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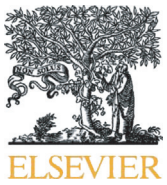

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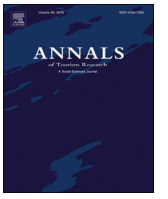

Full Length Article

Tourism mobilities and climate crisis dilemmas: Tourists traveling towards a climate apocalypse?

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ABSTRACT

Framed by a multidimensional approach to dilemmas, this qualitative study focuses on Norwegians' views on tourism mobilities and climate change dilemmas, contextual aspects, coping strategies, and consequences. Despite being situated in ideological and moral landscapes where the climate crisis is largely ignored, all participants acknowledge the dilemmas. However, the unconcerned deny personal responsibility and are unwilling to change their travel habits, representing a typical tourist mindset regarding environmental concerns. Pro-environmentalists are critical of neoliberal values and call for responsible tourism practices. Both groups agree that tourism needs regulations. Managing tourism's commons tragedy character on a global level poses challenges due to capitalist forces and low political priority. The study calls for pro-environmental changes at the individual, institutional, and political levels.

Introduction

Engagement with nature is a foundational aspect of Norwegian culture and society, deeply rooted in the national identity (Vigane & Sæther, 2020; Witoszek, 1998). Despite this connection to the environment, there appears to be a paradoxical disconnection when it comes to acknowledging and addressing the climate crisis (Norgaard, 2011). A comprehensive quantitative study conducted in 2022 examining public perceptions of climate change across six European countries revealed that Norwegians are more likely to exhibit climate scepticism and are less convinced that their individual actions can contribute to climate change mitigation (PERITIA, 2022). In this article, we delve into these conflicting attitudes as a series of dilemmas, acknowledging the awareness of the link between the climate crisis and travel habits, yet noting a reluctance to alter vacation behaviours. Additionally, we include other interconnected global crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and rising inflation, to better understand their effects on climate change perceptions and actions.

A dilemma can be defined as "a culturally embedded double-faced phenomenon in which a situation and/or discourse characterized by uncertainty, contradictions or conflicts, is related to cognitions and feelings of ambivalence in individual or institutional thinking" (Höijer, Lidskog, & Uggla, 2006, p. 360). Dilemmas related to tourism mobilities and the climate change (Cooper & Nagel, 2022) are based on an impending environmental disaster and the difficulty of not knowing when, where, and what will happen (Höijer et al., 2006). These dilemmas are further complicated by anti-environmental socio-cultural tourism norms and practices (Bianchi & Stephenson, 2014; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2018; Juvan & Dolnicar, 2014, 2021).

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A multitude of research has explored dilemmas related to tourism. These dilemmas range from the environmental and social impacts of mass tourism (Holden, 2017) to the carbon footprint of air travel (Hales & Caton, 2017; Higham, Cohen, & Cavaliere, 2014; Young, Markham, Reis, & Higham, 2015), and the sustainability challenges in the accommodation industry (Melissen, Koens, Brinkman, & Smit, 2016). Specific issues such as the effects of deglaciation on ski tourism (Carver & Tweed, 2021), the ethical considerations of tourist behaviour (Hindley & Font, 2017), the conflict between individual desires and public good in natural resource utilization (Schott, Reisinger, & Milfont, 2010), the contradictions inherent in slow tourism (Khan, 2015), and the peculiar phenomenon of "flights to nowhere" during the COVID-19 pandemic (Pratt & Tolkach, 2023, p. 735) have also been examined. Despite the extensive research, there is an absence of a cohesive theoretical framework. Among the studies that do incorporate theoretical perspectives, many draw upon the concept of social dilemmas (Chica, Hernández, & Bulchand-Gidumal, 2021; Hindley & Font, 2017; Melissen et al., 2016; Schott et al., 2010) or the attitude-behaviour gap (Juvan & Dolnicar, 2014, 2021; Pratt & Tolkach, 2023).

Here, we aim at enhancing our understanding of tourism mobilities and climate crisis dilemmas by including not only social but also existential, affective, and ideological dilemmas (Höijer et al., 2006; Mosquera & Jylhä, 2022). To achieve this, we employ a multidimensional research approach (Höijer et al., 2006) that investigates people's experiences with dilemmas, contextual aspects of these dilemmas, people's coping strategies for managing such dilemmas, and how people assess the consequences of these coping strategies. Based on this, we ask several questions: What are our informants' thoughts and feelings on climate change and tourism mobilities dilemmas in a time of crisis? What is the context for their decision-making and sense-making in this regard? What coping strategies do they consider for managing these dilemmas, and what consequences do they think such strategies could entail? In unpacking these questions, we recognize the importance of situating tourists' reasonings in a socio-cultural context (Norgaard, 2018).

