

Leisure mobility: Situating emotional geographies of *friluftsliv* in urban mobility transitions

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ABSTRACT

In Norwegian culture, outdoor recreation in nature – such as hiking – is an important activity tied to the production of identity and aspirations of a ‘good life’. ‘Friluftsliv’ (outdoor life) in Norwegian entails a connection to specific places and particular forms of movement between and within these places. This paper examines such mobility practices among residents of Stavanger, a mid-sized coastal city, drawing on 24 interviews with leisure hikers, split between car owners and non-owners. We argue that friluftsliv remains closely connected to the automobility regime, and show the implications for the urban mobility transition, which builds on a strategy of moving past car-centric planning and aims to reduce car dependence. We show how urban mobility planning can benefit from a more nuanced and situated understanding of what mobility *means*, and how it produces meaning, in a local context. We do so by addressing how people engaged in friluftsliv around Stavanger situate this within their mobility practices, and how these individualised expressions of friluftsliv and mobility reflect upon the urban mobility transition. This article draws on literature from emotional geographies and mobilities research to conceptualise ‘friluftsliv’ as a form of ‘meaningful mobility’ produced through assemblages of emotions, space, and culture.

1. Introduction: the emotional geography of urban access to nature in Norway

Norwegian culture has long been associated with an idea of nature stewardship through outdoor recreation and exploration (Flemsæter et al., 2015). In late September 2023, The Guardian ran an article entitled ‘The Norwegian secret: how friluftsliv boosts health and happiness’ (Dixon, 2023). This sort of prominent coverage signals the emblematic nature of the Norwegian term that captures this cultural characteristic: *friluftsliv* (outdoor life). It is legally endorsed through the Norwegian Outdoor Recreation Act (*Allemannsretten*), in a country where 950,000 people are members of 500 outdoor activity associations, as the same newspaper article highlights, or over 17 percent of the 5.4 million Norwegian population. The act secures rights to public access to wilderness and private property, i.e., “free use of nature” (Regjeringen, 2021). Friluftsliv invokes enjoyment, connectedness and a close relationship to nature as cultural heritage rooted in deep ecology. The nature stewardship of people in Norway must necessarily be juxtaposed with living in a petrostate, given the economic reliance on income from petroleum exports that has undergirded the development of a wealthy

and generous welfare state since the early 1970s.

Known as the ‘oil capital of Norway’, Stavanger and its neighbouring municipalities constitute the country’s most affluent urban area by per capita income but also one with an above-average rate of income inequality (Statistics Norway, 2019), with a relatively low-density population and living pattern premised on the construction and maintenance of car-centric infrastructure (Haarstad et al., 2022). The city is located on the south-west coast of Norway, close to the iconic Preikestolen (Pulpit rock) and Lysefjorden, a narrow fjord surrounded by cliffs and popular mountain hiking trails. Together with adjacent municipalities like Sandnes, Stavanger comprises the third largest metropolitan area of Norway. As one of 112 European Mission Cities, Stavanger aims to become a climate-neutral and smart city by 2030, serving as an “experimentation” site and “innovation hub” for “all European cities to follow suit by 2050” (European Commission, 2022).

Given Stavanger’s claimed position as a smart city and innovation leader, Stavanger municipality is an important actor in influencing and developing urban mobility transitions to achieve sustainability targets. The most serious challenges in transportation include a high proportion of car usage, and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions associated with cars,

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buses and goods transport. Thus, the Stavanger climate and environmental plan aims to cut 80 % of direct GHG emissions by 2030 and 100 % by 2040. Other objectives such as “making it easier to carry out everyday chores without a car in Stavanger,” and “meeting any increased need for transport through cycling, walking and public transportation” (Stavanger Municipality, 2022: authors’ translation) are to be achieved by facilitating cycling and pedestrian routes, expanding charging infrastructure for electric vehicles (EVs), and improving public transportation provision (ibid.). The ‘busway’ is perhaps the most important infrastructural measure in the regional mobility transition plan. It will be a 50 km road system that prioritizes buses and is often framed as a “light rail on wheels”. The county describes this as the quintessential line in the Nord Jæren regional transport system. Meanwhile, urban planning strategies have identified densification (i.e. prioritising the ‘busway’ transport axis for housing and business development) as a key development strategy to lessen car dependency, and facilitate cycling and pedestrian routes. The plan also aims to reduce forced car dependence by ensuring “seamless” changes that create “simpler everyday life” (Rogaland County, 2019, p. 25). The drivers of spatial planning strategies, we argue, largely revolve around ideals of compactness and efficiency (i.e. “seamlessness”) while transport planning strategies lean heavily on the digitalisation of transport modes, such as shared and autonomous mobility, and facilitation of active mobility like cycling and walking. The transport and mobility strategy shown in Fig. 1 illustrates the mobility hierarchy in local mobility policymaking, aimed at prioritising pedestrians, cyclists, public transport and sharing schemes over private car usage.

However, local, and regional mobility strategies are generally geared towards “promoting everyday activities” (Rogaland County, 2019, p. 23). We interpret ‘everyday activities’ here mainly to refer to the work or school commute, and to day-to-day errands such as grocery shopping and bringing children to and from kindergarten. Meanwhile, leisure activities that feature in regional strategies include attending sports, and going to parks or other meeting places (Rogaland County, 2019, p. 29). Interestingly, we observe that there are very particular spatial parameters in the definitions of different everyday leisure activities. Leisure activities are defined largely by the spaces they are thought to take place in (parks, sport arenas, and public meeting spots), while everyday activities are confined to spaces like work, school, shopping, and kindergarten. According to the Rogaland County’s regional plan (Rogaland County, 2019), friluftsliv falls within the same spaces as other leisure activities (ibid.). Although friluftsliv can arguably also be sought in public parks, limiting its definition to these spaces would be to neglect the traditionally important connection to the great outdoors, to mountains, lakes and fjords.

