGs as a keyword, we found 89 plans that included a reference to the SDGs, and a closer examination of these plans revealed that 57 contained a selection of SDGs, suggesting that close to half of the municipalities had made some choices about which SDGs they found most relevant. With the aim of better understanding which goals were selected and why, we chose to include only the 57 plans in our study. Plans that contained all the SDGs, or did not address them, were excluded.

With this overview as a backdrop, we decided to do a case study of four municipalities that had all made selections of SDGs as part of their localisation processes. The four municipalities were part of the original study in 2020, and were included based on the following criteria: different size, population and location (see map in Figure 1), urban and rural municipalities and municipalities with experience from recent municipal merging processes. The municipalities were Asker (96,000 inhabitants), Arendal (45,000 inhabitants), Lunner (9,000 inhabitants) and Narvik (22,000 inhabitants). They had all worked on relating the SDGs to local planning for some years, and two had been identified as "first movers" of SDG implementation in a Nordic context (Sánchez Gassen, Penje, and Slätmo 2018). Through interviews with planners and analyses of official planning documents, we explored the selective approach in more depth.

The documents we analysed included the planning programme for the social element of the municipal master plan (draft and adopted plan), the social element of the municipal master plan (draft and adopted plan), supplements to the plans with details on the methods and processes of goal selection, as well as 239 written statements to these plans received during public consultations. In addition, we analysed previously adopted master plans in the four municipalities. In total, this amounted to 260 documents. We used sustainable development, sustainability, UN and SDGs as keywords and focused the analysis on how the SDGs were related to the local context, the arguments for selecting certain goals and targets, the description of the localisation process and the participants. In the documents from the consultation phase, we examined what kind of public debate the SDGs created.

We interviewed eight municipal officials in the four case municipalities, including planners and municipal managers. The interviews were conducted in Spring 2020 and again in Spring 2022. While the first round of interviews was part of the study from 2020, the new round of interviews allowed us to ask how the strategic plans had been followed up and how the interviewees evaluated the use of SDGs as a framework for planning in their municipalities. In the interviews, we explored how the SDGs were perceived and how the municipalities had worked to relate them to a local planning context, including how and why they had selected particular goals. We also focused

Figure 1.   Map of Norway marking the case municipalities in this study. Source: Google Maps.

on their experiences of these processes, what other municipalities could learn from them and how the SDGs were followed up in subsequent planning. The interviews were conducted digitally or by telephone, audio recorded and later transcribed. All quotes from interviews and documents have been translated from Norwegian by the authors.

Ethical approval was granted by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (https://www.nsd.no/en, reference number 887995), and all interviewees provided written consent to take part in the study. To ensure anonymity in line with the ethical approval, each interviewee is referred to with a number (1–8) in the text, without making a link to a specific municipality. This anonymisation does not distort the scholarly meaning.

4.   Findings

4.1.   *Three goals to rule them all: goal selection and limited debate*

Among the 356 Norwegian municipalities, we found that 114 of them had adopted municipal master plans between 2019 and 2021. Of these, 89 referenced the SDGs as
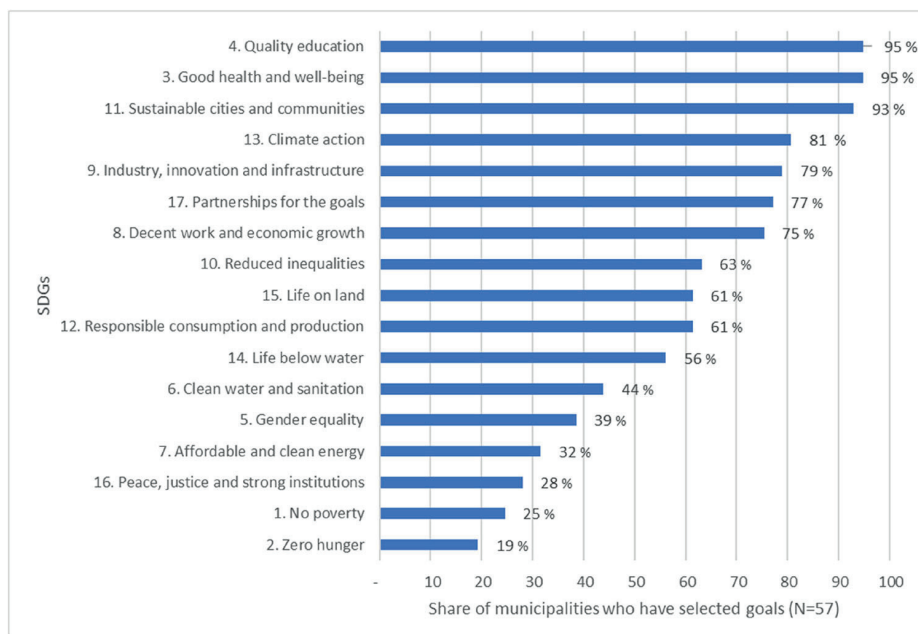
Figure 2. SDG selection in strategic municipal planning in Norway from 2019 to 2021 (*n* = 57).

an important policy framework for the development of the municipality. This indicates that most Norwegian municipalities had picked up the steering signal sent out by the government in national planning guidelines. In 57 plans, the municipalities had selected specific SDGs that would guide local development. The number of goals selected varied between 3 and 16, with an average of 10 goals per municipality.

When it comes to which goals the municipalities selected, our review discerned a pattern. Three goals, related to health (SDG 3), education (SDG 4) and cities and communities (SDG 11), were selected by more than 90 percent of the municipalities. These three goals correspond well with the key policy areas of Norwegian municipalities, as required by law: provision of health services, primary schools and kindergartens, planning and development. Not far behind were goals related to climate action (SDG 13), industry, innovation and infrastructure (SDG 9), partnerships (SDG 17) and decent work and economic growth (SDG 8). These were selected by more than three-quarters of the municipalities. Among the less popular SDGs were goals related to energy (SDG 7), peace and justice (SDG 16), poverty (SDG 1) and hunger (SDG 2). An overview of SDG selection in Norwegian municipalities is presented in Figure 2.

This overview does not say much about why these goals were selected or what kinds of policy problems they address in the local contexts. To gain a better understanding of the types of issues to which the SDGs were linked, we turned to four municipalities. The four case municipalities all selected the four goals at the top of the list in Figure 2 (SDGs 3, 4, 11 and 13). Two municipalities also included goals about peace and justice (SDG 16) and gender equality (SDG 5). None had selected the two goals related to poverty (SDG 1) and hunger (SDG 2) at the bottom of the hierarchy. Document analyses of the plans in the four municipalities showed similarities and

differences in how the SDGs were employed in the municipality plans. Three municipalities had used the SDGs as overarching themes to structure their master plans, while one municipality had developed four overarching focus themes and then sorted the selected SDGs under these themes. All four municipal master plans covered visions, targets and strategies for their selected goals, and one municipality had specified what the goals meant for their citizens.

Two municipalities had chosen to complement the selected SDGs with local goals, while one municipality had included targets from a wider range of SDGs in its plan. When it comes to the local policy issues covered by the selected SDGs, the plans covered similar issues. All the municipalities had, for example, selected SDG 13 (climate action), and in the plans, this goal was linked with issues such as climate adaptation, reducing fossil fuels in transport and ensuring environmental demands in public procurements. SDG 11 (cities and communities) was linked with issues such as densification and reducing transport needs, access to public transport and civil protection. Another goal selected by all the municipalities, SDG 17 (partnerships), was linked to a need for the municipalities to work with the local community, including businesses and civil society. In several places, the SDGs were used to supplement other policies. For example, SDG 11 (cities and communities) was linked to national planning guidelines concerning land use and transport planning. The SDGs were also used to support existing policies in the municipalities. For example, as part of the effort to achieve SDG 13 (climate action), Narvik set out an intention to certify the municipal organisation according to an environmental standard, implementing a decision made by the municipal council a few years earlier.

When we compared the plans with previously adopted municipal master plans in these four municipalities, we found the old and new plans to be similar in terms of overarching strategies and policy issues. Rather than bringing in new issues, then, the newer plans included more processual aspects, such as the need to cooperate across sectors both within and outside the municipal organisation, with a reference to SDG 17 (partnerships). The document analysis, in other words, showed that the SDGs aligned well with established municipal priorities and, to a small extent, seemed to challenge these. The municipalities, when making their plans, made the SDGs fit their planning needs by combining elements from the SDG framework with local priorities, attaching the goals to existing policies. The fact that the SDGs can easily be linked with local issues and priorities might explain their appeal and quick uptake in the municipal sector.

In the public consultation phase, the selection of SDGs did not seem to generate any particular debate. Of the 239 comments the four municipalities received during the planning process, 61 addressed the SDGs in one way or another. Most of these comments welcomed the municipalities' approaches to incorporate the SDGs in their plans. Around 20 comments were more critical about the chosen goals, and some suggested different goals, using the SDGs to support their arguments. Most of the critical comments concerned the omission of environmental SDGs. A few comments concerned the practice of selecting specific goals versus having a broader perspective that included all goals.