Norwegian ideological and moral (tourism) landscapes

Norway, as a welfare state, developed from the 1930s and particularly in the 1950–60s (Storo, 2021). The state provides public education, health services, childcare, pensions, and unemployment support to its citizens. Until the 1980s, the country blended governing traditions that only weakly addressed economic rationalism, regardless of the governments' policy positions (Christensen, 2003). From around 1980, Norway's oil production has been subject to a resource rent tax of 78 %, which has made the country extremely wealthy. Around the same time, neoliberal philosophy began to permeate politics, the public, and the populace (Finstad, 2021). As part of this, the "supermarket state" began to evolve, altering "some of the integrative and collective features of Norway's political culture" and redefining rights towards "more individual and egoistic than collective" (Christensen, 2003, pp. 185–186). In this shift, a "new, market-led definition of the citizen" emerged (Bianchi & Stephenson, 2014, p. 94), and authorities no longer just executed the will of the people but provided measures and used language that pleased capitalists and other powerholders. Individualism, self-interest, human freedom, and personal wealth became part of common-sense discourse (Evans & Sewell, 2013).

Norgaard (2011) argues that many Norwegians are "living in denial" about climate change, and that his denial or moral order infuses all levels of societal actors. Her study reveals a two-sided sense of collective self: as humble, nature-loving, egalitarian, Christian, and humanitarian; and as a defender of the wealthy oil-based national state. "High levels of wealth, education, idealism, and environmental values, together with a petroleum-based economy, make the contradiction between knowledge and action particularly visible in Norway", according to Norgaard (2011, p. 10). Dealing with this clash in self-presentation, Norwegians distance themselves from climate change by not thinking about it and instead focusing on the positive aspects of life in affluent Norway.

Since Norgaard's (2011) analysis, global climate problems have worsened and are more often referred to as a crisis. Nevertheless, newer studies indicate that Norgaard's claim still is valid. One study shows that one in four Norwegians are climate sceptics, believing global warming is primarily natural (Delebekk & Frem, 2023). Another study reveals that only 36 % believe climate change will impact them personally now or soon (PERITIA, 2022). A third study surveying Norwegians' attitudes towards climate change and policy, demonstrates that most respondents, with some variation, are not particularly concerned (Aasen, Klemetsen, Reed, & Vatn, 2019). Even dedicated environmentalists face dilemmas reconciling mobility with environmental values (Volden, 2019). The Norwegian government acknowledges climate change dilemmas yet continues with oil policies and give concessions for new oil fields. Moreover, the surplus of the "oil fund" is "to be used to enhance the growth potential of the Norwegian economy," according to the fiscal rule (Regjeringen, 2024). With this self-centred rule, the Norwegian government does not allocate its fortune to international responsibilities. Regarding tourism politics, it is cloaked in rhetoric that combines growth and the Green Shift, a neoliberal approach where environmental concerns are sidelined by fossil-fuel policies.

Environmental concerns generally tend to be absent in holidaymaking (Canavan, 2017; Juvan & Dolnicar, 2014, 2021). With its 5.4 million inhabitants, Norway was among the top five countries in the world for air-travel frequency before COVID-19 (Aasen et al., 2022). Domestic flying is defended by a scant rail network and the country's sparsely populated, elongated geography. Nine out of ten Norwegians will not stop flying to protect the environment (Reiseliv 1, 2023). "Travel by air is not (at least currently) socially 'moralized' with respect to climate change" (Aasen et al., 2022, p. 12). In Norwegian public debates, flight shame is seen as an elitist, moralizing rhetoric that disregards those with few other effective transportation options (Andersen, 2022). At the same time, Norwegians who often fly abroad are willing to pay higher carbon taxes (Denstadli & Veisten, 2020), indicating that they acknowledge the dilemmas of travel.

Literature review

In this section, we first discuss our conceptual approach consisting of partly overlapping social, existential, affective, and ideological dilemmas. Second, we explore individual, institutional, and political aspects of managing tourism mobilities and climate crisis dilemmas.