Thus, friluftsliv is framed in ‘sedentary’ (Cresswell, 2006, pp. 26–27) ways, where space is privileged over movement, while everyday life is separated from leisure activities. Johansen et al. (2021) have recently argued that public policy and spatial planning are framed based on the separation of work and leisure time, thus constructing friluftsliv as a distinct object of mobility policy removed from urban transport planning. The overall aim of this paper is to show that friluftsliv remains

closely connected to the automobility regime, hindering a larger mobility transition. This connection is empirically observed in practical terms, and also discursively and emotionally, where the car still has a central role within the friluftsliv imaginary. We examine this connection by answering the following research questions: How do people engaged in friluftsliv in the Stavanger area relate this activity to their own mobility practices? And how do these individualised narrations of friluftsliv and mobility reflect the local urban mobility transition?

We juxtapose this observation with the ongoing urban mobility transition geared towards reducing automobility dependence, and challenge this frame of reference by advocating for a more nuanced perspective that includes the emotional and cultural sides of leisure mobility. Such a perspective promotes a definition of friluftsliv that draws more on a *mobile ontology*, which is premised on movement rather than on rigidity and space (Sheller and Urry, 2006). With this as our conceptual foundation, we explore the emotional geographies of friluftsliv through an analysis of on-site interviews with people at popular friluftsliv destinations (primarily at hiking destinations). We thus approach mobility in more holistic, non-dichotomous ways by focusing on the interconnectedness between urban mobility practices and the cultural dimensions of mobility, here represented by the *friluftsliv* culture.

Our contribution opens up for a broader debate on urban mobility transitions, mainly in the research fields of emotional geography and mobilities studies, and other fields related to mobility transitions, leisure, and urban planning. We fulfil our overall aim by showing how urban mobility planning can benefit from a more nuanced and situated understanding of what mobility *means* in a local context. As a result, our study elucidates important frontiers for effective sustainable mobility transitions, by illustrating the intricate relationship between urban mobility practices, and cultural participation connected to nature, i.e., friluftsliv.

Although we frame our study within the context of emotional geography, this is *not* a study of people’s emotions as such, but rather an analysis of hikers’ narratives of mobility habits and challenges connected to partaking in friluftsliv as a leisure activity. Our nuanced picture of what mobility can entail within a specific context emphasises the importance of explicitly situating mobility studies in a given spatial, political, and cultural context. We build conceptually on literature primarily from the fields of emotional geography (Conradson, 2016; Davidson et al., 2007; Pile, 2010) and *mobilities* literature (Cresswell, 2006; Jensen, 2009; Merriman, 2019; Sheller and Urry, 2006) in order to form a theoretical perspective for thinking about friluftsliv as a mobile phenomenon that is situated both spatially and socio-culturally, and that is produced through affectual relations across these realms. We argue that friluftsliv is a form of ‘meaningful mobility’ (Adey, 2017; Cresswell, 2006). Cresswell insists that “Movement is rarely just movement; it carries with it the burden of meaning” (Cresswell, 2006 p. 7). Our empirical analysis is based on 24 semi-structured interviews conducted with hikers, to understand how local people engaged in friluftsliv relate to nature and access nature through diverse mobility practices.

The article is structured as follows. The next section reviews conceptual literature where we introduce an affectual perspective to mobility transitions, situate our treatment of friluftsliv in extant scholarship, and discuss the mobilities turn in human geography in relation to friluftsliv. Next, we present our methodology and rationale for case selection. The subsequent section comprises empirical analysis. A discussion follows, emphasising the significance of emotion and affect to mobility practices and urban transitions. We then conclude with reflections on the implications of our study for urban transport policies and future research.

2. Theoretical approach and conceptual literature

In this section, we present our theoretical foundation and elaborate on the concept of friluftsliv in the Norwegian context. The aim is to show

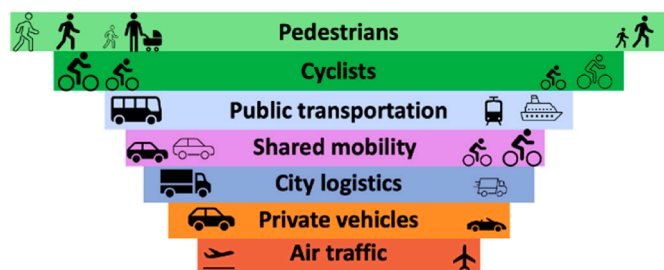


Fig. 1. “Stavanger municipality mobility pyramid”, 2022 (Authors’ translation: original figure in Norwegian). Source: <https://www.stavanger.kommune.no/stavanger2040/nyhetsutlising/ga-mere/>.

how friluftsliv is not a predetermined category for planners to attach to certain urban spaces, but a conceptually important form of *mobility* that is both political and affectual. First, we explore and present what the term friluftsliv means within the Norwegian context and connect friluftsliv to the pursuit of ‘the good life.’ Second, we present some key aspects and concepts from the emotional geography literature. Third, we introduce important *mobilities* literature and draw relevant analytical lines between emotional geography and mobilities literature, and invoke the concept of ‘meaningful mobility’.

2.1. Friluftsliv in the Norwegian context

According to national statistics, 82 percent of the Norwegian population partook in friluftsliv (i.e. hiking in and around mountains, forests and fields) in 2021 (Statistics Norway, 2021). This makes it important to study in relation to other forms of social production such as mobility. Friluftsliv as a term has been evoked to invoke ecological sensitivity, not commercialised outdoor activities. Faarlund (1993, p. 174) regards the latter as a form of tourism that rather “produce[s] a sense of alienation from our environment” that “gives people a taste of what they are missing while letting them continue in their nature-alienated lifestyles”. He argues that the term should not praise the power or splendour of nature, but rather represent a more harmonious friendship in which we feel at home in the wilderness. In Norway, friluftsliv is also connected to specific spaces and activities, underlining the material components of the concept. These connections include hiking in mountains and on plains, walking or trekking in woods and forests, fishing, paddling, and swimming in lakes, fjords and rivers (Faarlund, 2003). Crowley (2013) describes friluftsliv as a concept of ‘loving nature’, one deeply embedded in Norwegian culture. He associates the concept with philosopher and mountaineer Arne Næss (1912–2009) and the Deep Ecology movement, stating how Deep Ecology “can be seen as an extension of the Romantic longing for a cultural and emotional reconnection with nature. In Norway, this longing often took the form of friluftsliv” (Crowley, 2013, p. 46). This bears traces of essentializing and connoting rurality, remoteness and some sort of pristine nature, but unlike broader human-nature relations that encompass urban nature (as urban ecologists have articulated) and nature-based solutions, friluftsliv has tended to be more linked to more ‘out in nature’ imaginaries.

