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The strategic value of contradictions: exploring the practices of climate planning in Bergen, Norway

Jesse Schrage* , Håvard Haarstad and Knut Hidle

Department of Geography and Centre for Climate and Energy Transformation, University of Bergen, Bergen, Norway

Understanding how cities develop climate plans is crucial to capture their potential to achieve ambitious climate goals. Previous literature has highlighted the role of external pressures or heroic actors in driving local changes. By highlighting the everyday practices of actors in urban climate planning, we reveal new sets of contradictions in climate governance. Drawing from social practice theory, this paper examines how contradictions were managed in the process of developing a new climate plan in Bergen, Norway. Through a variety of empirical sources, we explore the strategic value these offer, and the organisational work accomplished by the navigation of contradictions. We highlight three strategic benefits of negotiating contradictions: the legitimisation, expansion and signalling of climate work. In conclusion, the paper argues that considering practices of climate planning reveals novel forms of agency, namely the potential of mundane organisational processes and the pivotal role of civil servants in this work.

Keywords: Urban Climate Planning; Urban Climate Policy; Contradictions; Institutional Change

1. Introduction

Cities and their leaders have gained broad international recognition for the critical roles they play in climate governance (Madsen and Hansen 2019; van der Heijden, Bulkeley *et al.* 2019). A broad and multifaceted literature on urban climate action has detailed the ambitious goals and actions enacted in cities across the world (van der Heijden, Bulkeley, *et al.* 2019). In much of this literature, the agency displayed by city administration has focused on the role of pioneering cities in developing both well-known and more innovative interventions and urban experiments (Madsen and Hansen 2019; Castán Broto and Bulkeley 2013; Bulkeley and Castán Broto 2013). However, practices, policies, and politics are the context in which urban climate governance initiatives are articulated (Rutherford and Coutard 2014), and an emerging literature has stressed how the capacity for climate action is inextricably linked with broader political, material and social conditions in which cities are embedded (Sethi *et al.* 2020; Creutzig *et al.* 2018; Bouzarovski 2020; Shove and Walker 2010). Crucially, since these efforts are manifestly

sticky and place-bound (Farla *et al*. 2012), there is a need to better grasp how local climate work constitutes a pragmatic effort at shaping transformation processes.

Therefore, this paper turns the attention to urban planners and bureaucrats, and the everyday, sometimes mundane, work they do in achieving climate plans and implementing climate actions in cities (Fuenfschilling 2019; Lawrence, Suddaby, and Leca 2011). Research on the role of public bureaucracies and their professionals in local climate governance is not new and has often been mentioned as a key enabling factor in local climate governance (van der Heijden 2019). Scholars have highlighted the role of various forms of resources (including access to finances or the presence of staff), knowledge, or institutional competencies in driving local efforts (see e.g. Hölscher *et al*. 2019; Isaksson and Hagbert 2020; Kern and Alber 2008). These, however, tend to equate agency with actors' "capacities" to affect organisational change, and the result is that the literature has provided less insights into the broader normative work and institutional dynamics that actors have to navigate in advancing ambitious climate work (Castán Broto and Westman 2020).

When it comes to explicating agency, we argue that most of the work on urban climate governance has focused on either the role of exogenous incentives and constraints, or the role of ambitious climate actors in driving local climate initiatives (Anguelovski and Carmin 2011; Gordon and Johnson 2018). The consequence is that agency is predominantly related to highly visible and exceptional forms of innovation, while there is a need for more insight into the everyday practices that underpin and enact these more visible forms of urban climate action.

To address this, we build on instructive work in organisational theory that can help us to make sense of the everyday practices of planners in climate governance, and how these practices play into broader organisational change processes (Golsorkhi *et al*. 2015; Vaara and Whittington 2012). As such, investigating the role of urban administrations working with climate, away from the prominent displays of climate action and towards the agency of organisational practices, can reveal new insights into fundamental contradictions of urban climate governance and how key actors navigate them (Jarzabkowski 2003).

Empirically, we are interested in how planners face and experience contradictions in their everyday work to develop climate plans and actions. Urban climate planning is arguably ripe with contradictions, as governance actors are forced to grapple with the contradictory policies and ambitions of politicians at various governance levels. Previous studies of contradictions across organisational siloes (Oseland 2019), between counter policies (Miller and Mössner 2020) and between environmental and socio-economic goals (Campbell 1996; March and Ribera-Fumaz 2016; Oseland and Haarstad 2022) have highlighted why contradictions emerge, or how they can be overcome.