Some major facets of dilemmas

Dilemmas are central to a modern citizen's daily life. To recognize a dilemma, one must feel some "uncertainty, contradictions, or conflicts" and "paradoxically, new knowledge, such as about global warming, may give rise to more uncertainty" (Höijer et al., 2006, p. 159). Moreover, the uncertainty of people's dilemmas is embedded in institutional and political discourses at different levels. Theoretically, dilemmas can be understood in terms of social, existential, affective, and ideological types (Höijer et al., 2006; Mosquera & Jylhä, 2022).

Social dilemma draws on game theory or rational choice theory and has also been labelled as the prisoner's dilemma (Höijer et al., 2006) and the tragedy of the commons (Hardin, 1968). One early definition is by Dawes (1980), who, inspired by Hardin, states that social dilemma occurs when: (a) each individual receives a higher payoff for a socially defecting choice (e.g., using all the energy available, polluting his or her neighbours) than for a socially cooperative choice, no matter what the other individuals in society do; however, (b) all individuals are better off if all cooperate than if all defect. Social dilemmas are, thus, conflicts "between individual freedom and individual responsibility" (Nakkerud, 2021, p. 892). For instance, a social dilemma appears when people continue consumption-oriented, mobile lifestyles, but know that it is damaging the environment. Thus, a social dilemma is about difficult choices, such as when or whether to rely on scientific evidence, and how to choose between alternatives (Höijer et al., 2006).

Dilemmas related to existential conundrums are more individually based (Höijer et al., 2006). They are about people's struggle to find meaning and purpose in life, and their capacity to experience themselves both as a subject and as an object, or from both an inner and outer perspective (May, 1969). This struggle is a fundamental part of the human experience, and all individuals must navigate this dialectical relationship. Such dilemmas can lead to various forms of personal distress and dysfunctions (De Castro, 2013). Modern humans, for instance, find meaning in traveling for pleasure, however, they also know that such a lifestyle is harming the earth, even threatening the very foundations of human existence (Thorpe & Jacobson, 2013).

Höijer et al. (2006) acknowledge the emotional reactions that social and existential dilemmas may cause, but they do not deal with the dilemmatic nature of emotions. Mosquera and Jylhä (2022) do, labelling them affective dilemmas. This occurs in:

> Situations in which individuals face a conflict between two or more incompatible emotional responses to an object or phenomenon, where there does not seem to be an obvious solution as to how one ought to feel overall in the face of it, and where the emotional status quo is not an option.
>
> [(Mosquera & Jylhä, 2022, p. 364)]

Related to climate change, people experience conflicting and ambivalent emotions, such as joy, fear, sadness, guilt, shame, uncertainty, anxiety, hope, and anger, that can be understood normatively. Thus, affective dilemmas are linked to the appropriate emotional reactions and how these are publicly negotiated, critiqued, and justified (Mosquera & Jylhä, 2022). Moreover, appropriate socially and individually situated emotions are not straightforward. For instance, climate change may give warmer summers in the Northern parts of Europe, that please people but at the same time, knowing the reasons why, make them feel guilt and anxiety.

These three types of dilemmas are embedded in ideologically situated social norms. In a tourism context, there are value conflicts between socioeconomic and ecological sustainability (Nakkerud, 2021), reflecting contrasting ideologies, such as neoliberalist growth and ecological degrowth based positions. Scholarly accounts on ideological dilemmas are based on the work of Billig et al. (1988). They argue that people are confronted with contradicting views, and that handling ideological dilemmas is part of the way we all cope with life and its realities.

A strong ideological strand of western capitalist societies is individualism (Billig et al., 1988). This ideology is filled with various dilemmas based on "contradictions within the liberal ideology (between competing values of equality versus respect for authority, of fairness as equity or equality, of individualism versus the common good) played out in everyday debates" (Condor, Tileagă, & Billig, 2013, p. 274). People think and argue ideologically based on maxims, values, and opinions that are temporally, spatially, culturally, and historically situated, and that form the basis for their common-sense thinking and speaking (Benschop, Halsema, & Schreurs, 2001). On one hand, people operating within the frames of common sense may behave as obedient citizens, not overtly reflecting on everyday situations or political issues (Billig et al., 1988). Even when we treat issues as part of the triviality of everyday life, our practices may still bear an implicit ideology. On the other hand, the notion that arguments are ambivalent, and contradictory may make people reflect upon taken-for-granted topics, such as the freedom of movement and a consumer lifestyle. Thus, people experience various dilemmas within which an ideology is implicit or explicit.