Academic writing on friluftsliv is most frequent in educational research (Backman, 2008, 2011; Lyngstad and Saether, 2021; Sharma-Brymer and Brymer, 2021) and environmental education (Beery, 2013; Sandell and Ohman, 2010). For instance, Mikaelis (2018, p.15) follows Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of ‘becoming-place’ to argue for new avenues for teachers to relate to the spaces of friluftsliv and create unthought-of ways to contribute to “education for an environmental and sustainable future”. Friluftsliv has clear Scandinavian boundaries and does include an aspect of work-leisure dualism. In Norway, Faarlund (2003) understands friluftsliv as a reaction to urban modernity, industrial society, and a longing to reconnect with nature emotionally and physically. Johansen et al. (2021, p. 140) argue that this work-leisure dualism provides the frame for public policy and spatial planning, with the purpose of “providing recreational opportunities for citizens’ leisure pursuits, seen as something clearly separated from work life and daily routines”.

We will argue that friluftsliv in Norway is strongly linked to the experiences and fulfilment of ‘the good life’. Much has been written on the relationship between nature and categories often equated with living ‘the good life’ such as well-being (Fagerholm et al., 2021; Russell et al., 2013) and health (Hartig et al., 2014; Twohig-Bennett and Jones, 2018). In human geography traditions, ‘the good life’ is less the fulfilment of predetermined categories, and more a cultural category in itself. Tuan (1986) explains how what makes a good life is largely determined by aspirations towards certain environmental spaces and certain activities that are idealised and specific within any given culture. Tuan’s ideas go a long way in insisting on the importance of place, and people’s sensory

and emotional relations to places, in the production of a good and idealised way of living. Thus, one must understand the good life beyond the categories of health and well-being, taking seriously the relational connections of material and non-material elements that produce it. In the *mobilities* literature that draws on a mobile ontology privileging movement over stasis and sees mobility as productive of space, however, what constitutes the good life is additionally dependent on dominant discourses around mobility, and related to forms of Mobility Justice (Sheller, 2018; Sheller and Urry, 2006). In the current car-centric mobility regime, dominant discourses tend to revolve around automobility and the ideal of the car as an emancipating and liberating object associated with economic opportunity, freedom, masculinity, and fun. Urry (2004) establishes this as one of six component that make up the ‘system of automobility’ (p.26) that has so deeply defined many societies since the mid-20th century.

To situate friluftsliv in our context, we shall emphasise the roles that affect and emotions, space, and movement play in producing it. This requires a conceptual framework. The next two sub-sections therefore provide the theoretical foundation of our approach to affect and mobility.

2.2. An affective approach

Davidson et al. (2007) define an emotional geography as “attempts to understand emotion –experientially and conceptually – in terms of its socio-spatial mediation and articulation rather than as entirely interiorised subjective mental states” (p.3). Emotions and space are both conceptualised within a relational frame, which highlights “how emotions are produced in relations between and among people and environments” (ibid.). This understanding can be further elaborated through Deleuze and Guattari’s reading of Spinoza, which emphasises *affects* rather than emotions (Conradson, 2016, p. 104; Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. xvi). Here, affects denote attention to the externalities, and embodied and inter-subjective formulations of feelings, rather than focusing on individual emotions as pre-existing categories in human cognition (see also Thrift, 2004). We therefore distinguish a focus on emotions, which we refer to here as internalised categories of feelings (like anger, sadness, and happiness) and a focus on affects, which are defined as heterogenous connections where space, movement, and culture form important affective assemblages. For us, this is an important distinction as our analysis is not one that explicitly focuses on the participants’ emotions as an object of study, but rather tries to illustrate the role that affects can play in shaping cultural mobility practices like friluftsliv. This represents a general viewpoint within the affective turn (Clough and Halley, 2007; Massumi, 1995; Pile, 2010), which cautions against the vocabularies of emotion, warning that they “only express affects that have already been engineered by the powerful” (Pile, 2010, p. 12). Indeed, Thrift (2004) advocates for the non-representational approach offered by privileging affects rather than emotions, so as to avoid a “false” representation of authenticity and personal experiences based on the language of emotion.

Therefore, focusing on emotions becomes indicative from an affectual perspective, as a “feeling is something that may emerge *between* bodies of various kinds, whether human or otherwise” (Conradson, 2016, p. 107). Interactions between people, but also their interactions with animate and inanimate objects, are equally important to understand the production of human emotions and feelings (Conradson, 2016). This conceptualisation of a relational and affective approach to emotions and place comprises our foundation for thinking about the way people relate to nature and other places in their environment, and how these can produce affects related to living ‘the good life’ in the socio-spatial context of urban western Norway and other analogous places.

2.3. The “new mobilities paradigm” and meaningful mobility

The “new mobilities paradigm” emerged in the humanities and social sciences in the early 2000s, partly as a criticism of the “sedentarist metaphysics that started from the assumption of clearly bounded and rooted spaces, places and territories as the normal starting point for understanding mobility” (Cresswell, 2021, p. 52). Mobility is seen as “entangled with wider assemblages of place, affect, and atmosphere” (Sheller, 2020, p. 191), and this new mobilities paradigm (Sheller and Urry, 2006) has ushered into mobility studies a sort of theoretical awakening where temporality and spatiality, movement, meaning, materialities, and affect are given important agency in ‘fluid ontologies’ (Cresswell, 2006; Merriman, 2019). Adey, 2017 describes mobility as not having any pre-existing significance in and of itself, but as something that takes on meaning depending on the context in which it occurs and on who determines its significance. He conceptualises out mobility in context, i.e., meaning ascribed to movement (as in the meaning given in the act of movement itself), and thus claims that “even while mobility has no pre-existent meaning, certain places, cultures and societies can give particular kinds of mobility particular kinds of meaning”. Thus, Adey captures the productive elements of mobility and situates them within an emotive landscape.