Here we are, instead, interested in how they are managed and the strategic value they offer in the everyday work of policy actors. For the purposes of this paper, we understand contradictions as "ruptures and inconsistencies both among and within the established social arrangements" (Seo and Creed, 2002, 2). A key empirical issue, then, is to understand how contradictions are navigated in the everyday organisational practices of planners, and whether and how these contradictions, in fact, can be used to drive new "concrete sociotechnical configurations" (Castán Broto 2015, 473) forward – in other words, what organisational work does the navigation of contradictions accomplish.

The paper analyses the role of contradictions in the everyday practices of making a new climate plan for the city of Bergen, Norway. Using interviews, observation and document analysis, we examine three key "moments" in which contradictions were

negotiated during the making of the city's climate plan. We contribute to the literature on urban climate governance by exploring new sources of organisational change in urban climate governance, and by providing a sense of how contradictions are mediated in the everyday work of policy actors involved in the making of urban climate plans.

The paper is structured as follows. In the next section, we review the literature on climate governance and institutional change, arguing that it fails to capture the more distributed and mundane nature of how organisational change occurs. In Section 3 we outline our analytical framework, which draws on theories of practice-driven change in organisational theory. Section 4 provides methodological considerations and empirical context. Section 5 discusses contradictions in the organisational work of making a climate plan in Bergen, Norway. Finally, the conclusion discusses implications of the practice perspective on the wider urban governance literature.

2. Climate planning and institutional change

Climate planning plays a significant role in shaping the governance of climate change in cities (Deetjen *et al.* 2018). As framework documents, these plans constitute a crucial tool through which the development, communication and implementation of local climate ambition is articulated (Guyadeen, Thistlethwaite, and Henstra 2019; Reckien *et al.* 2018). Examining processes of climate planning can contribute to our understanding of how urban institutions change, as well as their ability to deal with the climate challenge.

Early studies in climate-related institutions stressed how changes arise from triggers in the institutional environment to which cities then respond. Such triggers can be sudden shocks, such as extreme weather patterns or environmental hazards which lead to the institutionalisation of climate-related action locally (Roberts 2008). These can also take the form of changes in the national policy landscape, where novel regulatory approaches or sector-specific policies can be enacted, thus spurring local climate-related developments (Kasa, Leiren, and Khan 2012; Jordan, Wurzel, and Zito 2005). Another stream of research has focused on how the circulation and promotion of information through city networks similarly also constitute a key channel through which to understand the effect of exogenous changes locally (Bansard, Pattberg, and Widerberg 2017). Here, the ideas and information promoted in networks such as ICLEI or C40 have a bearing on the range of mitigation action seen as relevant and desirable (Bansard, Pattberg, and Widerberg 2017; Gordon 2018; Gordon and Johnson 2018; Grandin and Haarstad 2021; Schreurs 2008). Similarly, efforts by non-governmental organisations and local citizen groups have also been shown to affect organisational practices of climate planning: for example by triggering more ambitious regulations (Finn 2014; Mah and Hills 2016) or creating accountability, enforcement and compliance (Aylett 2010). In this vein, scholars have reported on how these external efforts have had both complementing and contrasting effects for existing institutional arrangements (van der Heijden, Bulkeley *et al.* 2019).

Institutional theorists have offered insights into the more general mechanisms that lead to such changes. In this view, institutions constitute a set of codes, rules and meaning that shape expectations and direct action, thus offering an idea of what constitutes appropriate behaviours (Gordon and Johnson 2017). Organisations are actively responding to their context, and novel behaviours, organisational forms or practices

come from adaptation to exogenous pressures that drive new "legitimate" behaviours by aligning practices with emerging norms (Holgate 2007; Sippel and Jenssen 2009).

More recently, urban climate governance literature has focused on the agency displayed by institutional entrepreneurs and policy actors driving local climate agendas (Castán Broto 2017; Hughes, Chu, and Mason 2018). Motivated by the need to understand how innovations are introduced within organisations, researchers have focused on the capacity displayed by cities and urban actors in implementing and developing a local climate agenda (van der Heijden 2019), highlighting the need to develop relevant knowledge, skills and competencies in organisations working with climate issues (Reckien *et al*. 2018). Others have focused on the role of institutional entrepreneurs in explaining effective local climate governance (Anguelovski and Carmin 2011; Pasquini and Shearing 2014; Roberts 2016). Ambitious mayors, senior public officials or program managers may catalyse novel projects, the development of local climate experimentation or build local and international networks, and in the process advocate the further expansion and implementation of mitigation targets and plans (Kalafatis and Lemos 2017; Hughes, Chu, and Mason 2018; Krause 2012). For institutional theorists, these local climate champions act as "challengers" that contest existing institutional set-ups (Micelotta, Lounsbury, and Greenwood 2017).