While the SDGs did not seem to generate much debate in the consultation phase, using the SDGs in the planning processes in the four municipalities did, however, involve broad participation – although not necessarily with the intent of selecting SDGs.

4.2. Selection criteria: local impact and room for manoeuvre

As shown, the planning documents provided little insight into why the four municipalities had selected particular goals over others. In a methodology booklet published by Asker municipality in 2018, local impact and room for manoeuvre were pointed to as important selection criteria. The 17 SDGs, it was emphasised, "constitute a whole, but a developing municipality needs to prioritise" (Asker Municipality 2018, 10). Goals were therefore chosen where the municipality could have the most impact. This statement was echoed in Narvik's planning proposal:

> The SDGs form a whole, but a developing municipality has to prioritise. Narvik municipality has therefore selected eight SDGs on which the greatest emphasis will be placed. This does not mean that the municipality will not work with the other sustainability goals but that it is these eight priority goals that are particularly emphasised in the municipality's plans. (Narvik Municipality 2021, 14)

As these quotes show, while the municipalities had selected particular goals, they seemed to be aware that ideally all the goals should be implemented. Across the interviews, the planners argued that the selected SDGs were seen as the most important ones and thus that they should have a particular focus in the coming planning period. Moreover, it was also stated that the selected goals represented policy areas where the municipalities could influence development – locally, nationally and globally – and, further, that the selected goals resonated well with existing focus areas and strategies. That the SDGs they had chosen were "obvious" was mentioned in several interviews, and one planner referred to their selection of SDGs as "typical municipal goals": "I think they will appear all over the Norwegian municipal landscape. They are very obvious […] They are the kind of goals where we have a bigger room for manoeuvre" (Interviewee 2, March 2020). One interviewee emphasised that the policy issues associated with the SDGs did not involve a break with earlier priorities, noting that the previous strategic plan "had focus areas, and they covered several of the goals we have selected. [… They] have been here for decades, these challenges. […] So it is in reality just a continuation" (Interviewee 7, March 2022).

The localisation process had resulted in some variation between the four municipalities in terms of the selected SDGs. The planners described different processes with varying degrees of involvement from politicians, the municipal administration, local businesses, stakeholders and local residents. In Asker and Lunner, local politicians were central in selecting goals. In Arendal, the selection was made by a steering group comprising politicians, administrative staff and stakeholders, while in Narvik, the planning administration itself selected the SDGs. Through the interviews, it became clear that Asker municipality's localisation process had been an important inspiration for the other municipalities. Asker had started working with the SDGs in 2016, inspired by the work of local authorities in other countries and influenced by a merger with two neighbouring municipalities, which created a need to reorganise their planning system. Having decided that they would use the SDGs as a framework for the new municipality, a political group with members from the three merging municipalities met several times over the course of a year. During that time, they developed a method for localising the SDGs with the help of a consultancy firm. The method involved assessing which SDGs were most important for the local community and on which goals the municipality could make the most impact. According to a report describing the

localisation process in Asker, the members of the group "managed to put aside their own political positions while working with the SDGs as a framework" (Pure Consulting 2018, 9), suggesting a mostly technocratic framing of the process.

Inspired by Asker, one of the other municipalities used the same consultancy firm to help them prioritise SDGs when starting their localisation process, including the same method for localisation. Although recognising that the consultancies contributed knowledge and facilitation skills, the municipality soon decided to take control of the process: "At some point, we found out that we needed to do it ourselves because we had to get the goals anchored locally. Sometimes it might be a bit too easy to use consultants" (Interviewee 8, March 2020). The two other municipalities had also looked to Asker for inspiration, but in interviews, the planners stated that they did not have the same resources or staff to conduct a similar process, including an analysis of the local impact and importance of the goals.

Among the interviewees, few reflected on what was left out when some SDGs were selected and others were not. One exception was a planner, who noted that if they had repeated the process, they should have selected all the SDGs:

> I think that if we had done it again, we would have included them all […] and not selected some. But the thing with selecting and weighing, perhaps it made the process of getting people to understand the content of the different goals easier. But I think I would choose to include them all. […] There's a reason why there are 17 goals. The goals that are not selected need to be indirectly included somehow. (Interviewee 8, March 2020)

Several interviewees also pointed out that issues related to culture, as well as agriculture and traditional nature conservation, had not been sufficiently covered when using the SDGs as a framework for planning. Two municipalities had recognised this by adding their own targets to supplement the global ones.

4.3.   *From goals to practice: a challenging translation*

Across the interviews, the planners expressed high expectations regarding the SDGs' potential contribution to a more holistic and cross-sectoral approach to societal development and sustainability in planning. At the same time, this enthusiasm was pending the next planning phase. Ringholm and Hofstad (2018) point out that the most difficult part of strategic planning is to translate the visions of a strategic plan into concrete policies without losing the strategic "spirit." Going from vision to policies proved challenging, according to our interviewees. Several interviewees stressed that since the municipal plans were at an overall strategic level, the SDGs had to be backed up by action in financial planning and municipal budgeting, thematic plans and land-use planning. Whereas the social element of the municipal plan only guides development, land-use plans are legally binding and thus depict the municipality's spatial development.

Several interviewees emphasised that future decision-making would show if and to what extent local politicians would feel committed to following up the SDGs when having to prioritise between goals and interests. As was the case when they started working with the SDGs at the strategic level, there was no recipe for how to follow up a plan based on the SDGs:

It is not obvious how to go on to the next step. Because it is fine to do it on the highest level and insert the SDGs and then have some goals and strategies around that. But [it is another thing] going from there to linking this with the municipal organisation. (Interviewee 2, June 2022)

How far the municipalities had come in implementing the strategic plan in the municipal organisation varied. To ensure a "common thread" from the strategic plan to thematic plans, one of the municipalities had dedicated human resources – a "sustainability team" – to follow up the SDGs down the line. Another municipality had structured action plans and budgets around the goals of the strategic plan. The aim was to break down organisational silos and enable the elected officials to allocate resources based on the SDGs. In this way, the strategic plan could hopefully be used as a practical tool. Making this a useful tool would, however, take time, it was acknowledged. According to one interviewee, this way of thinking was anchored at the top level in the municipality, but it would take a while before the rest of the municipal organisation followed:

[First] they adjust their language, so we [the municipal managers] can be happy. And then it takes a few years and they follow the arrangement as planned. So it's a process […] you cannot just introduce it like that. You need to take the system with you, and it takes some years before they understand what we mean. (Interviewee 8, June 2022)

For the small municipalities with fewer resources, it was said to be challenging to make a direct link between the SDGs in the strategic plan and more action-oriented plans. According to one interviewee, "a lot of pieces must come together in order to say that there is a coherent common thread where we can say we have delivered on the goals" (Interviewee 2, June 2022). Using the SDGs even added another level of complexity to the implementation phase, according to the interviewee.

Another challenge with following up the goals in the rest of the municipal planning system was that the politicians did not want to make too firm commitments in the strategic plan. They would rather have "round formulations that everyone can agree on" (Interviewee 8, June 2022). According to one interviewee, the politicians would rather take on political battles in other places, for example, when negotiating budgets. The problem with this approach is that it makes the strategic plan difficult to operationalise. This reflects the consensual character of strategic planning. While this might be politically convenient, from the point of view of the administration, it was more problematic:

If you think about the municipal master plan as a tool for steering, it is […] very easy to make things fit there, because it is so general. So we could have wanted […] that some of the disagreements were handled in that plan. (Interviewee 8, June 2022)

Making the leap from strategic plans to binding land-use plans proved especially difficult. The interviewees talked about efforts from the administrations to put more weight on environmental elements in the planning proposals, sometimes at the expense of more business- and development-friendly measures. However, this was not necessarily met with enthusiasm at the political level. Land-use planning was "realpolitik," as one interviewee put it (Interviewee 5, June 2022). Even though the goals in the strategic plan were agreed upon by all, politicians "have a tendency to forget when it suits them" (Interviewee 2, June 2022). Although everyone agreed at the level of the

strategic plan, "There is something about working with land-use issues. You meet a lot of stakeholders. It is tough being a politician," as one interviewee reflected (Interviewee 5, June 2022). In these cases, the administration could only try to remind the politicians of what they had previously decided.

On a more general theme, when asked whether the introduction of the SDGs in the strategic plan had led to any visible changes in political priorities in the municipalities, the interviewees expressed cautious optimism. However, it was noted that it could be difficult to pinpoint the origin of different measures and policies exactly, including what came from the SDGs, and what would be done, regardless of having these goals as a framework. There was something about the present time and many things pulling in the same direction. As one interviewee expressed, "the SDGs hit us and we are very prepared to think along these lanes" (Interviewee 2, June 2022).