Ways of averting dilemmas on individual, institutional and political levels

Brulle and Norgaard (2019) seek to explain climate crisis denial as social inertia, thus why people tend to set aside or even counter unpleasant narratives about situations in the world. Social inertia is thus their way of conceptualizing cognitive dissonance, from a sociological perspective. They discuss individual, institutional, and political socio-cultural processes (see also Norgaard, 2011, 2018). On the individual level, people's ecological habitus – their way of living and thinking – is challenged by knowing about climate change, and the dilemma between "daily carbon-producing activities" and "expectations for a low carbon lifestyle" (Brulle & Norgaard, 2019, p. 900). As solving this dilemma might disrupt the current social order, people choose strategies such as consciously ignoring or denying climate facts. They continue with their consumption and business as usual, thereby rejecting what Žižek (2010, p. 328) terms "a climate apocalypse" and rebel against any changes in the status quo. Tourists, for instance, tend to deny the air travel and climate change dilemma: they act responsibly at home but not on holiday, thinking that others must act first (Becken, 2007).

In neoliberal, post-political societies, the ideology of climate change tends to be reduced to particular causes (Berglez & Olausson, 2014). Thus, on the institutional level, the social inertia appears through blaming the taken-for-granted means of production. Brulle and Norgaard (2019) argue that climate change dilemmas on this level are denied in two ways. The first is to uphold the status quo of neoliberal capitalism through socially accepted narratives. The Norwegian Government, for instance, defends oil production, arguing that it will take decades to change the energy platforms. This is also argued to preserve people's welfare. The second is to commodify and transform climate issues into market objects, for instance, by turning carbon quotas into "climate capitalism". "Capitalism's growth-addiction and fossil fuel dependence means that it cannot possibly decarbonize" (Newell & Paterson, 2011, p. 23), is an example of an institutional way of denying climate change. This rhetoric enables tourism industry actors to work against de-growth initiatives (Fletcher, 2011), market their sustainable practices, and sit and wait for cleaner technology (Gössling & Peeters, 2007; Pulido-Fernández, Cárdenas-García, & Espinosa-Pulido, 2019; Yaw, 2005).

On the political level, social inertia appears as three types of discursive frames: the reactionary, the reformist, and the radical, according to Brulle and Norgaard (2019). The reactionary is about counter-narratives and movements filled with climate misinformation, produced by corporations and neoliberal think-tanks to intervene with political economical interventions. Its post-political mission is to uphold the power of industries that strongly rely on environmentally harmful consumption such as the oil industry. This mission lacks strong emotional involvement with climate change and is marked by "'neurotic' micro-political action", such as reusing and recycling (Berglez & Olausson, 2014, p. 69). The reformist is the efforts of climate movements such as Green Governmentality which works towards strong international governance, and Ecological Modernization or Climate Capitalism (Brulle & Norgaard, 2019), labelled the Green Shift in Norway, which advocates technologically and financially new forms of production. The reactionary and the reformist movements have conflicting interests that hinder political climate actions.

The radical approach, which also is labelled Climate Justice, "… links climate change to larger issues related to the organization of the neoliberal capitalist regime, the North/South divide, unequal economic and political relationships, and a moral critique of the existing international order" (Brulle & Norgaard, 2019, p. 891). The radicalness of this position leads to political conflicts and inactions as it challenges the reformists' capitalist doctrine and market economy, through its quest for a new social order (Brulle & Norgaard, 2019). As it holds the marginalized political position of the three, climate politics remain limited to "piecemeal, incremental actions that do not disrupt the existing institutional, political, and economic arrangements" (Brulle & Norgaard, 2019, p. 892). Fig. 1 summarizes our theoretical framework.