This focus on institutional entrepreneurs as spearheading local changes has broadened our understanding of how organisational change occurs, notably in highlighting the political and networking skills necessary at the organisational level (Brown, Farrelly, and Loorbach 2013). However, we would suggest that these existing approaches downplay how much of the work of developing and implementing climate plans and actions in cities is likely achieved through everyday, sometimes mundane, bureaucratic procedures and practices by urban planners. Thereby, they fail to account for the organisational work at play in governance processes and the strategic effects that contradictions perform.

3. Practices of planning and their contradictions

In order to understand the everyday work of civil servants in planning practice, and how they navigate contradictions in this work, we build on a social practice perspective on organisational change (Golsorkhi *et al*. 2015; Jarzabkowski 2004). A number of theoretical approaches exist (for an overview, see Seidl and Whittington 2014), but common among those is that they foreground the notion that organisational change and stability is a product of how the complexity of organisational work is handled "in the course of everyday work" (Bjerregaard and Jonasson 2014). This perspective, we argue, provides a complementary perspective to existing urban governance literature.

Theories of social practice understand agency as mobilized through collective and habitual forms of action, and as performed within the limits of the resources at their disposal (Mantere 2013; Schatzki 2006; Tsoukas and Chia 2002). Agency is therefore a product of the interaction between actors, collectives and practical activity, and change occurs when shared understandings of what constitutes legitimate organisational work are altered (Lounsbury and Crumley 2007; Vaara and Whittington 2012). In other words, these changes have less to do with external pressures or ambitious institutional entrepreneurs, and more to do with how changes in everyday tasks or routines are anchored in practice (Voronov and Yorks 2015; Whittington 2006).

This approach foregrounds practitioners that take advantage of various possibilities to strategically orient their work to affect organisational change. Actors are seen as embedded change agents, both competent and deliberate in their efforts to affect the recognition and acceptance of sets of routines (Seidl and Whittington 2014; Zietsma and Lawrence 2010). The literature shows the diversity of strategies deployed to change existing practices: using persuasion to coax others that certain managerial techniques are employed (Lozeau, Langley, and Denis 2002), convincing colleagues of the importance of adopting a novel practice (Bjerregaard and Jonasson 2014), or framing organisational episodes with the aim of complementing existing practices (Hendry and Seidl 2003).

This practice approach allows us to examine the role of contradictions in organisational work. We draw on the definition by Seo and Creed (2002) outlined in the introduction section, in which contradictions are understood as ruptures and inconsistencies in established social arrangements. Contradictions can take many forms: contradictions between ambitious climate goals and the actual work to be done, or contradictions in the ways in which changes need to be accomplished in practice. We hold that contradictions can do constructive organisational work in the sense that they allow organisational actors to consider the diversity of available options, and being aware of these therefore "can sharpen actors' awareness of institutional alternatives" (Smets, Greenwood, and Lounsbury 2015).

Contradictions are key to making a new climate plan. Organisational work is driven forward when contradictory prescriptions on how to carry out a task are faced, and action emerges through the negotiation between competing alternative courses of action (Smets, Greenwood, and Lounsbury 2015; Zietsma and Lawrence 2010). Contradictions therefore have strategic value. Since individuals working within organisations can maintain various, and often contradictory, logics at the same time (see Thornton and Ocasio 1999), the navigation of conflicting prescriptions on how to carry out a task can be used as a resource to drive the work of organisations (Venkataraman *et al.* 2016; Voronov and Yorks 2015).

In Table 1 below we illustrate, in schematic fashion, the contrasts between the different approaches to organisational change discussed above. The bottom line illustrates the approach developed in this paper. For the case study analysis elaborated below, we use this approach as a lens to examine the process of making a climate plan in Bergen, Norway.

4. Methodological approach

We use several different sources of data. First, we studied written documents such as policy documents, white papers, scoping studies and other documents that influenced the development of the municipality's new climate strategy. Most importantly, we focused on the city's current climate strategy published in 2016 ("Grønn strategi"), as well as its more recent iteration. In reading the documents we focused on the presence of certain themes and ideas, on the structure of the reports, and the links between them.