5. Discussion

Returning to our first research question, our findings show that during localisation, goals were associated with local problems and modified to make a better local fit, while those goals that did not resonate with local challenges were omitted from the plans. We identified a pattern to this goal selection among the municipalities, with SDGs related to health, education and cities and communities at the top of the prioritisation list. Goals related to poverty and hunger were scarcely selected. Given that the most frequently selected goals are part of key municipal service areas, our findings indicate path dependency rather than a changing course due to the SDGs (Kortelainen and Rytteri 2017). Meanwhile, Norway has major challenges related to several of the SDGs (Sachs *et al.* 2022). Loss of biodiversity and consumption are areas where Norway is performing poorly (Ministries of Local Government and Modernisation and of Foreign Affairs 2021). The goals related to these issues were, however, only moderately popular. There is, in other words, a gap between some of the "burning issues" and the selection of SDGs in Norwegian municipalities.

In making the SDGs "speak" to local problems (Tait and Jensen 2007), goals were filled with local content and merged with old policies. Rather than introducing new policy issues in municipal policymaking, our study suggest that the SDGs were aligned with existing priorities (Horn and Grugel 2018; Perry *et al.* 2021). This confirms the observation that local policymaking, while connecting with global agendas, first and foremost is a territorial and grounded activity (McCann and Ward 2011). Localisation, however, risks making the SDGs a near-sighted policy, missing the wider spatial and temporal dimensions of the 2030 Agenda. As Biermann *et al.* (2022) observe, so far there is limited evidence of the SDGs making an impact beyond a change of rhetoric. With much attention given to localisation both in guidelines and policy studies (e.g. Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments 2016; Ansell, Sørensen, and Torfing 2022), our findings suggest that localisation is no panacea. The risk is that localisation simply leads to "the relabelling of existing priorities and programmes without changing their substance, targets, or timelines" (Gneiting and Mhlanga 2021, 922).

Our interviewees were all aware of this dilemma, and some warned against the SDGs simply becoming a new way of repackaging existing policies. From a practical point of view, a selective approach to the 2030 Agenda can be understood as a way to limit the scope of a plan and make it more targeted. There are, in other words, good reasons why municipalities make certain selections with limited resources and

capacity. As we have shown, selectivity is associated with assessments of importance, local challenges and potential influence at the local level. Moreover, when trying to create public awareness and local ownership of the SDGs, it is probably easier to reduce the complexity by focusing on local challenges related to only some of the goals rather than the whole menu (Perry *et al.* 2021). A selective approach is also a reasonable approach in light of the critique that strategic municipal plans are often too broad and lack political priorities (Ringholm and Hofstad 2018). The challenge will, however, be to follow up this first round of SDG translations at later stages, with other actors, discussions and interests (Kortelainen and Rytteri 2017).

This brings us to our second research question. We show that when the SDGs become localised in Norwegian strategic municipal planning, they become a part of a system where they should be further operationalised and followed up through formal processes such as reporting, budgeting and binding land-use plans. In principle, then, there is a system for following through from visionary statements at the global level to concrete local action, accompanied by procedural rules in the Planning and Building Act. Strategic municipal planning in Norway is intended to be an important tool for local political steering and development (Plathe, Hernes, and Dahle 2022). Thus, localising the SDGs at the overall planning level should, in theory, make political priorities visible and commit politicians to deliver on concrete action in subsequent plans. Making the SDGs a part of the planning system also contributes to broad anchoring of the goals through participatory processes, something emphasised by all our interviewees. This "convening power" in summoning different stakeholders to discussions around the same issues has been noted as a value of SDG localisation (Fox and Macleod 2021).

As we have shown, incorporating the SDGs in strategic municipal planning also has distinct constraints. New rounds of translations, from overarching ambitions in strategic plans into concrete and binding policies continues to be a challenge. At the same time, this is what will make the SDGs have an actual impact on policy (Ringholm and Hofstad 2018). While our findings point to efforts to ensure a "common thread" from the strategic plan to more operative plans, our material also points in the other direction – that introducing the SDGs as policy objectives complicates implementation of the strategic plan, since the goals remain vague. Although localisation processes have contributed to translating and relating the global goals to different local contexts, the municipalities' selective approach suggests that more challenging translations have been left to later stages of planning.

The SDGs, as we see it, have potential to contribute to local discussions about long-term challenges and consequences of local planning practices in a broader perspective. However, this requires that also the difficult SDGs – typically the environmental goals and targets – are included in the discussion, and not ignored (Stafford-Smith *et al.* 2017). Our findings show that there was limited political and public debate concerning the selection of SDGs. Again, this seems to reflect a more general problem for strategic municipal planning in Norway. If the 2030 Agenda is to be taken seriously as a political project, which is also emphasised in national planning guidelines, then it is a paradox that localisation processes in Norway have generated so little debate to date.

6. Conclusion

In this paper we have explored localisation of the SDGs in strategic municipal planning in a Norwegian context. By focusing on the practice of selecting SDGs, our

findings indicate that SDG localisation has largely supported existing priorities in the municipalities. In Norway and elsewhere, the 2030 Agenda is being referred to as an important policy framework for sustainable development (European Commission 2019; Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation 2019). Through calls to localise the SDGs, implementation of the goals is delegated to lower levels of government, where they become part of plans and strategies. Based on our findings, we will argue that there is little reason to believe that adding the SDGs to strategic municipal planning in itself contributes to a change in course. While localisation puts the fate of the SDGs in the hands of local decision-makers and might contribute to engagement around global issues, there is also reason to warn against the SDGs becoming just another box to tick in a municipal plan, rather than inspiring actual and much-needed policy changes. Nevertheless, we will argue that the planning system could be a useful framework for implementing the SDGs in a Norwegian context. The planning system offers a democratic and knowledge-based system for following up on overarching goals and ensuring action and evaluation of local efforts. It also has the capacity to make conflicting interests visible and engage productively with goal conflicts instead of steering towards consensus. Finally, it gives the public an opportunity to hold politicians accountable for their commitments. However, this requires that the goals that seem too difficult or challenging at first glance, do not become lost in translation.

As our study shows, Norwegian municipal master plans have largely incorporated the SDGs in one way or another. While we have focused on the municipal administration and the viewpoints of planners, future studies should critically examine to what extent commitments about the SDGs in strategic planning are followed up in the following rounds of policy translation. As our study suggests, strategic planning is largely oriented towards consensus, and this is therefore not where political differences and conflicts become visible. Future research could therefore explore how politicians, developers and stakeholders draw on the SDGs to argue, mobilise and justify different positions in controversial planning processes. Exploring how SDGs are used to legitimise conflicting positions at the local level could contribute to greater understanding of how goal conflicts are played out in specific planning processes and to what extent the SDGs can spur alternative policies that move beyond business as usual.

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Paper 4: Reinar, M. B., Groven, K., & Lundberg, A. K. (2022). Mye styr, lite styring? Implementering av FNs bærekraftsmål i samfunns- og arealplanlegging. In *Bærekraft: Fjordantologien 2022* (pp. 298-317). Universitetsforlaget.

https://doi.org/10.18261/9788215062938-2022-1

15. Mye styr, lite styring? Implementering av FNs bærekraftsmål i samfunns- og arealplanlegging

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Sammendrag Regjeringen har vedtatt at FNs bærekraftsmål skal legges til grunn for lokal og regional planlegging. Planleggerne får dermed en sentral rolle i å oversette bærekraftsmålene til en lokal kontekst. På bakgrunn av intervjuer med planleggere i Nordland og Vestland, og analyser av statlige styringsdokumenter, utforsker artikkelen hvilke styringslogikker som kjennetegner implementeringen av bærekraftsmålene.

Abstract The Norwegian Government has adopted the UN's sustainability development goals (SDGs) as a basis for local and regional planning. Planners are therefore given a key role in translating the SDGs into a local context. Based on interviews with planners in Nordland and Vestland counties, and an analysis of policy documents, the article explores which governance logics are driving local implementation.

Nøkkelord FNs bærekraftsmål | bærekraftig utvikling | planlegging | kommuner | styringslogikker

INNLEDNING

I 2015 vedtok FNs generalforsamling Agenda 2030 som en felles global handlingsplan for å ta tak i vår tids største utfordringer. Agendaen inneholder 17 bærekraftsmål og 169 delmål som gir retning for en mer bærekraftig utvikling på både kort og lang sikt (FN, 2015). Rollen til lokale myndigheter i å realisere bærekraftsmålene vektlegges i Agenda 2030. At 2030-agendaen må håndteres lokalt støttes blant annet av anslag som viser at to tredeler av delmålene forutsetter handling fra lokale aktø-

rer (Kanuri et al., 2016). Litteratur om implementering peker på at målene må gjøres lokalt relevante gjennom lokale oversettelser og «lokalisering» (United Cities and Local Governments, 2015; The Global Taskforce, 2016). Lokalisering innebærer å relatere mål og delmål til den spesifikke konteksten og utfordringene man opplever lokalt. Her gis målformuleringene et konkret innhold, de relateres til opplevde utfordringer og de knyttes til virkemidler man har til rådighet for å påvirke samfunnsutviklingen i en mer bærekraftig og rettferdig retning. Det er ingen oppskrift på hvordan dette skal gjøres, og internasjonalt er det stor variasjon i hvordan lokale myndigheter jobber med bærekraftsmålene (Bilsky et al., 2021). Variasjonen handler ikke minst om at bærekraftig utvikling er et begrep som gir stort rom for tolkninger, ideer og løsninger. Denne tolkningsfriheten innebærer samtidig at bærekraftig utvikling er utfordrende å implementere lokalt (Hofstad, 2018).