Mobility gains meaning in relations with other heterogeneous entanglements such as places, affects and environments, but also objects like cars, roads and built environment on the one hand, and also non-material forms like language, discourse, politics and values on the other. This is what we mean when we refer to *assemblage* where we draw on Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of assemblages as relational and productive collections of heterogeneous parts linked together for a time to form a Whole (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). such as Norwegian friluftsliv. Flemsæter et al. (2015) draw on Cresswell’s (2010) work on the ‘politics of mobility’ to analyse the implications for inclusion and diversity in participation in Norwegian outdoor life. They argue that friluftsliv has certain moral coding that pertains to a form of mobile citizenship. As shown above, friluftsliv has narrow parameters for what constitutes a legitimate, and idealised, use of space. This prompts Flemsæter et al. (2015, p.2-3) to ask whether new groups of people should adapt to established friluftsliv culture, or whether there is room to redefine the boundaries of contemporary friluftsliv. Our analysis is mindful of this concern.

Friluftsliv pertains to distinct forms of mobility and movement: specific forms of mobility in nature spaces, and the movement to and from these spaces of friluftsliv. According to Sheller and Urry (2000), a mobile lifestyle is about the opportunities and choices of movement, with daily mobility shaping lifestyle and thereby also identities. Automobility constitutes one form of mobility that offers personal freedom and a set of identity practices. Cars are embedded in places and societies in more-than-socio-technical networks as well as in emotional geographies, which “occur at different scales ranging from the feeling of the individual body within the car to the familial and sociable setting of car use to the regional and national car cultures that form around particular systems of automobility and different driving dispositions” (Sheller, 2004, p. 236). Illustrating the emotional geographies of automobility, Sheller (*ibid.*) makes the important claim that “[c]ars will not easily be given up ... [t]oo many people find them too comfortable, enjoyable, exciting. And enthralling. They are deeply embedded in ways of life, networks and friendship and sociality, and moral commitment to family and care of others”. In Sheller’s concept of mobility justice (Sheller, 2018), automobility is also seen as a root cause of many contemporary and historical injustices that are produced in the highly mobile world. For example, injustice produced by the way that car-centric infrastructure unevenly distributes benefits and burdens as it produces different (urban) spaces, for example how polluted inner cities have been the cost of highly automobilized suburbs. Or how negative externalities of automobility like pollution, injuries and deaths are disproportionately affecting the relatively poor or otherwise marginalized in modern

societies (*ibid.*). Sheller conceptualisation sees (in)justices occurring on multiple scales, and like mobility itself they exist in relation to “class, racial, sexual, gendered, and disabling exclusions from public space, from national citizenship, and from the means of mobility at all scales” (Sheller, 2016, p. 15). Thus, a transition away from the automobility regime requires detaching the car from intricate emotional geographies and relations to “gender expression, racial and ethnic distinction, family formation, urbanism, national identity and transnational processes” (Sheller, 2004, p. 236, p. 236)), while the broader mobility transition should pay attention to the different scales of mobility justice.

Friluftsliv as meaningful mobility, that is friluftsliv as a form of mobility that is given meaning in relation to its emotional geography, is embedded in the pursuit of the good life – to national identity, family life and wellbeing (Bischoff et al., 2007; Crowley, 2013) and dependent on movement in and between spaces, is unequivocally tied to dominant mobility regimes. In the context of Stavanger’s ongoing mobility transitions, we consider it crucial to anchor analysis in these connections between mobility (and especially automobility) and emotional geographies. The culturally significant leisure activity of friluftsliv, we argue, provides an ideal case for precisely that.

3. Methodology and methods

Our research strategy and methods comprise an abductive approach, which entails moving “from a conception of something to a different, possibly more developed or deeper conception of it. This happens through placing and interpreting the original ideas about the phenomenon in the frame of a new set of ideas” (Danermark et al., 2002, p. 91). Correspondingly, the framing of this article, its concepts, and ideas, while including concerns we were broadly informed about and mindful of at the outset when planning and conducting data collection, emerged from the analysis of interview data and took firmer shape through iterative engagement with relevant literature and within our team. This section is structured thus: first we present our data collection methods, then we provide an overview of our materials and table of informants, followed by issues of reflexivity, before lastly reflecting on some limitations of our study.

3.1. Data collection

We conducted fieldwork consisting of 24 semi-structured interviews, 12 of which were with car owners (CO) and 12 with non-car owners (NCO) (see Table 1). NCOs did not own or have access to cars and relied on public transportation, micro-mobility such as scooters and bicycles, but occasionally on acquaintances and friends who owned cars. Additionally, we conducted one expert interview with a representative from Stavanger Turistforening (the local chapter of the national tourist association DNT), to gain insight on whether and how they cooperate with the regional transport operator Kolombus. The fieldwork was executed by visiting popular hiking destinations Dalsnuten and Preikestolen, where we approached hikers we met, whilst purposively aiming for diversity by talking to people in different age groups and life stages. We travelled to both destinations (start of hiking path) by car, approaching the potential respondents at designated rest areas along hiking paths, to avoid disrupting them mid-hike. This approach allowed us to sit down, audio record and take notes in a relatively comfortable setting. Further, it also helped conceal our own mode of transportation in case this would influence respondents’ willingness to participate. We additionally made a second trip to Dalsnuten using public transportation to survey the nearby bus stop in the hope of finding potential NCO respondents; unfortunately, no NCO respondents were found this way, which is an interesting finding in itself.

Respondents ranged from singles and couples to families with children and dog owners. 13 of 24 informants were found in the field, and they were disproportionately car owners (11 out of 13). This was disappointing considering our hopes to capture CO and NCO hikers in

Table 1
Interview characteristics (ordered by interview date, May–August 2022).