Second, we carried out eleven semi-structured interviews focusing on public officials as well as project managers, planners and case officers from municipal departments working on environmental, climate, and urban planning issues. In addition, we carried out exploratory interviews with individuals who took part in the reference and

Table 1. Understanding organisational change – schematic summary of literature discussion.

	Understanding of institutional change	Understanding of agency	Institutional trigger
Exogenous	Driven by environmental changes in legitimacy-granting criteria	In adapting to institutional incentives and constraints	Misalignment of institutional practices with their context
Institutional Entrepreneur	Driven by forms of cultural and organisational entrepreneurship	Driven by agentic actors	Internal actor-based contestation of institutional set-up (norms, priorities, behaviour)
Practice-driven	Driven by everyday, collective organisational work (*Praxis*)	As an effect of practices, therefore distributed, habitual and embedded in action	Contingent on how contradictions are addressed by organisational actors. Embedded in the ongoing and everyday work of organisational actors.

working groups that provided inputs into the new climate plan. A total of eleven interviewees where thus selected for their involvement in the making of the plan, as well as their knowledge in how the direction for the new climate plan emerged.

Analysis of interview transcripts were triangulated with analysis of policy documents, along with notes from public hearings. This process aimed at identifying themes and organisational processes that lead to the emergence of contradictions. The empirical analysis focused on organisational "moments" when various actors related to contradictions and conflicting roles, tasks and interests, and how those contradictions were negotiated in everyday work to advance the climate plan in the Climate Agency. In reconstructing how contradictions were managed, discussions within the research team and with members of the agency also allowed refinement of the categories and episodes identified below.

5. Managing contradictions in the making of Bergen's climate plan

5.1. *Research context*

As in many other contexts, in Norway, municipalities have significant autonomy for climate-related governance and climate action (Westskog, Hovelsrud, and Sundqvist 2017). Municipalities can set their own climate goals and targets, and choose the types of policy instruments used to reach them (Aall, Groven, and Lindseth 2007). Nevertheless, local climate work in Norway relies on coordination with both regional and national authorities (Hanssen, Mydske, and Dahle 2013). The level of climate ambition varies considerably throughout the country, and has been shown to be affected by municipality size, its respective geographic and economic context or its access to government grants (Kasa, Westskog, and Rose 2018).

Bergen municipality's climate work represents a particularly relevant case to study how organisational contradictions are managed in the making of its new climate plan. While climate work was long since delegated to various municipal entities, the city has, since 2008, gathered all climate-related activities in the "Climate Section", along with other environmental and planning issues. The section was responsible for the first

spur of municipal climate policy documents. Bergen's previous climate plan, it's "Green strategy" was published in September 2016, detailing the overall roadmap for achieving the city's goal of being emission-free by 2030 (Bergen Kommune 2016). With a strong focus on transport, waste, energy and local businesses, the report underscores the city's aim to focus on mitigation work (Bremer *et al*. 2020; Oseland 2019).

The need to bring climate higher up the political agenda led, in September 2020, to the formation of Bergen's Climate Agency. Standing below the city council, but without formal power, it was given responsibility to encourage, co-ordinate and assist action in creating alignment with the city's long-term climate goals. As is the case in other big Norwegian cities (such as Oslo, Trondheim or Stavanger), Bergen's Climate Agency can stimulate climate action both through internal municipal investments, or by mobilising relevant and concerned public and private actors. In March 2021, the city council decided to create an updated version of the city's climate strategy. And while public participation in climate planning work is not required by law in Norway (Westskog, Hovelsrud, and Sundqvist 2017), the new plan was co-developed with inputs from various reference groups with actors from academia, local businesses, civil society groups and municipal actors.

From the outset, Bergen's new climate plan puts itself forward as a highly ambitious document. The former plan focused on delivering a reduction in emissions while also allowing for local (urban) growth and its development into a "green" city. In its new plan, the agency frames its vision as follows: "Bergen is a driving force for a disruptive, radical and fair climate transition, so that everyone in Bergen can live a good life with low greenhouse gas emissions in a changed climate" (Bergen Kommune 2022, 4). This renewed ambition offers a particular opportunity to understand the role of contradictions in the everyday organisational work of climate governance. It is open for exploring how new and old practices are evaluated, the novel routines that are set in place and how organisational challenges were managed in this shift.

In the following we outline three "moments" we identified where contradictions emerged and were negotiated: in the mobilisation of knowledge (Section 5.2), in matching goals with actions (Section 5.3), and in mobilizing actors (Section 5.4).