Det har blitt pekt på at rollen til lokale myndigheter i å løse globale problemer henger sammen med større trender som en fragmentering av nasjonalstaten og økt selvtillit blant lokale beslutningstakere til å ta en global rolle, gjerne i ulike nettverk og sammenslutninger som «hopper over» det nasjonale styringsnivået (Aust & Du Plessis, 2018; Parker, 2003; Peters & Pierre, 2001). Nettopp samarbeid og partnerskap står sentralt i Agenda 2030, noe som blant annet tydeliggjøres i mål nummer 17: «Samarbeid for å nå målene». I agendaen gis det også mye plass til privat sektor for å implementere målene, noe som har fått enkelte til å spørre hvor stor rolle nasjonalstaten kan ha innenfor dette rammeverket (Cooper & French, 2018). Samtidig har flere påpekt nødvendigheten av statlig styring og eierskap for å realisere målene. Blant annet har en ekspertgruppe nedsatt av FNs generalsekretær påpekt at «[g]overnments will need to prioritize policy coherence, overcome sectoral silos and align existing rules and regulations towards achieving the goals that are interlinked across sectors» (Messerli et al., 2019, s. 29). Delmål 17.14 i Agenda 2030 peker også på behovet for «en mer samstemt og helhetlig politikk for bærekraftig utvikling».

I Norge har samfunns- og arealplanlegging blitt identifisert som et viktig virkemiddel for å realisere Agenda 2030, blant annet gjennom forventningsdokumentet *Nasjonale forventninger til regional og kommunal planlegging 2019–2023* (Kommunal- og moderniseringsdepartementet, 2019). Ifølge plan- og bygningsloven skal planlegging fremme helhet blant annet gjennom «[…] samordning og samarbeid om oppgaveløsning mellom sektormyndigheter og mellom statlige, regionale og kommunale organer» (Plan- og bygningsloven, 2008, § 3-1). De nasjonale forventningene er et eksempel på at bærekraftsmålene har blitt tatt inn i den hierarkiske styringen av planleggingen. Som på andre samfunnsområder kjennetegnes imidlertid også offentlig planlegging av statlig tilbaketrekning (Falleth et al., 2011).

Innenfor bærekraftsarbeidet har kommunene derfor mange frihetsgrader i hvordan implementeringen skal foregå, noe som tyder på at implementeringen av bærekraftsmålene er kjennetegnet av ulike styringslogikker.

På bakgrunn av dette er hensikten med artikkelen å utforske hvilke styringslogikker som ligger til grunn for den norske implementeringen av bærekraftsmålene i planlegging etter plan- og bygningsloven. Problemstillingene som driver artikkelen, er derfor: Hvordan kommer samarbeid og spenninger til uttrykk mellom styringsnivåene i arbeidet med bærekraftsmålene? Hvilke styringssignaler etterlyser lokale og regionale planleggere i arbeidet med å oversette bærekraftsmålene i planlegging, og hvordan samsvarer disse etterlysningene med de nasjonale styringssignalene?

Vi begynner med en redegjørelse av styringslogikker før vi beskriver hvordan vi har samlet inn det empiriske materialet og gjennomført analysen. Deretter følger en resultatseksjon delt i tre deler: først en del om forventningene bærekraftsmålene har blitt møtt med nasjonalt og lokalt, så en del om hvordan lokale og regionale planleggere opplever den overordnede styringen på dette feltet, og en siste del som redegjør for de statlige styringssignalene. Vi avslutter med en diskusjon av funnene i lys av styringslogikkperspektivet.

STYRINGSLOGIKKER I OFFENTLIG PLANLEGGING

Offentlig styring skjer ikke bare ved påbud og kontroll, men også i samvirke med private aktører og det sivile samfunnet gjennom ulike former for nettverk, partnerskap og økonomiske mekanismer. Innenfor statsvitenskap og samfunnsgeografi, fagdisiplinen denne artikkelen tar utgangspunkt i, skjedde det på 1990-tallet en dreining fra studier av «government» til studier av «governance» (Kooiman, 2003). Governance har blitt beskrevet som «the totality of interactions, in which government, other public bodies, private sector and civil society participate, aiming at solving societal problems or creating societal opportunities» (Meuleman, 2008). Governance-litteraturen skiller ofte mellom idealtypene hierarkisk governance, nettverks-governance og markeds-governance (for eksempel Davies, 2005). I vår analyse vil vi se nærmere på forholdet mellom de to første uten å gå nærmere inn på markeds-governance (som kort fortalt er styring inspirert av næringslivslogikk, med deregulering og målstyring som viktige kjennetegn).

Med *hierarkisk governance* menes tradisjonell lovstyring uten involvering av andre aktørgrupper. I en ideell verden samsvarer dette med Max Webers visjon fra 1921 om det rasjonelle, regelstyrte og ukorrupte byråkratiet. Ensidig hierarkisk styring preges av svakheter som overbyråkratisering og ekskluderende mekanismer som enveiskommunikasjon og svak involvering av sivilsamfunn og privat sek-

tor, som igjen kan føre til manglende aksept for vedtatt policy hos berørte grupper (Meuleman, 2008). Hierarkisk styring i ren form, som den statlige kommando-planleggingen under gjenreisingen etter annen verdenskrig, ble forlatt alt rundt 1960 (Aarsæther et al., 2018) og eksisterer i praksis parallelt med andre styrings-former. *Nettverks-governance* oppsto som styringsstrategi på 1990-tallet, delvis som en reaksjon på markedstenkningen som fulgte med new public management (Steurer, 2007). Positive kjennetegn ved nettverksorganisering er dialog, plura-lisme, partnerskap og det at interessene til ulike aktørgrupper blir forsøkt ivaretatt. Typiske mangler gjelder uklare ansvarslinjer, ineffektive dialogprosesser og mulig-heter for manipulering (Meuleman, 2008). Det har også blitt reist kritikk om at nettverks-governance kan bidra til at politikkutøving skjer innenfor lukkede eliter som søker status quo, og derfor kan gjøre det vanskeligere å bryte med ikke-bære-kraftige strukturer (Khan, 2013).

Governance-begrepet har gitt opphav til egne litteraturfelt som er relevante i vår sammenheng. Miljøgovernance (environmental governance) ble mye debattert på 2000-tallet (Jordan et al., 2003; Lemos & Agrawal, 2006). Som en videreføring av miljøgovernance har mange studert klimapolitikk i lys av governance-begrepet, på både internasjonalt og nasjonalt nivå, men også innenfor det vi kan kalle lokal klima-governance (Hovik et al., 2015; Lund et al., 2012; Sippel & Jenssen, 2009). Felles for mange av disse arbeidene er likevel at de har et flernivåperspektiv og stu-derer policy for utslippsreduksjon og klimatilpasning som «multi-level gover-nance» (Hanssen et al., 2013; Juhola, 2010). Governance har også funnet veien til litteraturen om implementering av bærekraftsmålene (Glass & Newig, 2019; Mon-kelbaan, 2019; Meuleman & Niestoy, 2015) og det er særlig behovet for koordine-ring på tvers av nivåer, sektorer, aktører og interesser for å muliggjøre en helhetlig tilnærming til Agenda 2030 som vektlegges.

I mye av litteraturen vi har vist til her, er det fokusert på hvordan nettverks-governance kan brukes til å styrke implementering av miljøpolitikk. I den grad for-holdet mellom nettverk og hierarki har blitt sett i sammenheng, har oppmerksom-heten i stor grad vært rettet mot betingelsene for at nettverk, gjennom dialog og partnerskap, skal kunne bøte på manglene ved hierarki (Groven, 2017). Forholdet mellom de to styringsformene har ofte blitt omtalt gjennom et noe negativt ladet bilde av «nettverk i skyggen av hierarki», forstått som at nettverksstyring ikke kla-rer å utfolde seg på grunn av sektorstyring etter hierarkiske koordineringsmeka-nismer (e.g. Hanssen, 2014). Det finnes også eksempler på at hierarkisk styring har blitt trukket fram som en forutsetning for at man skal lykkes med å nå miljømål gjennom nettverksstyring, altså at effektiv nettverks-governance fordrer et statlig ris bak speilet, noe som gir et mer forsonende bilde av hierarkiskyggen (Börzel,

2008; Héritier & Lehmkuhl, 2008; Hey, 2008). Groven (2017) har vist hvordan policyendring for å håndtere sårbarhet for overvannsskader, og innføring av nye prinsipper for lokal overvannshåndtering i Norge, nettopp har hatt størst gjennomslag der nettverks-governance initiert av ikke-offentlige aktører har blitt supplert med offentlig regulering. I tabell 15.1 har vi listet opp noen sentrale karakteristikker ved de to styringslogikkene.