Informant	Date	Location	Status (Car Owner (CO) or Not (NCO))	Instrument
Informant 1	May 12, 2022	Peer (at work)	CO	In person
Informant 2	June 5, 2022	Dalsnuten	CO	In person
Informant 3 (with dog)	June 5, 2022	Dalsnuten	CO	In person
Informant 4	June 5, 2022	Dalsnuten	CO	In person
Informant 5 (with son)	June 5, 2022	Dalsnuten	CO	In person
Informant 6 (with dog)	June 5, 2022	Dalsnuten	CO	In person
Informant 7	June 19, 2022	Online outreach	NCO	In person
Informant 8	June 19, 2022	Online outreach	NCO	In person
Informant 9	June 20, 2022	Preikestolen	CO	In person
Informant 10 (with partner)	June 20, 2022	Preikestolen	NCO	In person
Informant 11 (with partner)	June 20, 2022	Preikestolen	CO	In person
Informant 12	June 20, 2022	Preikestolen	NCO	In person
Informant 13	June 20, 2022	Preikestolen	CO	In person
Informant 14	June 28, 2022	Online outreach	NCO	In person
Informant 15	June 28, 2022	Online outreach	NCO	Online
Informant 16	July 16, 2022	Dalsnuten	CO	In person
Informant 17 (with partner)	July 16, 2022	Dalsnuten	CO	In person
Informant 18	July 16, 2022	Dalsnuten	CO	In person
Informant 19	July 18, 2022	Online outreach	NCO	Online
Informant 20	July 18, 2022	Online outreach	NCO	Online
Informant 21	July 18, 2022	Online outreach	NCO	In person
Informant 22	July 19, 2022	Online outreach	NCO	In person
Informant 23	August 15, 2022	Online outreach	NCO	In person
Informant 24	August 15, 2022	Online outreach	NCO	In person

their element, i.e., in the field. To pursue equal representation and perspectives from NCOs, we reached out on local Facebook groups and online friluftsliv communities posting a call for mobility practices in relation to friluftsliv. Agreements were made to interview those who responded in person. The interview guide was structured in such a way as to allow informants to talk freely about their lived experiences. Questions were not explicitly focussed on the emotional aspects, but rather on mobility practices in the pursuit of friluftsliv. Yet affectual and emotional responses arose from the fieldwork across the respondents, amplifying affectual themes such as lifestyle commitment, no car equals no hiking, limited range, and social exclusion, as a result of early-stage description and analytical reflections stemming from iterative cross-reading of transcribed interviews.

Thus, the empirical material consisting of emotional responses was thematically analysed (Braun and Clarke, 2006) after being extracted as separate from the overall dataset. We understand “theme” as in line with Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 82) “A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set”. More

specifically, exploring and interpreting meaning within the data, led to the formation of themes listed in the empirical analysis section. Preliminary codes and keywords that we encountered prominently initiated the thematic structure, which in turn revealed oversights in local mobility strategies. As such, the analysis allowed for systematic processing and interpretation of the qualitative data. We draw attention to quotes from the interviewees, and sometimes also depict the setting and situation of our interaction, with attention to body language, moods, and ways of speaking that illustrate an additional emotive layer beyond just the spoken words to ground our analysis.

Additional data was gathered from a workshop we held on the topic of socially inclusive low-carbon urban transport transitions, conducted as part of a larger research project, with a large variety of 17 sectoral stakeholders, including representatives from mobility operators, Stavanger municipality, Rogaland County, regulators, and interested mobility users. None of the interviewees took part in the workshop, thus this broader discussion helped to underpin and triangulate our findings.

Reflecting over methods and approaches raises issues of reflexivity. As noted by Rose (1997), “The need to situate knowledge is based on the argument that the sort of knowledge being made depends on who its makers are” (*ibid* pp.306-307). This prompts the authors to reflect over our own position as part of the friluftsliv culture, having lived in the local context ourselves while frequently enjoying friluftsliv. Two of the authors have Norwegian ethnicity and local upbringing, whereas two have encountered and embodied it over several years. Hence the team has been positioned well to triangulate and consider our positionality on this form of cultural meaning. Moreover, we have reflected on the abductive approach as what Dey (2004) terms “a matter of interpreting a phenomenon in terms of some theoretical frame of reference” (p.91). While our theoretical frames are detailed above, we highlight the importance of understanding our data in relation to heterogeneous assemblages (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987), meaning that our empirical data on affects alone does not inform our analysis, which also draws on important cultural, spatial, and material elements. We understand that conclusions can differ or be argued against with respect to explanatory power (Danermark et al., 2019 pp.112-113), whereas what is essential about inferences is recontextualization that improves understanding.

3.2. Limitations and scope

There was a noticeable difference in the length of the interviews between COs and NCOs, where CO interviews were shorter compared to NCO ones. This can be attributed to several factors, such as 11 out of 12 CO interviews taking place at hiking destinations approached at random. We attempted to reach NCOs the same way, in addition to placing ourselves on relevant buses and at the nearest bus stop, but none were found this way. The NCO interviewees from our online outreach were scheduled, allowing for more time flexibility on their terms. It is also possible that this group felt they had more to voice given that they are the ones who encounter considerable limits when trying to access friluftsliv. Another limitation is the sample size. Our sample of 24 semi-structured interviews is relatively small and thus has potential limitations in range and coverage of diverse issues. However, the study reveals adequate consistency to convincingly capture a range of concerns that pertain to the socially lived experiences of both groups of interest in this case. These concerns range from the modalities of access to friluftsliv to the emotional states that go hand in hand with particular forms of access. We did not observe an outcry for public transportation to popular hiking destinations in local mainstream or social media debates, which we tracked regularly during 2020–2023. However, we hold that there is value in understanding how and why people justify car ownership in relation to friluftsliv, despite some of them being avid public transport commuters for work.

4. Empirical analysis: the difficulty of relating to nature with (out) a car

The following section presents the analysis, showing the four main themes that arose from our data analysis. It starts with a focus on the strong commitment to the lifestyle of friluftsliv, followed by the difficulty of accessing friluftsliv without a car, then attends to the limits to spatial range experienced by NCOs, and finally addresses issues of social exclusion. This last issue affects all NCOs in a variety of ways.

4.1. Lifestyle commitment

When asked about reasons for using or not using public transportation, the majority of COs say they prefer to use the car due to convenience, although some of them use public transportation to commute to work. As for hiking, they all prefer to use the car, as public transportation does not take them to where they would like to recreate and therefore justifies car ownership as an enabler in actively pursuing friluftsliv as a lifestyle.