5.2.   *Contradictions in mobilizing knowledge*

As part of the renewed ambition for the climate plan, the Climate Agency attempted to bring in a broader set of knowledge inputs than the previous plan. In this process, they had to confront challenging questions of what knowledge is relevant to apprehend and intervene for a reduction in emissions. Here we identify the first set of contradictions, in the conflict between openly mobilizing various forms of knowledge and inputs on the one hand, and the need to articulate a coherent set of more narrow approaches, on the other. Working through these contradictions, however, accomplished important work that helped to render climate strategies visible.

Prior to the development of the strategy, the Climate Agency worked on developing a "knowledge basis for the green strategy" (Bergen Klimaetaten 2022) which gathered the variety of knowledge that supported the content of the strategy document. This work allowed the civil servants working on the plan to assess current knowledge and to identify priority areas for the climate strategy. Importantly, this document was developed with the help of external stakeholders invited into a reference group, whose mandate was to provide input to, and feedback on, the document. This group included

members from the regional county level, local environmental, sport and welfare organisations, a local bank, the chamber of commerce and academic actors (see Bergen Kommune 2022, 74).

Coming into this process, the civil servants adopted an open process, where there "were no wrong inputs or knowledge that couldn't be included" (Interview #10). Interviewees explained that the different forms of knowledge provided by these actors were meant to work in a complementary fashion with each other. As one of the members of the private sector that took part in the reference group said, the aim was "to discuss [the plan] and bring to the table what are for us the most important forms of inputs, comments or suggestions" (Interview #8). For the civil servants organising these exchange meetings, it was important that the reference group felt welcome. As related by a senior member of the agency: "we took into account what was important for their part, and we tried to include those things [in the strategy] … we just tried to make everyone just happy" (Interview #1). The assumption was that these actors would bring various knowledge domains to the table, and that they would all piece together into a coherent picture of the city. In practice, however, this resulted in a diversity of voices that made the work of synthesis difficult. As explained by one of the members of the climate agency:

> I don't think there was anything […] that shouldn't figure in the plan. It was more like members of the [reference] group wanted to put their own perspective into the plan. And that was an issue, that everyone had things that they were very concerned about and that should have been in the plan. At some stage we felt that it became just too big. (Interview #2)

The need to bring a breadth of knowledge into the strategy came into conflict with the actual work of articulating a clear and succinct plan. Including other actors, while necessary to broaden the scope of the climate strategy, also proved problematic. As is related in the quote above, the process of including a variety of inputs also made the work of identifying relevant themes and areas of strategic interventions more difficult. In practice, this had an impact on how the final strategy became structured. While earlier drafts included up to 25 different priority areas, in the final version these were streamlined into twelve priority areas, providing policy goals across both social (e.g. advancing a fair climate transition without increasing inequality and through dialogue and collaboration) and environmental dimensions (e.g. ensuring reduced emissions through fossil-free mobility, renewable energy or low-carbon construction) (see Bergen Kommune 2022). In turn, these supported the strategy's four interacting goals, namely emission reduction, building a local circular economy, nature conservation and climate adaptation. At the end, for the sake of identifying and defining the knowledge areas relevant for the agency to engage with, it was necessary to reduce the scope that the strategy document would cover. How then, with a diversity of voices, to select the relevant priority areas? As related by a civil servant, this was not a straightforward process:

> We really had to find ourselves in this strategy, and it was not a straightforward process. The openness meant that the people not shouting loud enough wouldn't get their stuff into the strategy. So while what was included did feel at times coincidental, there were a lot of efforts in guiding the process, but also afterwards in systematising this diversity. (Interviewee #10)

Undeniably, the diversity of inputs required civil servants to build coherence and streamline the various inputs into comprehensible goals. While the process through which the climate strategy was produced aimed at reconciling the diversity of knowledge, in practice this also led to the emergence of dominant themes. Although, in theory, the strategy's four goals were meant to be equally important in achieving the city's overall climate targets, in the work of gathering relevant knowledge, the goal on emission reduction received most focus.

As detailed by a member of the agency: "Even though we sort of agreed on the point that these four goals are equally important, it very often felt like the goal concerning reduced emissions was the main goal, and then the other goals were set up in the background" (Interview #1). The necessity to reduce emissions thus became a dominant frame through which some of the other goals could be perceived as relevant. In other words, important aspects of the strategy had to formulate their contributions in relation to their capacity to reduce emissions. For example, as a civil servant working with the inclusion of biodiversity concerns in the strategy explained:

> Every time we tried to put something about nature in the plan, it was always questioned… And I sort of understand that because the value of nature in itself is not good enough for a climate strategy. So that's why we have focused on carbon capture and carbon storage, and also nature's ability to adapt. So just to be really, really clear about nature's role in the climate crisis. (Interview #2)

Arguably, gathering the various forms of knowledge commensurate to the ambitious goals set by the city required a broad set of voices. But the need to articulate a coherent set of approaches, generated a set of conflicting situations that had to be negotiated and resolved. In turn, there was a contradiction at play between openly mobilizing various forms of knowledge, on the one hand, and the need to articulate a coherent set of more narrow approaches that would be relevant input for the strategy on the other.