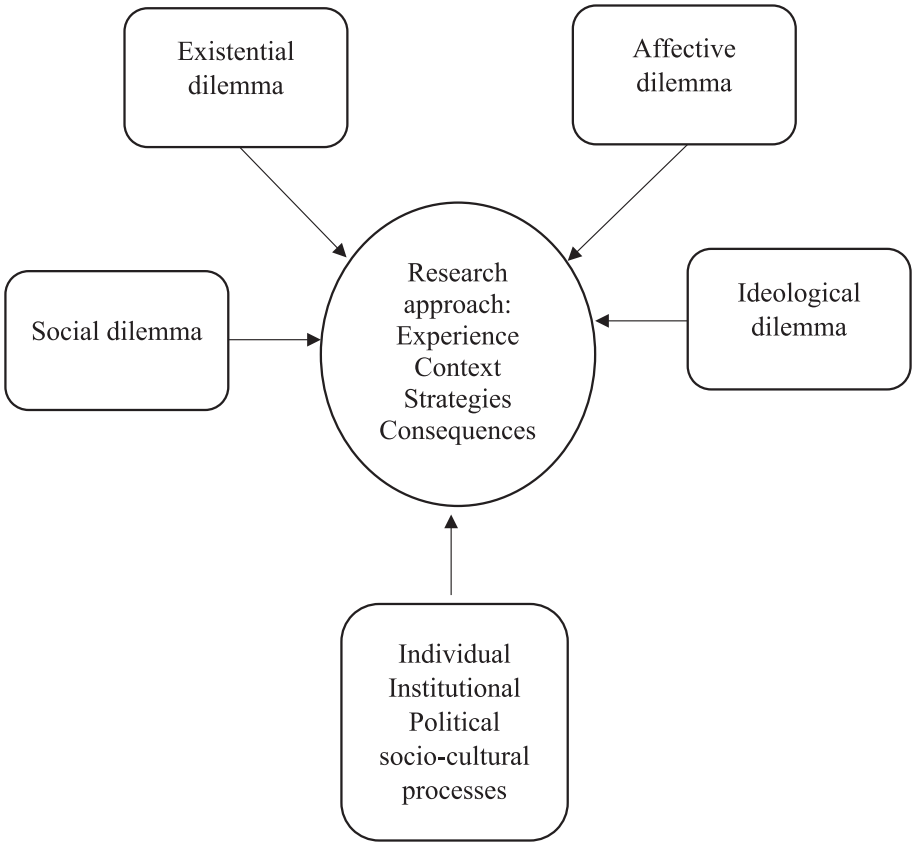

Fig. 1. Theoretical framework.

Study methods

This inductive qualitative study, inspired by a constructionist approach to interviewing (Brinkmann, 2013), is part of a four-year research project focusing on tourism in Norway during and in the aftermath of COVID-19, in which we focus on domestic tourists. To gather data, interviews were conducted over three to four days: in late August/early September 2021 and in August 2022, six months after the reopening of society. On both occasions, two researchers conducted interviews in the municipality of the North Cape. Convenience sampling methods were used, such as approaching visitors in the cafeteria in the North Cape Hall, on the headland, and talking to people in a hotel restaurant, and in a local museum and tourist information office, all situated in the nearby town of Honningsvåg. Snowball sampling was also utilized, where an acquaintance passed on the researchers' information letter to friends. Additionally, purposive sampling was used, and we had a pre-arrangement for two interviews with three locals, that we knew from earlier work relations, at their workplaces.

In total, 27 semi-structured interviews were conducted, with 15 in 2021 and 12 in 2022. For this paper, we excluded six interviews not relevant to the research questions. Of the remaining 21 interviews (Table 1), 10 were dyadic, six individual, and five group interviews with three to four participants. Except for two interviews, they were done by both researchers. People interviewed in groups had pre-existing relationships as couples, family, friends, and/or coworkers. All interviews were conducted in Norwegian and lasted between 11 and 67 min, on average 37 min. The study included 21 male and 21 female interviewees. Fourteen interviews (29 people) were with individuals aged 40 or older, six interviews (10 people) were with individuals in their twenties or thirties, and one was conducted with a middle-aged woman, her daughter and her daughter's friend, who were both in their twenties. Among the interviewees, 20 were tourists, 11 were on business trips, and 11 were locals.

In 2021, the informants chose to travel in the off-season to avoid crowds and limit the possibility of COVID-19 infection. In 2022, after the reopening, there were many international cruise tourists on the island, but very few Norwegians due to the end of the main

Table 1
The informants.