Tabell 15.1 Karakteristikker ved styringslogikkene hierarkisk governance og nettverksgovernance

Governance-dimensjon	Hierarkisk governance	Nettverks- governance
Teoretisk bakgrunn	Positivisme	Sosialkonstruktivisme
Motiv	Risikominimering	Ivaretakelse av identitet
Syn på aktører	Subjekt	Partner
Kontroll gjennom	Autoritet	Tillit
Relasjon	Avhengig	Gjensidig avhengig
Problemtype	Kriser	Komplekse problemer
Instrument	Lov	Konsensus

Tabellen er utarbeidet av forfatterne, etter Meuleman, 2008, s. 45–50, 2014, s. 888–891, vår oversettelse.

METODE

Denne artikkelen presenterer funn fra samarbeidsprosjektet Field of Goals (Fra mål til mening til handling – samproduksjon og implementering av FNs bærekraftsmål i regionalt og lokalt planarbeid) som har mål om å utvikle et rammeverk for implementering av FNs bærekraftsmål i lokal og regional planlegging. I prosjektet, som er finansiert av Norges forskningsråd, samarbeider forskere og planleggere i de to regionene Nordland og Vestland om å utvikle metoder for å bruke bærekraftsmålene aktivt i planlegging. Med utgangspunkt i ønsket om å belyse hvordan ulike styringslogikker kommer til uttrykk i arbeidet med bærekraftsmålene både på nasjonalt, regionalt og lokalt nivå, har vi kombinert to kvalitative metoder: kvalitative intervjuer med planleggere på lokalt og regionalt nivå samt analyser av sentrale styringsdokumenter fra nasjonalt nivå som handler om planlegging og lokalt arbeid med bærekraftsmålene.

Intervjumaterialet består av 9 semistrukturerte intervjuer med til sammen 22 planleggere fra de 7 kommunene og 2 fylkeskommunene som deltar i samarbeidsprosjektet (se tabell 15.2). Dette innebærer at informantene er ansatt i kommuner

og fylkeskommuner som har forpliktet seg til å delta i et samarbeidsprosjekt om implementeringen av bærekraftsmålene. Det varierte imidlertid hvor langt de hadde kommet i disse prosessene. Mens en av kommunene i utvalget var blant de første i landet til å innarbeide bærekraftsmålene i kommuneplanens samfunnsdel, befant andre kommuner seg helt i starten av dette arbeidet. Felles for informantene var likevel at de hadde et aktivt forhold til bærekraftarbeidet.

Med unntak av ett intervju gjennomførte vi gruppeintervju hvor to eller flere planleggere deltok. Utvalget var sammensatt slik at erfaringer fra både areal- og samfunnsplanlegging var inkludert, det samme var ulik alder, fagbakgrunn og kjønn. I enkelte av intervjuene deltok også enhetsledere. Fordi vi intervjuet flere planleggere fra de ulike kommunene og fylkeskommunene, har vi fått et godt bilde av status for arbeidet med bærekraftsmålene og utfordringsbildet. Det har vært en styrke at planleggerne har kunnet diskutere seg imellom i intervjuet og gitt uttrykk for ulike synspunkter for arbeidet med bærekraftsmålene. En utfordring ved gruppeintervjuene er imidlertid at maktrelasjoner i arbeidsmiljøet – for eksempel mellom unge og eldre planleggere eller mellom planleggere og enhetsledere – kan ha påvirket intervjusituasjonen. Dette prøvde vi å ta høyde for ved å inkludere alle i samtalen og stille oppfølgingsspørsmål.

Intervjuene ble hovedsakelig gjennomført fra desember 2020 til mai 2021. Ett av de ni intervjuene ble gjennomført fysisk, resten digitalt på grunn av koronapandemien. Det ble gjort elektroniske opptak av intervjuene som så ble transkribert og analysert. Intervjuene ble analysert for å identifisere felles temaer på tvers av informantene, knyttet opp mot artikkelens analytiske perspektiver.

Tabell 15.2 Oversikt over informantene

Kommune/fylkeskommune	Befolkning (2021)	Antall informanter
Bodø kommune	52 560	2
Bømlo kommune	11 953	2
Gloppen kommune	5 885	3
Narvik kommune	21 661	1
Nordland fylkeskommune	–	2
Sortland kommune	10 514	2
Sunnfjord kommune	22 020	3
Vestland fylkeskommune	–	2
Vestvågøy kommune	11 521	5
Antall informanter		22

I tillegg til intervjuer har vi analysert nasjonale styringsdokumenter knyttet til bærekraftsmålene og planlegging i tidsrommet fra Agenda 2030 ble vedtatt i 2015, og fram til juni 2021 da den nasjonale handlingsplanen ble lagt fram. Vi definerer nasjonale styringsdokumenter som dokumenter som legger føringer på kommunenes planlegging, inkludert planveiledning. Dette dreier seg om de nasjonale forventningene til regional og kommunal planlegging fra 2019, den nasjonale handlingsplanen for oppfølging av bærekraftsmålene fra 2021 samt tolv planveiledere regjeringen har utgitt i perioden fra 2019 til sommeren 2021 (Kommunal- og moderniseringsdepartementet, 2021b). Disse dokumentene bidrar til å belyse hvordan regjeringen ved Kommunal- og moderniseringsdepartementet har styrt dette området siden 2019. I forbindelse med utarbeidelsen av den nasjonale handlingsplanen inviterte Kommunal- og moderniseringsdepartementet kommuner og fylkeskommuner til å komme med innspill, og vi har også gått gjennom disse for å undersøke hva slags type styringssignaler som eventuelt ble etterspurt. I innspillene ble felles temaer identifisert, og vi har dratt fram og diskutert temaer som gikk igjen på tvers av kommunene og fylkeskommune. I tillegg har vi gått gjennom regjeringens nettside om planlegging (www.planlegging.no) og analysert hva slags styringssignaler som kommer til uttrykk der. I analysen av dokumentene som handler om bærekraftsmålene, har vi brukt søkeord som «planlegging», «kommune(r)» og «fylkeskommune(r)», og i dokumenter som handler om planlegging, har vi søkt etter referanser til bærekraftsmålene og Agenda 2030.

RESULTAT

I denne delen presenterer vi det empiriske materialet. En viktig innramming dreier seg om forventningene bærekraftsmålene er møtt med i Norge, og vi begynner derfor der. Deretter følger en del om hvordan lokale og regionale planleggere opplever den overordnede styringen på dette feltet. Den siste delen dreier seg om hva de statlige styringssignalene på dette området inneholder.

Store forventninger til bærekraftsmålene

«The momentum is there. It is up to us to act», skrev Erna Solberg i en kommentar i *Harvard International Review* i 2015 om overgangen fra tusenårsmålene til bærekraftsmålene (Solberg, 2015, s. 61). Den norske statsministeren ble like etter dette med i pådrivergruppa for bærekraftsmålene. Med andre ord har bærekraftsmålene og Agenda 2030 hatt en sentral plass i toppen av norsk politikk helt fra starten av.

Regjeringen understreket også tidlig at Agenda 2030 innebærer transformative samfunnsendringer (Finansdepartementet & Utenriksdepartementet, 2017, 2018, 2019). At arbeidet med bærekraftsmålene innebærer noe virkelig nytt har vært et gjennomgangstema, og i den nasjonale handlingsplanen fra 2021 understreker regjeringen at bærekraftsmålene «representerer en ny og helhetlig tilnærming til utvikling» (Meld. St. 40 (2020–2021), s. 6).

Også blant planleggerne vi intervjuet, ble det uttrykt store forventninger til hva FNs bærekraftsmål kunne bidra til når det gjaldt bærekraftig samfunnsendring. Tre av de sju kommunene vi har intervjuet, begynte å arbeide med bærekraftsmålene før disse ble vektlagt i de nasjonale forventningene i 2019. En av disse kommunene hadde vært gjennom en kommunesammenslåing, og i denne prosessen hadde den brukt bærekraftsmålene aktivt for å forsøke å skape en ny identitet og som et viktig premiss for det nye plansystemet i kommunen. I de to andre kommunene hadde bærekraftsmålene i mindre grad blitt knyttet til spesifikke planer forut for 2019. Imidlertid deler alle de sju kommunene som deltar i prosjektet, ambisjonen om å jobbe aktivt med bærekraftsmålene i planlegging, selv om de befinner seg på ulike stadier i dette arbeidet.