At Preikestolen, we meet a CO interviewee who is idealistically aligned with environmental issues and uses public transportation for this reason as well as due to the lack of a driving license (she is marked as a car owner because her husband owns a car, and customarily drives a private vehicle to reach hiking destinations). They are relatively new to car ownership, having purchased their first car only four years ago. She describes them as an environmentally idealistic couple who adjust their lives to rely on public transportation and bikes as much as possible. Yet they now cannot see themselves switching back to a life without an automobile. *“We use the bus when we can, (the car) it’s more for when we want to go somewhere far where the buses do not go”* – this quote strongly indicates a lack of public transportation services to friluftsliv places. Moreover, since the onset of the pandemic and the newfound time that came with it, they have been more active, taking trips and hiking more often. In this instance, pursuing optimal or pragmatic friluftsliv manages to trump what comes across as a lifelong commitment to environmentally-friendly mobility practices.

Having the identity of being close to nature is closely tied up to car ownership in the sense that it comes with a sense of freedom, agency and convenience. *“I own a diesel car. I have been thinking about whether I could manage without a car, I mean it would be nice. But I see that I simply cannot do it with the lifestyle that I have because I am in the Scouts. I have to plan and bring equipment so I just have to have a car”*. The interviewee is currently an urban dweller but recalls his grandmother disliking his move from a rural area, because then he would be moving away from nature, reminiscing that: *“Now I live in Sandnes city and I don’t feel like I live close to nature”*.

4.2. No car, no hiking

The 12 CO interviewees, 11 of whom we met out in the field, describe a very car-centric local community of friluftsliv enthusiasts who often justify car ownership in pursuing this lifestyle. They also cite the “scattered about” sprawled landscape in which we live and recreate outside. One interviewee frustratedly expressed *“Regarding not owning a car, I can tell you, then one must move to Oslo! As long as the region is built as it is, it is very difficult to make public transportation in a way that covers all roads frequently enough.”* He then goes on to express that if this need were to be met (frequent schedules to the outskirts, as well as hiking destinations), he could then perhaps reconsider car ownership. He owns two cars to meet the transportation needs of his family of six: a Tesla that he uses to commute, and a diesel family car. When asked about ways of improving the transportation system for better access to the outdoors, he talks briefly about the importance of improved roads to hiking destinations and states that a car is necessary unless you are doing friluftsliv right outside your door. He is keen to talk about the personal motivation challenges of getting outside, and concluding that to achieve improved

access to the outdoors, there must be bus departures that run *“very flexible and terribly frequent, and that just does not pay off here.”*

In our question regarding carpooling, the informant’s son is quick to jump in to tell us quite factually and candidly that *“us kids are sometimes forced to go on hikes from time to time.”* *“Yes. We sometimes force you to go, absolutely right!”* replies the father in a sarcastic, tough love tone and manner. This father explicitly pursues the lifestyle of friluftsliv as a family activity. When we met them on site, they were headed back to the seating area closer to the parking lot. The son needed to rest his knee that had been injured in a football game while the rest of the family were still hiking, hence the family’s commitment to friluftsliv reads as substantial and strong. What comes across quite clearly is that a hike must be pursued on a Sunday, despite a knee injury. When asked about whether or not he makes time for daily walks, he responds: *“No, but I manage to jam it in ... for me it’s important to get out, so, it will be in the evenings and such”*. By contrast, when asked to imagine a car-free life with current public transportation routes, he exclaims *“... then there will be no hiking!”*.

Results from CO interviewees show that the majority do not experience transportation as a challenge, as they have the convenience of access to a car. This indicates that this group has a strong sense of agency and experiences mobility as the freedom to get to where they want when they want. It also highlights the relationship between friluftsliv and the dominant automobility regime, and prompts questions regarding the inclusion and exclusion of recreational sites based on modal choice and access to means of mobility. The few COs who cited transportation challenges mentioned public transportation fees and lack of routes as improvement points for them to use the public transportation service more often, rather than personal vehicles. This suggests that there is a willingness to switch away from car ownership in the event of improved mobility infrastructure and public transportation services. In general, COs have the impression that public transportation is quite good, and some of them use it to commute to work.

NCOs, however, tell of user difficulties in a digitalised transport sector, experiencing bad transfers between buses or across modes, the lack of a safety margin for such transfers, and a more detailed set of problems with great improvement potential. They pull from their experience of depending on the public transportation system to reach nature destinations to a far greater extent than COs. Experiences such as a limited weekend schedule, lack of safety margin and user difficulty often resulted in destinations not being pursued, hence affecting not only their choice of hiking destination but also whether or not hiking was even an option. When asked about challenges encountered when trying to recreate outside, 11 out of 12 NCOs respond that transportation is their main challenge. Interestingly, the one interviewee who did not say that transportation was a challenge, light-heartedly answered the question with *“dørstokkmila”* (just getting out the door) as the biggest challenge. However, this informant went to the greatest lengths to reach the destination where we met in the field, walking to the bus stop, taking the bus as far as it goes, and then taking a taxi to the start of the hiking path. Despite his light-heartedness, his response implicitly expresses feelings of a challenge as *“dørstokkmila”* or getting out the door to him, evidently requiring considerable planning and logistics. Later in the interview, the informant revealed that all logistics must be looked up and planned before leaving home since he does not own a smartphone and is therefore unable to look up transportation information while out and about, something that the public transportation system assumes users can do, hence lacking much signage and information at various locations during transit.

4.3. Limited range

One interviewee, who relies on public transportation for recreation, speaks of digital difficulties when trying to use Kolumbus’ shared electric cars. The app shows an available car at a location, only to find out upon arrival that the car is 3 km away. A Kolumbus employee then

drives them to the car, which then turns out not to be charged. The interviewee ended up losing over 2 h before being able to access a fully charged car. As a result, she finds the car-sharing scheme too unreliable to gamble her weekend hiking time on.

Another NCO finds herself going to the same destination repeatedly for her weekend camping hikes, to the point where she feels like she has become friendly and acquainted with the destination wildlife, something she finds quite enjoyable. Throughout the interview, she keeps saying “*I could have gone to different destinations, but it would require so much planning*”, therefore Dale is where she keeps returning. She elaborates: “*I guess there is a sense of familiarity being there as well, so I feel comfortable being there on my own, not having like a ‘flight car’ to escape if something were to happen. So yeah I guess I normally stay in places that I am familiar with, where I know I can find my way if my equipment were to fail, like losing battery. Dale is very safe most of the time.*” Indisputably, as a lone hiker who does not own a car, she has a limited choice of destinations. Little flexibility in her work hours requires accurate planning for the bus schedules, bus transfers and hiking time, something she has worked out down to the minute for this specific destination she finds herself returning to. It works when everything is on time. Yet, something as simple as the bus being a few minutes delayed makes her miss a transfer, resulting in a complete change of plans for that specific hike, and hours added to the hike or travel time. This particular hike is a well-known destination which makes the low safety margin for corresponding buses especially frustrating and puzzling. We see this as a potential point of improvement to meet the needs of the people whom public transportation should be serving.