Pseudonym	Relationship	Age	No of interviewers	Duration	Year	Type of informant
Man 1	Coworkers	67+	2	48 min	2021	Locals
Woman 1		50+				
Man 2		50 +	1	25 min	2021	Local
Man 3	Coworkers	60 +	1	30 min	2021	Business
Woman 2		40 +				Locals
Man 4	Couple	50 +	2	60 min	2021	Tourists
Woman 3						
Man 5	Couple	40 +	2	42 min	2021	Tourists
Woman 4						
Man 6	Couple	40 +	2	31 min	2021	Tourists
Woman 5						
Man 7	Couple	40 +	2	41 min	2021	Tourists
Woman 6						
Man 8	Coworkers	40 +	2	53 min	2021	Businesses
Man 9						
Man 10	Friends	50+	2	15 min	2021	Tourists
Man 11						
Man 12						
Man 13						
Man 14		40+	2	40 min	2022	Tourist
Woman 7		40+	2	35 min	2022	Local
Woman 8	Family and friends	50+	2	28 min	2022	Tourists
Woman 9		20+				
Woman 10		20+				
Woman 11	Friends	70+	2	50 min	2022	Tourists
Woman 12						
Man 15	Coworkers	40+	2	11 min	2022	Businesses
Woman 13						
Man 16	Couple	50+	2	66 min	2022	Tourists
Woman 14						
Woman 15	Coworkers	20+	1	23 min	2022	Businesses
Woman 16						
Woman 17						
Man 17	Friends	20+	2	21 min	2022	Locals
Man 18						
Man 19						
Woman 18	Coworkers	20+	2	11 min	2022	Businesses
Woman 19						
Woman 20						
Woman 21		30+	2	52 min	2022	Local
Man 20		30+	2	67 min	2022	Local
Man 21		20+	2	33 min	2022	Local

summer holiday period. Locals were recruited to remedy this small number of domestic tourists. For the research questions, it was not a prerequisite that the informants were on holiday at that specific point in time. Informed consent was obtained before the unstructured interviews were audio-recorded. To ensure ethics and anonymity, no names or personal information were registered. The study was approved by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data. In 2021, the interviews focused on holidays taken before COVID-19, holidays during the pandemic that dealt with infection preventive measures, and the interrelationship between tourism mobilities, COVID-19, and climate change. In 2022, the interviews concentrated on tourism mobilities and climate change, including other current crises such as inflation, and less explicit attention to the pandemic.

Thematic analysis was conducted using a combination of data analysis software and traditional tools such as word documents, pen, and paper. The opportunity to work in more creative ways "maximizes researcher data interaction in a variety of learning modalities, ensuring that the analysis process is rigorous and productive", according to Maher, Hadfield, Hutchings & de Eyto (2018, p. 1). One researcher followed the steps for thematic analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). All interviews were transcribed verbatim, followed by discussions to search for patterns related to tourism mobilities and climate crisis. The initial coding was done in Atlas.ti, and relevant coded data was moved into a Word document, where the process of identifying themes started.

During the early stage of analysis, we constructed five themes: (a) climate change challenges, (b) environmental responsibility, (c) holiday making, (d) COVID-19, and (e) global unstable political circumstances. At a later stage of the analysis, we applied Höijer et al.'s (2006) multidimensional approach, which turned our analysis more deductive. The coding aimed to identify (1) experiences with dilemmas, (2) their socio-cultural contexts, (3) coping strategies, and (4) consequences of such coping. The data were then moved to NVivo and recoded. Back in Word, the codes and extracts belonging to the four dimensions were systematized again. In this process, codes were removed, moved around, and recoded.

The study has some limitations. Due to a lack of personalized data, we were unable to conduct a fine-tuned analysis of socio-demographic factors. Additionally, all informants were traveling during their holidays, which means we did not hear from those who had stopped this practice, whether for climate crisis or other reasons. We also did not explore gender dimensions or include voices from the tourism industry, community, or politics. While our turn from inductive to deductive modes of reasoning might be considered a limitation, this switch is common in qualitative research (Armat, Assarroudi, Rad, Sharifi, & Heydari, 2018). Our aim was not to generalize the results but to unpack how our interviewees, at a specific time during and after the pandemic, reflected on tourism mobilities and climate crisis dilemmas.

Tourism mobilities and climate crisis dilemmas

Drawing on Höijer et al.'s (2006) multidimensional framework, we first unpack *social, existential, affective and ideological dilemmas*. We then connect these dilemmas to a Norwegian *context*, by exploring individual, institutional and political factors, as well as the global matters of COVID-19 and inflation. Further, we discuss the informants' suggested *coping strategies* for managing the dilemmas. We end this section by investigating what *consequences* such management might have.

Dilemmas of tourism mobilities and climate crisis

Almost all the informants acknowledged the reality of climate change and how it conflicted with their travel habits. Five of them were strongly environmentally concerned, while two were climate sceptics. We identified experiences with partly overlapping social, existential, affective, and ideological dilemmas. As a social dilemma, they described humankind as self-centred, egoistic, and progressive in its never-ending craving for new things and experiences. Thus, the individual's own interests, desires, and benefits were voiced before collective concerns. When asked why people knowingly did not choose to reduce their ecological footprint through traveling less or differently, one informant argued that "trying to make people take responsible choices is not easy. We are only animals" (Man 14). Another informant responded to the inquiry of whether people were ready to change holiday behaviour for the sake of climate change by arguing, "I don't think so. Many people went to Spain during the pandemic when there was no quarantine, although it was strongly recommended not to travel abroad. … People are very selfish" (Man 5).