At the same time, we also find that working through this contraction accomplished important organisational work. In negotiating conflicting inputs, the civil servants had to fine-tune their arguments and strategic approaches for the plan, and to carefully situate the dominant goal of emission reductions in relation to other goals, such as nature preservation or the technological development of CCS. By highlighting the need for ambitious climate action locally, and by including a diversity of actors in the making of its strategy, the climate agency accomplished the necessary normative groundwork to maintain climate questions relevant. Crucially, maintaining contradictory positions allowed the central goal of carbon emission reductions to be legitimised, and framed the development of the climate strategy itself in a way that reflected a diversity of actors' positions. By doing so, the climate strategy becomes a product not solely of the Climate Agency, but represents a democratic product informed by a diversity of knowledge of the city's actors.

5.3. Contradictions in matching goals with actions

Having identified the strategic areas of importance necessary to achieve the city's ambitious goals, how then to move onto articulating relevant interventions? How can the necessary actions needed in each priority area be identified? A second task in

strategically approaching climate change locally was to position the climate agency in relation to different strategic areas of importance.

In its new strategy, the city's previous goal of becoming "emissions-free" was operationalised into a climate goal of 85 per cent emissions reduction by 2030 (compared to 2009). This more specific goal implies a series of interventions to reduce emissions, notably within the sectors that today account for an important share of the city's emissions: heating, transport and waste management. Given the scale of interventions, it quickly became obvious that the range of measures needed by far exceed the mandate and resources owned by the municipality. "[T]he goals are so much more than what the municipality can do, within its own organization, and within its means. So that means that the strategy is not telling what the municipality shall do, it is telling what has to happen, and that is a completely different thing" (Interview #1). As this city strategist put it, in order to achieve its goals, the work of the climate agency relies on a number of actions and interventions beyond its powers. Here a second contradiction came to matter for the work of civil servants, namely the lack of compatibility between the scale of emission reduction ambitions on the one hand, and the available actions on the other.

In support of the climate plan, the agency ordered a technical note on the development of emission scenarios for the city (Korsbakken *et al.* 2020). The report estimated the effects in emission reductions from different packages of mitigation measures, from a business-as-usual pathway to a radical pathway with the aim of mapping the necessary measures required to achieve the city's emission reduction goal. As explained by one of the consultants working on the report: "that's the big issue here: that municipalities like Bergen don't have either the mandates or the resources to actually achieve a pathway like that" (Interview # 5). As noted by one of the civil servants working on the new strategy, this was a matter of broadening the scope of the strategy document itself:

> Usually when a municipality makes a strategy, it is for the work that the municipality can do, and has a say over. But for this climate strategy, we looked at what has to happen for the city to reach those goals, in 2030 and 2050 … and the goals are so much more than what the municipality can do, within its own organization, and within its means. So that means that the strategy is not telling what a municipality shall do, it is telling what has to happen, and that is a completely different thing. (Interview #1)

If the climate agency and, by implication, the municipality are setting goals that are beyond its reach, how is the strategy meant to specify the necessary actions needed within each of its priority areas, or each sector? This contradiction translated in the work of planners as a necessity to balance, on the one hand, the need to be in control and specific as to what requires change in each sector with, on the other, the need to be broad and ambitious in order to extend the importance of climate within the municipality. Navigating this contradiction was not a matter of addressing one or the other, as if those were opposite to each other. Instead, for the civil servants interviewed, the two are, in fact, complementary, as having an overarching and broad strategy meant that it could more easily accommodate more fine-grained actions within it. As explained by an interviewee, "in this strategy we have made it in a way that, overall, there will be space for new elements to be included, so we try to not include things too specifically, but still remain broad in our ambition" (Interviewee #1). For the

interviewees, this provided some flexibility to extend the scope of measures in the future, thus keeping the possibility of available actions open.