Materialet vårt avdekker at planleggerne har store *forhåpninger* til at Agenda 2030 skal bety et taktskifte i arbeidet for bærekraftig utvikling, og at mandatet som regionale og lokale myndigheter har fått til å legge bærekraftsmålene til grunn for samfunns- og arealplanleggingen, skal bli et viktig bidrag i så måte. Det er et gjennomgående trekk at planleggerne vi har snakket med, er positive til innføring av bærekraftsmålene, og tror at disse kan bli nyttige i den lokale planleggingen. Forhåpningene – og frustrasjonene – som er knyttet til bærekraftsarbeidet, kommer fram i dette utsagnet fra en av de kommunale planleggerne: «Jeg føler at i administrasjonen så er vi veldig opphengt i det. Vi ønsker å lykkes med planlegging som knyttes opp til bærekraftsmålene. Og vi sliter og synes det er utrolig vanskelig.»

Det oppfattes som særlig viktig at bærekraftig utvikling er nedfelt i formålsparagrafen til plan- og bygningsloven. Dette har gjort at natur- og miljøhensyn har fått større tyngde, ble det sagt i en kommune. Mens plan- og bygningsloven i sin natur er spesifikk, bidrar formålsparagrafen til en større diskusjon enn det de andre lovparagrafene inviterer til.

Informantene så det som viktig at bærekraft ble framhevet i alle sammenhenger, slik at det oppsto en felles forståelse for at målene skulle følges. En forhåpning blant mange var at de ville bidra til at man kom seg «ut av siloene», og at hele organisasjonen begynte å jobbe med den samme visjonen og mot de samme målene. Det ble vist til at kompleksiteten som lå i en bærekraftig samfunnsomstilling, krevde at

man samarbeidet på nye områder, og forhåpentligvis kunne bærekraftsmålene bidra til en slik endring. At bærekraftsmålene også kunne bidra til å «løfte blikket» fra detaljene i planlegging, og bidra til å se at den konkrete planen man jobbet med var «en brikke i helheten», ble også sett på som viktig.

Signaler nedenfra: behov for tydelige signaler og nasjonale prioriteringer

Det er staten som har pålagt kommuner og regioner å legge bærekraftsmålene til grunn for sin planlegging. Når lokal og regional planlegging blir utpekt som avgjørende for å nå bærekraftsmålene, står de kommunale og regionale planleggerne fram som nøkkelaktører. I denne delen redegjør vi for hva slags styringsbehov lokale og regionale planleggere etterspør.

Informantintervjuene tematiserte ikke bruk av nettverksstyring. Det er derfor ikke mulig ut fra denne delen av empirien å vurdere i hvilken grad arbeidet med bærekraftsmålene er uttrykk for denne typen styringslogikk. Det finnes riktignok enkeltutsagn som vitner om at planleggerne ser verdien i å dra veksler på nettverk når bærekraftsmålene skal innlemmes i planleggingen, for eksempel ved å hekte bærekraftarbeidet på eksisterende engasjement i lokalsamfunnet: «Vi har noen redskaper i frivilligheten, for eksempel kjennskapen til hverandre i lokalsamfunnet som er en kjempestyrke, og som vi kunne ha brukt mye mer i en sånn sammenheng. Det er et verktøy jeg tenker på» (informant 15).

Spørsmål vi har stilt planleggerne om deres oppfatning av de statlige styringssignalene på bærekraftområdet, gir likevel kunnskap om hvordan de ser at innslag av hierarkisk styring preger plansystemet og arbeidet med bærekraftsmålene. Informantene legger vekt på at planlegging skal være helhetlig, med et langt perspektiv, og at formålsparagrafen i plan- og bygningsloven er en instruks om å planlegge for bærekraftig utvikling. En planlegger trekker også fram formålsparagrafens formulering om at planlegging skal ta hensyn til barns og unges oppvekstsvilkår, og ser på dette som et lovfestet krav om planlegging for sosial bærekraft. De nasjonale forventningene blir satt inn i den samme konteksten som en politisk bestilling til kommunene, med et tydeligere krav om planlegging for bærekraftig utvikling fra 2019. Alt dette kan ses som uttrykk for tradisjonell lovstyring.

Selv om arbeidet med bærekraftsmålene på denne måten er solid forankret i planlovgivningen, er det flere planleggere som peker på en begrensning ved at det ikke er sanksjonsmuligheter overfor kommuner som ikke planlegger i tråd med dette kravet. Spørsmålet «hvor tydelige er de nasjonale føringene på bærekraft?» ble besvart slik av informant 10:

Jeg tenker jo litt at signalene er jo tydelige i det at vi skal gjøre det, men innholdsmessig er det veldig opp til lokalt skjønn å finne innholdet og gjøre det relevant. Og det kan jo være mange gode grunner til at det skal være sånn. Det betyr jo og at vi kanskje sliter med ... og hvor forpliktende og førende er det egentlig når de ikke kommer med pisk. Altså det kommer en del gulrøtter, men ikke noe pisk. (...) Det er ingen sanksjoner overfor en kommune sånn som jeg klarer å se det akkurat nå.

På spørsmål om hvor tydelige de nasjonale føringene er, svarte flere av planleggerne at disse er svært tydelige på overordnet nivå. Mye er likevel overlatt til lokalt skjønn, og det er vanskelig å innfri forventningene fordi det mangler virkemidler. En betraktning gikk ut på at føringene blir mindre tydelige når man beveger seg ned i planhierarkiet. En ting er å skrive inn viljeserklæringer knyttet til de 17 bærekraftsmålene på overordnet nivå i planstrategien eller kommuneplanens samfunnsdel, noe annet er å se hvordan man skal gripe dette an i for eksempel reguleringsplaner. En planlegger ga denne nøkterne beskrivelsen av hvor vanskelig det kan bli å ta i bruk målsettinger om bærekraft i en praksisstyrt plan- og byggesakshverdag (informant 18):

Men altså det å dra med de nasjonale forventningene til planlegging inn i et oppstartsmøte om en reguleringsprosess, da faller du gjennom. Og også når det er snakk om en byggesak eller et eget utbyggingsprosjekt, da liksom hva betyr bærekraftsdimensjonene for hvordan vi nå tenker ny hall og skole, for eksempel? Hvordan skal vi tenke stedsutvikling og bærekraftsdimensjonene sammen? Hva betyr det i praksis? For da er vi ikke bare på «kjatinga», vi snakker ikke bare om dette teoretisk.

Planleggeren satte her fingeren på forskjellen mellom bærekraftig utvikling som et overordnet ideal, og det å faktisk knytte det an til noe konkret – som planlegging i stor grad handler om.

Det er et gjennomgående funn at planleggerne opplever at ulike statlige myndigheter gir styringssignaler som går på tvers av hverandre. Et eksempel på dette er havbrukspolitikk, noe som kommer til syne i et regionalt planforum: «Men da sitter et nasjonalt direktorat og forventer at vi skulle legge til rette for mer vekst i havbruk, mens et annet direktorat sa at 'nå må dere se på bærekraft og kanskje redusere veksten i havbruket'» (informant 17). Vegutbygging er et annet eksempel som blir nevnt, der for eksempel Statens vegvesen stiller krav om at kommunen skal sette av tilstrekkelige områder til arealkrevende kvalitetsveier, mens statlige miljøvernmyndigheter har forventninger om at kommunen sikrer natur- og miljøver-

dier – «så staten er et mangehodet troll, på godt og vondt da, det er de jo», som en informant uttrykte det (informant 12).

Bærekraftsmålene har fått stor oppmerksomhet, og det er knyttet forventninger til at de skal utgjøre en forskjell i planlegging for mer bærekraftig samfunnsutvikling. I lys av dette opplever informantene i denne studien at de har fått lite verktøy eller «oppskrifter» til bruk i dette arbeidet. En planlegger uttrykte seg slik (informant 8):

> Så det finnes vel ikke noen oppskrift som vi har fått utdelt. Vi har bare fått sytten bærekraftsmål med enda flere delmål under. Men hvordan gå fram, det er sikkert mange måter å gjøre det på. Det er opp til vår egen kreativitet eller evne til å få inn et eller annet systematisk i planarbeidet vårt.

Mens noen la vekt på at det var opp til kommunene selv, og pekte på egen kreativitet, var det andre som i større grad så denne friheten som et problem (informant 13): «Jeg føler vi kan veldig lite om hvilke verktøy vi har tilgjengelige. Vi har på en måte nettsider, og vi kan gå inn å lese på bærekraftsmålene, men jeg opplever at vi har ikke noe konkret verktøy for hvordan vi kan ta det i bruk.»

En annen planlegger pekte på noe som ville være som en «ønskedrøm», nemlig at de nasjonale veilederne hadde vært tydelige på om planlegging etter den og den veilederen var i tråd med bærekraftsmålene. I en annen kommune ble det påpekt at det å sette nye krav til utbyggere, for eksempel i en reguleringsplan, aldri ble positivt mottatt. Særlig for en liten kommune ville det bli vanskelig å være først ute med nye krav til bærekraft: «… sånn at hvis man skal få det til, må jo det komme først og fremst fra staten» (informant 20).