4.4. Social exclusion

It is important to note the issues of exclusion that emerged from this study, found in both infrastructure and social interactions. Not only were the on-site informants disproportionately car owners, but they were also all native Norwegian speakers, whereas the majority of NCOs were non-Norwegians temporary residents seeking to more actively participate in friluftsliv. The lack of NCOs on-site points to the social differences and structural power dynamics. NCOs’ unanimous response that transportation is a main challenge when trying to recreate makes it evident that friluftsliv is undoubtedly a more attainable lifestyle for COs. The automobile-centric transport system excludes NCOs in pursuing outdoor and cultural citizenship, legally established by Allemannsretten and Friluftsløven. This form of structural exclusion in turn shapes identities, a sense of belonging, and a discursive hegemony of cars as key to mobility in practice. Integrating into this culture, one has to overcome hurdles both tangible (such as access to a car) and intangible (such as solely Norwegian language use on digital hiking platforms like UT. no).

In theory, friluftsliv should be attainable for all, yet in reality, this is not the case. The surveyed hiking destinations favour COs with extended parking lots, marginalizing NCOs who at Dalsnuten walk on a heavily trafficked road from the nearest bus stop to the many trails available from there. Our expert interviewee from Stavanger Turistforening (a local outdoor organisation) mentioned running shuttles on this stretch from the nearest bus stop to Dalsnuten, but only for special hiking events arranged by them, such as a lantern trail. There is otherwise no cooperation between them and Kolombus, leaving the already marginalized NCOs even more vulnerable when navigating the well-frequented road.

As mentioned in our methods section, a workshop on urban transport transition was held as part of a larger research project. Here, a participant pointed out that structuring public transport around commuters, as is often the case, is rather outdated. To quote: “*A workday today is different, I could for instance have a work session while walking the dog in the woods! We must therefore extend the range and reach of public transport, and also have an inclusive system that allows for dogs*”. This underpins our findings in that aspects of friluftsliv, being firmly embedded in the culture, must be explicitly acknowledged and considered in urban green transitions strategies, especially when a strategy calls for a shift away

from car dependency, as the Stavanger climate and environment plan does. Our analysis also illustrates how the mobility system currently affords room for thinking beyond established workday patterns and creating a more flexible mobility system beyond binary constructs of a work/leisure society.

Exclusion, therefore, unfolds at several levels, not only in the attempt to access nature but also in Norwegian culture and what is considered ‘the good life’. Such a rigid dichotomy, shaping identities of the haves (COs) and have-nots, exacerbates the dilemma of elitism in this context.

5. Discussion

In the following, we apply our findings to the theoretical approach of assemblages, affects, work-leisure dualism and ‘the good life’. We structure this discussion in two main sections. In the first section, we address the research question ‘How do people engaged in friluftsliv in the Stavanger area relate this activity to their own mobility practices?’. Here we establish the connection between the emotional geographies of friluftsliv and forced car dependence in the context of Stavanger and relate this to imaginaries of ‘the good life’ and to work-leisure dualism. In the second section, we address the research question ‘How do these individualised narrations of friluftsliv and mobility reflect the local urban mobility transition?’. Here we argue that friluftsliv is a form of ‘meaningful mobility’ (Cresswell, 2006) that is strongly linked to automobility, and how this can be a barrier to local ambitions for sustainable urban mobility transitions. We thus shed light on how the emotional geographies of friluftsliv raise issues to consider in a mobility transition, as well as how ‘meaningful mobility’ in the current situation is accompanied by a disconnect from the environment. This is followed by reflections on aspects to be included in future policymaking for urban green transition in the Stavanger region and similar contexts.

5.1. Nature, affect, and ‘the good life’

Interviews with both COs and NCOs show how central the car is in friluftsliv assemblages in the Stavanger context. The emotional geography of leisure mobility and the contextual importance of automobility in friluftsliv assemblages highlights the importance of rethinking the mobility transition in ways that account for how mobility is meaningful within a certain context. All respondents broadly agreed that relating with nature in their place-situated reality intertwined with owning or having easy access to a car. The dearth of NCOs at hiking destinations affirms forced car dependency. It wedds friluftsliv as a lifestyle to justification of car ownership, with most COs citing access to nature as the main reason to own a car, as key to a sense of freedom and agency. This paradoxical association, undergirded by decades of advertising campaigns subliminally linking cars, freedom and rugged nature, suggests that pursuit of ‘the good life’ is accompanied by a disconnect from the environment, if measured up against the local targets in Stavanger’s climate and environment plan. This manifestation of ‘the good life’ lacks what according to Faarlund is the very essence of friluftsliv: to encourage ecological sensitivity and question mainstream lifestyles (Crowley, 2013).

Our analysis articulates the strong affective link between experiences of mobility and friluftsliv in the Stavanger context. This came across in the COs’ frequency of hiking and justification of car ownership in pursuing this lifestyle. For NCOs, the strong emotional connection was noticeable in their commitment to friluftsliv, despite the many hurdles experienced in its pursuit. However, our argument goes beyond claiming that there are positive emotional effects of ‘being in nature’. Thinking in affective terms breaks with a human-nature dichotomy, allowing us to consider how emotions are in themselves assemblages – connections that emerge between people and their surroundings. The affect of friluftsliv in Stavanger relates to the entire friluftsliv assemblage, including mobility (often automobility), geography (the spatial separation of home and nature spaces for friluftsliv), and culture. As argued above,

this assemblage features the individual and collective pursuit of ‘the good life’. In doing so, it maintains this cultural imaginary and interweaves it with imaginaries of urban transportation. For NCOs, pursuing ‘the good life’ through friluftsliv requires more effort, time and planning than for COs. How people relate with nature, how they experience *friluftsliv*, or what constitutes ‘the good life’ for them imbues the experience of mobility with meaning, and in turn informs their sense of a place.