Informants indicated existential dilemmas in thinking that people might face doomsday, and that a restart of the planet is needed. "We have damaged the earth enough; she is doing everything to get rid of us" (Woman 7). An even more climate-sceptical informant argued: "You're going to die once, anyway. I don't see the point of taking care of the planet. … It's going to go to hell, anyway. So, why not enjoy yourself when you are here. I mean this" (Man 18). In a similar vein, another informant believed that the way we live destroys the planet. But still, we need to make the best of it for our local communities while they still exist:

> We have done so much to this earth. … I think we can do something for the local environment while we are here. But then I think that no matter what you do, you just want to prolong it. There will always be something that will make the earth having to restart. Just like a plant where the seed must come up again. … I don't think we can save the planet as we see it today. That's where I ended up.
>
> [(Man 20)]

In thinking about climate change as a highly complex matter and difficult to mitigate, a sense of hopelessness, sorrow, denial, and avoidance was voiced, indicating the affective dilemmas: "It becomes so overwhelming when you sit as an individual and

think about – what can I do to prevent it or stop what is happening? At least I feel helpless at times" (Man 21). Woman 1 reflected upon her traveling habits in relation to climate change and COVID-19 and expressed sadness that it might come to an end:

> We could travel anywhere. We sat on the beach at one end of the world and thought, where should we go next. We looked at the beer bottle, we drank Corona, let's go to Mexico. Back then we were in Indonesia. Then I thought that it is absurd that we are in a position where we can sit like that and have no restrictions on where we can go, ever. … It is with sadness in my heart and soul if it turns out that I can never travel to Thailand again.

Another informant felt sad about how our climate-unfriendly actions would affect the situation for future generations: "We think that things are going well, for this generation anyway. It is the next ones who will have to live with the impacts. It is very sad" (Woman 17).

Regarding ideological dilemmas, most of the informants pointed to how the economy overshadowed environmental concerns. Their strongly embedded desires to travel and their mobile consumption-oriented lifestyles had not been altered by the pandemic:

> Since I was little, I have been traveling during the holidays. … It is natural for me, who was born in 1977 … I think that we who have grown up in a travel culture, we live it. I think it will take quite a bit more than a year and a half of a pandemic to change this. … I think, if there will be a change in this culture in terms of traveling, it might be the concern for the environment.
>
> [(Man 8)]

One informant voiced mainstream Norwegian ideologies of freedom, rural living and long distances, economy overriding ecological sustainability, and a disregard for flight shame by arguing in this way:

> You have forces that really work against tourism, Miljøpartiet de grønne [The Green Party]. Where they talk about Ola and Kari Nordmann [Jane and John Doe] only being allowed to fly so and so many times a year … If you don't feel flight shame today, you're yuck, yuck. If you live in Northern Norway with a long and dark winter and need to travel twice a year to warmer areas, what will it be like in the future? That you get a few flying hours only?
>
> [(Man 2)]

Our informants acknowledged a series of tourism mobilities and climate change dilemmas. They expressed conflicts between individual and collective responsibilities, this social dilemma can also be seen as an ideological dilemma between individualism and collectivism. Their existential dilemmas reflected tensions between human lifestyles and non-human suffering. Affective dilemmas were aroused when thinking about how tourism has been and how it would be in the future. Additionally, ideological dilemmas were voiced as oppositions between neoliberal ideas and pro-environmentalism.

Contextual factors underpinning the dilemmas

These four dilemmas were underpinned by individual, institutional, and political factors. On the individual level, most of the informants lacked the willingness to remedy the various dilemmas, they were the unconcerned. These informants were reluctant to give up their privileged comfortable lifestyles in affluent Norway and to change their travel habits for the sake of mitigating climate change, at least not on their own accord. Holidaymaking and air travel were part of their lifestyles, freed from most worries and responsibilities. Living a hectic life, flying was the most sensible option, as argued by Woman 8.

In one interview, the carefree lifestyle was linked to a discussion of contemporary affluence, the difference between generations, and not having experienced any major societal crisis. Even in older generations, frugality was not about taking care of the climate:

> Man 16 – like my mother, they are well off, they have enough money. But my mother just repaired the elbow of my father's Lacoste sweater. I can fix that, she said. I had thrown it away. … It's still in their spinal cord and they don't do it to save money or save the environment, but for the sake of preserving things. There was scarcity at that time. She still sees the value in the jumper and sews on a patch. So, the jumper is just as nice.
> Woman 14 – reuse, they do it out of frugality.
> Man 16 – not for climate or that they don't have money.