We find, therefore, that this contradiction also did important organizational work. The high ambitions were not paralysing for the work of civil servants. Instead, negotiation was generative in the sense that it allowed the Climate Agency to take a broad strategic approach to the range of available actions. Implicitly, it allowed the inclusion of areas of strategic importance that were also, in themselves, in contradiction to other strategic documents. For example, the value of preserving forests and marshes for the city's climate goals (included in priority area #8 of the climate strategy) was seen to come into conflict with the city's goal to expand its urban infrastructure, present in the city development plan. However, working through this helped the climate agency to expand the range of available actions, but also to identify areas that would require further policy focus.

5.4. *Contradictions in mobilising actors*

The new climate strategy document outlines how the work of reducing climate emissions requires work across municipal silos, situating climate work as deeply interlinked with issues of planning, biodiversity, transport and local adaptation. As such, the making of the strategy required making the work of the climate agency visible to other departments of the municipality and relied on the mobilisation of other actors in making the climate plan. The plan relates specifically to other municipal plans and processes that may have an impact on, or will be impacted by, the city's climate work: the municipality's development plan, its cycling, pedestrian or green area strategies as well as the city's work on blue and green infrastructure. Contradictory goals and targets emerged between the Climate Agency's work on climate change, and the goals of other municipal departments. How can competing objectives between these plans be dealt with? And which entity oversees actions towards these goals?

This contradiction required the Climate Agency to marshal these entities, other municipal organisations, but also businesses and civil society, into the work and goals of the climate agency. In the process of making the plan, the civil servants used different strategies to bring other actors along.

The development of the strategy was as much a matter of articulating and creating the plan, as it was a matter of making that organisational work visible to others within the municipality. Building on shortcomings from the previous climate plan, this planners explains: "it's important for the work that we are doing, and for what we want to achieve, to have one person from every department represented on the city council to join our group […] We tried to get these people to participate, to validate the things that we wrote into the plan, and to support it as well" (Interview #1). Enrolling actors into the work of the climate agency was thus a prime motivator to engage with other actors. The making of the new climate strategy also included a number of public engagement events: discussions with primary schools around Bergen, public presentations of the strategy's main goals, a public hearing and a process of public input (*gjestebud)* which invited citizens to formulate feedback to the document.

Together, these aimed at receiving feedback and ideas on the climate plan. While the intention of these processes was to influence the strategy process both through open events and through dialogue in smaller groups, these notably also allowed the

climate agency to communicate the intention and work that it is aiming to do. Formulating its broad vision as a story, this project manager explains:

> So there's a lot of work to be done and I think that we still have the opportunity to get others on board. […] We really need to create that story, about the plan and strategy, you know. To make everyone understand why it is so important that all these four goals are in it. (Interview #7)

Adding to this, the content and general aesthetics of the plan were also employed to keep the work of the climate agency relevant. Indeed, visually, the new plan offers a departure from traditional policy documents: it is less of an administrative document, with technical details only relevant to experts, than a matter of communicating the ambition and work of the agency. A mixture of designed layout, supportive imagery and sketched images offer an appealing outlook on what the required climate transformation might look like. The images depict green spaces, low-carbon forms of transportation, people gardening or future urban projects.

One of the civil servants interviewed was aware of the power that resided in this aesthetisation. As explained by a senior civil servant: "it's not a policy document, it's a communication document, and we use it as such" (Interview #10). Together, these various elements provide an enticing story meant to depict a positive vision of what a fossil-free Bergen might look like in the future.

Arguably, these elements were used as a means to mobilise a number of people into the work of the climate agency. In our view, these had a purposive role: they aimed at maintaining the relevance of the work of the climate agency. As explained by a civil servant:

> we do not only want to make a plan, but also the structures in the municipality for cooperation internally in the municipality, but also externally. So these forums that we have built up, we want them to continue, in one form or another, after the strategy is finished. This is so that things can evolve, when we will need new measures to reach the goals, so that we can include people as we go along. (Interview #1)

Within the climate agency, the making of the strategy document was depicted as a means, a communication tool to reach out to other actors, and to make the work of the agency known. More than that, the civil servants interviewed all stressed that given the ambition of the city and its 2030 goals, the strategy had to be more than a planning document; it had to depict a positive version of the future for all actors involved.

Related to this is the concern by members of the agency that the creation of these channels also figured as a means to identify and address future conflicts that the plan would generate. A number of civil servants related to debate articles published in the local press that criticised the city's approach to planning and access inequalities that its car-policy had created (Bergens Tidende 2022). Furthermore, the last city election saw a surge in populist politics linked to an increase in road toll prices that had long term effects on the city's engagement with climate issues (see Wanvik and Haarstad 2021). As such, one interviewee explained that:

> we do not want to have another road-toll protest. So we think that it this is very important, that people participate in reaching the [climate] goals. If they feel that these are their own goals, then people will be more willing to reach them. It is more of making a "we", than making a "we and them". (Interview #1).