En annen planlegger pekte derimot på at de nasjonale føringene ga kommunene et stort handlingsrom, og at kommunene generelt ikke var flinke nok til å gjøre nytte av dette handlingsrommet, på grunn av enten dårlig kapasitet eller manglende bevissthet. Når kommunen ikke planla selv, for eksempel på området strandsoneforvaltning, ble man fanget av nasjonale standarder og retningslinjer.

Å øke *kompetansen* blir av en planlegger holdt fram som et steg i riktig retning. Mens det finnes kompetanse på deltemaer innenfor bærekraftarbeidet, eksisterer det mindre om hvordan man skal sette sammen helheten. Det kommer fram i materialet at plan- og bygningsloven, og det tilhørende regelverket, tilbyr flere verktøy som er viktige i det kommunale bærekraftarbeidet, og generelt sett blir plan- og bygningsloven sett på som et godt egnet rammeverk for å jobbe med bærekraftsmålene. Innenfor arealplanlegging er konsekvensutredning det mest konkrete verktøyet for å jobbe med bærekraftsmålene, og da særlig innenfor temaene natur og miljø og barn og unge.

Signaler ovenfra: viktigheten av lokalt selvstyre og lokale prioriteringer

Det er gjennom de nasjonale forventningene til regional og kommunal planlegging fra 2019 (Kommunal- og moderniseringsdepartementet, 2019) at regjeringen tydeligst har gitt uttrykk for at bærekraftsmålene skal få konsekvenser for planlegging og politikk. Formålet med forventningsdokumentet er nettopp å fremme bærekraftig utvikling. I plan- og bygningsloven presiseres at de nasjonale forventningene skal følges opp i planleggingen, og også legges til grunn for statens deltaking (Plan- og bygningsloven, 2008, § 6-1). Her vil vi se nærmere på hvilke styringslogikker som kommer til uttrykk i dokumentet.

De nasjonale forventningene er i seg selv et eksempel på hierarkisk styring; her blir det gjort rede for hvilke politiske mål som skal legges til grunn for planleggingen, og for hvert kapittel blir instruksen oppsummert i form av konsentrerte forventningspunkter. Også vektleggingen av bærekraftig utvikling er uttrykt i kommandoform, som i det første av de 57 forventningspunktene: «Fylkeskommunene og kommunene legger FNs bærekraftmål til grunn for samfunns- og arealplanleggingen» (Kommunal- og moderniseringsdepartementet, 2019, side 11). Dette skal forstås som en marsjordre. Ut over det at dokumentet på denne måten hviler på en hierarkisk styringslogikk, er det få eksempler på bruk av kommandoord av typen «må» og «skal». En stor del av forventningspunktene følger i stedet malen «fylkeskommunene og kommunene legger til rette for ...» eller «legger vekt på ...» som gir rom for skjønn og tolkning. Selv om samordning gjennom nettverk har blitt en utbredt styringsform, er dette lite synlig i plan- og bygningsloven og annet regelverk (Aarsæther et al., 2018). I de nasjonale forventningene blir imidlertid nettverk framhevet som viktig, eksempelvis ved å vise til samarbeid mellom privat næringsliv, innbyggere, kunnskapsmiljø og ulike organisasjoner.

I juni 2021 ble den nasjonale handlingsplanen *Mål med mening – Norges handlingsplan for å nå bærekraftsmålene innen 2030* (Meld. St. 40 (2020–2021)) lagt fram av regjeringen etter en to år lang prosess. Handlingsplanen har et tredelt mål om å sette de globale målene inn i en norsk kontekst ved å oversette dem til norske forhold, gi retning for bærekraftsarbeidet fram mot 2030 samt angi mulige nasjonale målepunkter for å vurdere måloppnåelse. I tråd med de nasjonale forventningene framheves kommuner og fylkeskommuner som nøkkelaktører, og det understrekes at «alle deler av samfunnet må bidra» (Meld. St. 40 (2020–2021), s. 8).

For hvert av de 17 bærekraftsmålene gis det en kort oversikt over globale utviklingstrekk og norske perspektiver på de tilhørende delmålene, før det foreslås nasjonale målepunkt som et supplement til de globale indikatorene. Vår gjennomgang av handlingsplanen viser at det først og fremst er i mål 11 om bærekraftige

byer og lokalsamfunn at lokal og regional planlegging omtales (selv om behovet for både areal- og samfunnsplanlegging omtales for temaer som folkehelse, vannforvaltning og energi), og videre i mål 17 om samarbeid for å nå målene. Det framgår innledningsvis at «[m]eldingen skal ikke erstatte eksisterende meldinger og strategier eller politikk som skal utvikles på de enkelte departementers områder fremover» (Meld. St. 40 (2020–2021), s. 9), og regjeringen foreslår få forpliktende tiltak på disse målområdene som gjelder kommunene.

Mål 11 oppsummerer eksisterende politikk på planfeltet og framhever behovet for kompetanse og kapasitet i kommunene, digitalisering av planlegging samt behovet for en kunnskapsbasert planlegging (folkehelseprofiler og arealregnskap). I så måte er det få tegn på at bærekraftsmålene innebærer noe nytt overfor kommunene på dette området. Mens det er lite tegn på hierarkisk styring, viser mål 17 at regjeringen har ambisjoner knyttet til nettverksstyring. Det foreslås et samarbeid mellom regjeringen og KS (Kommunesektorens organisasjon) «om å utvikle en felles forståelse av hva bærekraftsmålene innebærer for fylkeskommuner og kommuner, og hvordan målene kan operasjonaliseres på en måte som speiler utfordringene nasjonalt, regionalt og lokalt» (Meld. St. 40 (2020–2021), s. 189).

Gjennomgangen av innspill til handlingsplanen viser at særlig tre forhold dras fram som viktige. For det første må handlingsplanen bidra til *å tilpasse bærekraftsmålene til norske forhold*. Blant annet gjelder dette en klargjøring av hvilke delmål som er relevante å jobbe med på lokalt hold. Flere peker på et ønske om tydelige signaler for norske prioriteringer og ambisjoner. Ifølge Kristiansand kommune må regjeringen «være tydelig på hva som forventes av kommunene og fylkeskommunene, og samtidig bli tydeligere i egen etterlevelse av de prinsippene, føringene og retningslinjene den legger for underliggende nivåer» (Kristiansand kommune, 2020). For det andre er det et behov for noen *felles verktøy* for å hjelpe kommunene med arbeidet. Dette gjelder både veiledninger og tilgang på gode eksempler, men i særlig grad indikatorer og statistikk tilpasset lokale forhold. For det tredje blir det uttrykt et behov for at handlingsplanen har en *helhetlig inngang* til bærekraftsarbeidet, blant annet ved å «skape bedre samarbeid på tvers av styringsnivåer» (Stavanger kommune, 2020). Flere av innspillene er samtidig tydelige på at det lokale handlingsrommet til å gjøre tilpasninger må bevares. I flere innspill bemerkes det at planen i liten grad er forpliktende for regjeringens politikk, og at den derfor må følges opp dersom det er behov for strukturelle endringer. KS ga også innspill til planen, der betydningen av å jobbe sammen i ulike kommunenettverk ble tillagt særlig vekt.

Planveiledere har en sentral plass i statens verktøykasse. Som en informant uttrykte det: «Vi funker gjennom veiledere og retningslinjer fra departementet»

(informant 2). Vi har derfor undersøkt videre på hvilken måte bærekraftsmålene har blitt tatt inn i statlige planveiledere. I perioden 2019–2021 utga Kommunal- og moderniseringsdepartementet tolv veiledere rettet mot kommunal og regional planlegging (Kommunal- og moderniseringsdepartementet, 2021b). Bærekraftsmålene er nevnt i tre av disse. Den veilederen der det tydeligst er gjort en kobling til bærekraftsmålene, dreier seg om universell utforming (Kommunal- og moderniseringsdepartementet, 2021c). Departementet belyser her hvilke deler av bærekraftsmålene, inkludert delmål, som planlegging for universell utforming bidrar til å nå. I veilederen om barn og unge i plan og byggesak (Kommunal- og moderniseringsdepartementet, 2021d) nevnes det kort at ivaretakelse av barn og unges interesser i samfunns- og arealplanleggingen bidrar til å nå intensjonene i Agenda 2030. I veilederen om kommuneplanens arealdel (Kommunal- og moderniseringsdepartementet 2021a) gjentas også budskapet fra de nasjonale forventningene.