Then there is the aspect of work-leisure dualism that constitutes our daily routines. As Johansen et al. (2021) put it, leisure is a breaking away from work life. However, when this work/leisure dualism frames spatial planning, friluftsliv is planned for as something separate. We argue that this leads to an imbalance evident in the contrasting leisure mobility patterns we unearthed. For COs, this work-leisure dualism is easier to break than for NCOs, using easy car access for flexibility to integrate friluftsliv into their mobility practices. This is in stark contrast to most NCOs’ experience, as they must overcome several barriers to access friluftsliv. The enrolment in a hegemonic automobile-centric system of mobility leads to a lack of demand for public transport services by most hikers, limiting the agency of the few NCOs to express their needs in mobility transitions. Strikingly, despite the emergence of several car sharing services enabled by digitalisation, informants did not highlight these as relevant in relation to their access to friluftsliv.

5.2. Friluftsliv as meaningful mobility

Accessing nature mostly through automobile ownership to some extent contradicts the sense of closeness to nature, ironically sustaining a car-centric community of nature lovers. Achieving the municipal objective of 70 percent of trips being taken by public and active transport by 2030 requires transitioning away from automobile lock-in. Hence, uncovering why people feel they need to own a car despite living in urban areas reveals a gap between local policy and the culture of urban residents. Thus, looking reflexively at the dynamic of emotions in pursuit of ‘the good life’ highlights the contemporary significance and challenge of urban mobility transitions. Our complex relations and connections to nature, including on the affective plane, shape action. We see car ownership as an affective outcome of pursued human-and-nature encounters.

This situation disfavours residents who in principle do not wish to or cannot afford to own a car, limiting their pursuit of friluftsliv as ‘the good life’. While relatively affluent, Stavanger has among the highest levels of income inequality in Norway (Statistics Norway, 2019). Leisure mobility differences show what it means to be marginalized in a wealthy city.

Rather than being a critique of friluftsliv or automobility, our paper challenges social constructs of public transport. Beyond a means to move people, it must do so in ways aligned with local cultures and values, yet in this case social and environmental values are competing, as evident on the emotive plane. A move away from automobility necessarily requires expanded service provision to meet people’s mobility priorities, with scope for some shifts in these needs and desires in the cognitive and discursive domain. This implies the need for intentional work to unlearn received narratives of how to access nature to achieve urban mobility transition goals.

Understanding friluftsliv as a form of meaningful mobility reveals the nuances that should be accounted for when planning for urban mobility transitions. In Stavanger, spaces for friluftsliv activities often fall outside the parameters of existing public transportation, a system designed to address work commute needs. Automobility, thus, remains a defining form of movement if one is to pursue friluftsliv activities. If urban mobility transitions reproduce this dualistic work-leisure paradigm, ‘new mobility’ (such as on-demand and shared mobility services) might provide greater flexibility in the ‘meaningful mobility’ of work-life assemblages, but still uphold forced car dependency in leisure mobility. This has implications beyond our case context to leisure

assemblages more generally. To transcend dichotomous work-leisure axes in urban mobility transitions, we can benefit from viewing mobility in a more nuanced way. As we have shown in this article, friluftsliv, which is an important form of mobility but also reliant upon other modalities that structure access to this form of mobility, carries significant meaning and is entangled with assemblages of emotions, space and culture. There are also mobility justice (Sheller, 2018) implications if car-restricting policies unevenly affect marginalized people and increasingly enclose friluftsliv spaces in favour of the highly automobile middle-class. In other words, our insights reflect how mobility is always entangled in complex power relations and hierarchies. In Stavanger, the automobility regime places barriers on the transition to a more sustainable form of friluftsliv as mobility.

6. Conclusion: cognitive and emotive shaping of greenurban mobility transition imaginaries

In this paper, we have examined how people engaged in friluftsliv relate this activity to their broader mobility practices. We have done so by looking at what mobility means in a specific context, spatially, culturally and politically from a mobilities perspective in which mobility and movement “carries with it the burden of meaning” (Adey, 2017; Cresswell, 2006 p. 7; Flemsæter et al., 2015). The emotional geography of friluftsliv illustrates how the commitment to and peculiar relationship with nature, challenges the realization of the envisioned urban mobility transition due to forced car dependency. A lifestyle culturally associated with what constitutes ‘the good life’, accompanied with car dependency, raises issues of agency, social inclusion and mobility justice. Planning for leisure mobility as something outside of daily routines, as separate from work life (Johansen et al., 2021, p. 140), commodifies leisure as something more attainable by and affordable to privileged social groups, further excluding the vulnerable and marginalized from partaking in culture, and in the social shaping of collective identity.

Engaging with our empirical data through the lens of affectual approaches (Conradson, 2016; Deleuze and Guattari, 1987), we have seen how the affective production of meaning in the mobilities of friluftsliv is intrinsically tied to car ownership and automobile identities in forms of affectual assemblages that include the materialities of nature spaces and cars, mobility practices, and local mobility discourses. On this basis, we argue that automobility frames the movement and mobilities of friluftsliv, which in affective and emotional assemblages constitutes an important aspect of the good life in the Stavanger context. Through this dynamic, friluftsliv, and by extension the good life for residents of Stavanger, both become undergirded by the power dynamics and mobility justice (Sheller, 2018) implications associated with automobility.

In closing, we submit that mobility planners must look to emotional geographies and affectual aspects when planning urban mobility transitions. More specifically, they must consider the multi-faceted aspects of mobility in the places where they occur, to better enable a transition that is not only green but also just. While the contrasting emotional and experiential landscapes of diverse transport modal users highlight possible pathways towards less automobile-centric systems, they also constitute sobering proof of the challenges for just urban mobility transitions.

CRedit authorship contribution statement

Helene S. Tråsavik: Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Methodology, Visualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing, Project administration. **Morten R. Loe:** Conceptualization, Formal analysis, Supervision, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. **Katrina King:** Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Methodology. **Siddharth Saren:** Funding acquisition, Methodology, Project administration, Writing – review & editing, Conceptualization, Supervision, Writing – original draft.

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