Table 2. Summary of contradictions and the accomplishments of organisational work to overcome these contradictions.

Analytical "moment"	Analytical focus	Key contradiction	Organisational work accomplished
Mobilisation of knowledge for the Knowledge base (Kunnskapsgrunnlag)	How the Knowledge base shows the variety of knowledges that come together to make climate, and the city visible.	Contradictions emerged from bringing various knowledges together. It was assumed that bringing them together is not creating tensions, and that they are compatible. Contradictions were used to display the breadth of knowledges and work required to reduce emissions.	Legitimising the central goal of carbon emission reductions
Matching goals with actions	How strategic thinking is articulated (through interventions, strategy, vision), and what work does the strategy prepare for.	Contradictions appeared between the ambition of the plan, and the interventions necessary to achieve it. The strategy paints a picture of precision and control through the identification of priority areas to reduce emissions. Contradiction allowed areas requiring further policy focus to be highlighted.	Expanding the range of available actions
Mobilising actors	How consensus is built (through the communication of the plan itself, and the place given to "the public" in its articulation) through novel communication channels and spaces, and getting feedback and ideas from the working groups.	Contradictions emerged between the Climate Agency's work on climate change, and the goals of other municipal departments. Focusing on contradictory city goals allowed mobilisation of other municipal actors in the work of the agency.	Signalling the climate strategy to different municipal entities and stakeholder groups

Therefore, overcoming the contradiction between conflicting actors' interests accomplished critical organisational work to signal the work and goals of the climate strategy to other municipal entities. Routinely interacting with other actors within the organisation allowed climate to be embedded into the day-to-day routines of other organisational participants who were not directly working with climate-related planning. Without creating additional bureaucratic structures, these routine interactions offered novel communication channels within and outside the municipality; and mobilized proactively to overcome resistance and challenges to possible future climate actions (Table 2).

6.   Concluding remarks

Scholarship on climate governance has typically focused on highly visible forms of local climate action or exogenous forces. In this paper, we consider instead the everyday work of civil servants in advancing local climate work. Through special attention to how contradictions were managed and employed in the process of making a new climate strategy, we were able to explore the strategic value these offer in advancing the organisational work of the Climate Agency in Bergen, Norway. We highlight three strategic ways in which contradictions allowed local climate work to be advanced: by legitimising the goal of carbon emission reductions, by expanding the range of available actions, and by signalling the work of the climate strategy to other municipal actors. Together, the organisational work accomplished with these contradictions was instrumental in advancing a more ambitious local climate agenda, and allowed the collective agency mobilised in anchoring that work within a municipal organisation to be captured.

By uncovering these pragmatic efforts, we seek to provide a deeper understanding of the institutional work that urban climate action and policy integration entails. While the literature stresses the importance of policy design and institutional capacities, we show how the agency mobilised by civil servants played a significant role in strategically advancing a more ambitious climate agenda for the city of Bergen. Critically, by foregrounding the work involved in local climate governance, we show the messy nature of local climate work. From a research perspective, this implies giving less attention to successful innovations, and ambitious institutional actors, but rather focus on how climate is "muddle through" (Nagorny-Koring and Nochta 2018) within municipal activities, considering the everyday politics of learning, collaboration or the operationalisation of low-carbon interventions.

A tension remains, however. While top-down managerial approaches are needed to guide this work, these should be balanced with the need to facilitate open-ended forms of experimentation in bureaucratic practices. Applying a practice lens to further assess this work would, however, require careful methodological and analytical tools. While capturing the diverse range of strategies that organisational actors deploy in their work is essential, some types of organisational work might, in fact, be difficult to capture. For example, researching ambitious climate work through advocacy or networking work might, therefore, be more tangible analytically than, for example, changing normative associations between sets of practices, or the construction of novel ones. This calls for a stronger engagement between practice scholars and those involved in understanding urban planning processes. In other words, this implies taking the complexity of planning seriously and approaching contradictions as a co-evolving space for

agonistic and relational creative forces (Legacy *et al.* 2019). Regardless of how demanding these tasks might be analytically, these are necessary in order to capture the interplay between practitioners and broader policy processes, and the purposive interventions that can emerge from this space.

ORCID

Jesse Schrage (iD) http://orcid.org/0000-0002-7638-6347

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