Til sist har vi undersøkt hvordan departementet kommuniserer forventninger og styringssignaler på sin nettside om planlegging (Kommunal- og moderniseringsdepartementet, 2021b). Her beskrives hvorfor bærekraftsmålene er et viktig tema for planleggingen, med generelle anbefalinger om at målene bør innarbeides i samfunns- og arealplanleggingen. Videre peker departementet på at alle de 17 målene og 169 delmålene henger sammen og må ses i sammenheng, til tross for at det kan «være fristende å velge ut noen få enkeltmål for å spisse innsatsen» (Kommunal- og moderniseringsdepartementet, 2021b). Det påpekes også at bærekraftsmålene bør innarbeides som del av det ordinære planarbeidet, og at kommunen bør stille «krav om bærekraftige løsninger også når det kommer til private reguleringsforslag» (Kommunal- og moderniseringsdepartementet, 2021b). Statens vektlegging av kommunens ansvar danner her en tydelig kontrast til sitatet over fra en av planleggerne om at det for en liten kommune er vanskelig å være først ute med å stille nye krav til bærekraft i private reguleringsplaner. Når det gjelder statlig involvering, peker departementet på at statsforvalteren i regionale og kommunale planprosesser bør «bidra i drøftingene av hvordan bærekraftsmålene skal følges opp på sine ansvarsområder, og til at planene fremmer helhet» (Kommunal- og moderniseringsdepartementet, 2021b). Statsforvalterne har på sin side fått beskjed i tildelingsbrev om å rapportere om hvordan de følger opp bærekraftsmålene i tråd med regjeringens politikk.

AVSLUTTENDE DISKUSJON

Internasjonalt gjøres lokale myndigheter til nøkkelaktører for å implementere bærekraftsmålene, for på den måten å bidra til en mer bærekraftig og rettferdig samfunnsomstilling (Fenton & Gustafsson, 2017; Monkelbaan, 2019; UNDP, UCLG & UNHABITAT, 2017, 2021). Dette begrunnes gjerne med nærhet til befolkningen og kjennskap til muligheter og utfordringer, og dermed evnen til å mobilisere bredt til handling. Funnene våre viser at dette også gjelder i Norge, der kommuner og fylkeskommuner har blitt utpekt som sentrale for å implementere den globale agendaen. En vesentlig forskjell mellom det internasjonale og det nasjonale nivået er imidlertid at mens FN ikke eier mekanismer for å håndheve Agenda 2030, har en stat som Norge mange muligheter til å styre på mer direkte måter. Gjennom nasjonale forventninger til planlegging har staten tydeliggjort at bærekraftsmålene skal bli en del av den kommunale og regionale planleggingen. Dette tydelige styringssignalet er mottatt på nivåene under, og implementering av bærekraftsmålene har med dette blitt en sentral oppgave for lokale og regionale myndigheter.

Våre funn gir imidlertid grunnlag for å modifisere inntrykket av at implementering av bærekraftsmålene følger en hierarkisk styringslogikk. Når man ser forbi formålsparagrafen i plan- og bygningsloven og de nasjonale forventningene, er det lite styring å spore. I stedet for å legge særlige føringer på dette området, har staten i stor grad basert seg på at kommuner og fylkeskommuner, i samarbeid med andre aktører, vil finne gode løsninger for hvordan bærekraftsmålene kan realiseres. Den nasjonale handlingsplanen er et godt eksempel på at staten i liten grad ønsker å ta styring over kommunene på dette området, noe som henger sammen med vektleggingen av det kommunale selvstyret og kommuners autonomi til å planlegge for sin egen utvikling. Innenfor denne styringslogikken framstår nettverk og partnerskap som egnede virkemidler for ønsket samfunnsendring. Ut fra denne tilnærmingen utøves kontroll gjennom tillit heller enn autoritet, og politikkendring drives gjennom i form av konsensus mellom likeverdige partnere heller enn gjennom lov og reguleringer (jamfør tabell 15.1 i teoriseksjonen). Denne styringslogikken viser seg blant annet i materialet vårt gjennom tiltakene i den nasjonale handlingsplanen som dreier seg om at staten i samarbeid med KS vil «utvikle en forståelse av hva bærekraftsmålene innebærer for fylkeskommuner og kommuner» (Meld. St. 40 (2020–2021), s. 182). Denne tilnærmingen til implementering kan forstås på bakgrunn av at bærekraftig utvikling gjerne oppfattes som et «wicked problem», en type problem der ingen autoritativ kilde kan sies å sitte med løsningen (Hofstad, 2013, s. 19). Dette vanskeliggjør også det å stille opp konkrete krav og minstestandarder til hva implementering av bærekraftsmålene faktisk innebærer. Og fordi

nasjonale styringssignaler på området ikke inneholder konkrete krav som kan knyttes til en minstestandard for bærekraftig praksis, gir det heller ikke mening å lete etter sanksjoner for mangelfull etterlevelse.

Så mens kravet til planlegging for bærekraftig utvikling i de nasjonale forventningene har form som en ordre, opplever likevel planleggerne vi intervjuet, styringssignalet som uklart. Her framkommer det spenninger knyttet til styringssignaler. De færreste planleggere vil vel hevde at de får for få eller for svake styringssignaler knyttet til de tradisjonelle planleggingsoppgavene, ettersom de er omgitt av en stor mengde regelverk, forventninger og veiledere som utfyller plan- og bygningsloven. Men når det kommer til råd om hvordan bærekraftsmålene skal implementeres i planpraksis, stiller det seg annerledes. Planleggerne uttrykker et ønske om at staten skal være tydeligere om ambisjonsnivået for Norges arbeid, utfordringsbildet og hva slags prioriteringer som må gjøres. Dette støttes også av andre kartlegginger av kommunenes arbeid med bærekraftsmålene (Lundberg et al., 2020; KS, 2021). Flere av informantene gir uttrykk for frustrasjon over at de ikke får tydeligere signaler og bedre verktøy på dette feltet, all den tid de har blitt pålagt å legge bærekraftsmålene til grunn for lokal og regional planlegging. Det blir hevdet at for mye er overlatt til lokalt skjønn, og at manglende sanksjonsmuligheter kan være en begrensning. Funnene peker imidlertid i flere retninger, da det store handlingsrommet kommunene har, også blir framhevet som noe positivt. Basert på våre funn mener vi derfor at det er viktig å finne fram til styringssignaler som gir tydeligere krav til hva det innebærer å innfri statlige forventninger på bærekraftsområdet, uten at man underminerer kommunalt selvstyre og fjerner mulighetene for et mangfold av tilnærminger i lokal og regional planlegging for bærekraftig utvikling.

Meuleman (2008, 2014) antyder at mens nettverksgovernance i større grad er egnet til å løse «wicked problems», er hierarkisk governance egnet når man står overfor akutte kriser. Som Hey (2008) peker på, har vi etter flere tiår med utvikling av nettverks- og markedsorganisering sett få eksempler på at selvregulerende governance-former har klart å bane vei for ny policy, for eksempel på miljøfeltet, uten at det også har eksistert en reell trussel om bruk av offentlige tvangsmidler. Implementeringen av bærekraftsmålene lener seg tungt på de mekanismene for implementering som uttrykkes i Agenda 2030 gjennom mål 17 om samarbeid og partnerskap for å nå målene. Ut fra funnene våre mener vi at det er problematisk å basere den norske innsatsen for å nå bærekraftsmålene så tungt på styringslogikker hvor mer og bedre samarbeid gjennom nettverk og partnerskap anses som løsningen. Nasjonale minstestandarder for realiseringen av bærekraftsmålene lokalt og regionalt ville gitt en tydelig indikasjon på hva staten *faktisk* forventer av kom-

muner og fylkeskommuner, med muligheter for sanksjoner mot dem som ikke når disse minstekravene. Dette forutsetter selvsagt at regjeringen og nasjonale politikere ikke bare retorisk mener at bærekraftsmålene skal være nådd innen 2030, men at de også er villige til å stille krav til implementeringsarbeidet lokalt og regionalt.

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With the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, the United Nations created a new framework for collective action towards sustainable development. In the years since, there have been numerous calls to "localise" the SDGs. This puts pressure on local governments to find ways to meaningfully engage with the SDGs as part of their planning and policy-making.

This thesis critically examines localisation of the SDGs in Norway and discusses the implications for Norway's progress on the 2030 Agenda. The thesis analyses how localisation has been formulated and justified as a strategy at the national level, as well as the practises that aim to make the SDGs appear relevant in local planning. To do this, the thesis develops a theoretical framework based on concepts from the policy mobilities literature, centring on the tensions that arise when global ideas, expressed in the SDGs, need to be anchored in local contexts. The empirical material comes from interviews with 41 planners and other key policy actors at local, regional and national government levels, as well as from analyses of municipal plans and national policy documents.

The findings are presented in four empirical papers. The findings show, among other things, that while the SDGs are generally appreciated by municipalities as a framework for local planning, local planners demand clearer guidance and clarifications about what implementation should entail. The thesis finds that the national government appeals to notions of local autonomy when justifying localisation as a strategy of implementation, which, in turn, leaves little room for defining national criteria for what progress should look like, given the tradition of strong local autonomy in Norway. One consequence of localisation is as such that the national effort to achieve the 2030 Agenda has little overall direction. In practice, progress on the SDGs becomes largely what municipalities make of it.