Some climate crisis scepticism was also voiced to avoid facing the dilemmas of the tourism industry and climate change:

> It is probably a bit more complex than blaming travel. … Climate is constantly changing anyway. It comes in waves; it gets hotter and colder. But of course, there is more CO_2 being thrown into the air, so it has some consequences. But I think it is much more than the travel that leads to climate change. If people were to travel less, then we would have less climate change? No, that would be a bit wrong to claim.
>
> [(Woman 7)]

In some sense, the interviewees also expressed anthropocentric values by making humans more important than nature: "If someone is going to decide that it is not allowed to travel, then it will be felt very restrictive. At least if it is not authorised in anything other than environment concerns" (Woman 16).

Some of the informants had changed their travel habits due to environmental concerns or indicated that the pandemic had opened their eyes regarding the effects of reducing pollution, making them more pro-environmental. Woman 2, for instance, avoided short holiday breaks and was conscious of staying longer at a destination when traveling. She also argued, "I think there are many options, that you're conscious and don't do everything on autopilot". Woman 18 wanted to try interrail as she felt "you can experience in a completely different way if you travel more environmentally friendly". Seeing the positive environmental effects of the first pandemic lockdown for people and animals, woman 3 argued "I don't think we should travel as much as we do".

Although this latter part indicated value changes, institutionally, tourism was strongly embedded in their reasoning, and something they defended. For many informants, the tourism industry and its positive effects on the local economy were valued, although they acknowledged negative factors and environmental downsides. Woman 21 talked about how important tourists were for the local community (Honningsvåg): "I think about industry and trade, I am very happy to see that there is activity. It's black [polar night] here in the winter. In May when the tourists start to arrive. Something is awakening. … Everyone embraces them". She continued to speak about tourism as a social norm:

> It is not just society that decided that we should travel so much. The individual demands it today. It has built up over time, that we believe that we need it, that we must get some time off from the hustle and bustle of everyday life. We think we almost have a right to it. It's a bit repulsive to think about.

Politically, affluent Norway, with its welfare system, humanitarian values, and neoliberal consumer mentality, has leading politicians who do not want to take serious action to mitigate climate crisis. It was claimed that Norway addresses climate change issues internationally but does not implement effective measures domestically, as well as: "Politicians would say that money is the most important. Money govern anything" (Woman 12). Moreover, as a country of huge areas with unspoiled nature, politically, Norwegians fight over windmill projects and whether or when to terminate the oil industry. "We are completely dependent upon oil to make plastic and rubber, there are no other alternatives yet" (Man 20).

In the wake of the pandemic, the political economic situation in Norway is somewhat shifting. Beginning with the Second World War until the outbreak of COVID-19, the country and its people had not been significantly affected by global crises and, thus, lacked experience with economic hardship. However, since autumn 2021, mortgage and electricity prices have escalated from being very cheap to making some families and businesses struggle. For most of our informants, this had not yet affected their holiday patterns, just led to attempts to save on electricity. Inflation, however, made woman 13 and her family decide not to plan "a holiday abroad next year. It takes too much of the budget, we'd rather find things to do in the local area." Moreover, one informant reflected that:

> It will have knock-on effects if people have poorer finances. Then it may happen that you buy cheaper food that has been produced in a dirtier way, where more transport has been involved. But it can also have positive effects, that people become more concerned about using up the goods they have. Don't throw away so much.
>
> [(Woman 16)]

Thus, new political economic circumstances have the potential to contribute to solving climate crisis and tourism mobilities' social and ideological dilemmas, yet also produce new ones.

At national, regional, and local levels, politicians have for years considered tourism to be an important industry, particularly in rural and remote parts. In Northern Norway, small places such as Honningsvåg are economically dependent upon international cruise tourism to sustain a viable local community. In addition, the people living in such remote places are highly dependent upon flying both for business and leisure purposes, and they do not want authorities to implement strict travel regulations.

> I don't think we should have higher prices for fuel to prevent travel. We who live here have no other choice. It will make it even more difficult for us. Then I don't just think about my own holiday, I think about my job, among other things. … Such things have consequences; people cannot live here [without flying]. Then there will be no sustainable society.
>
> [(Woman 21)]

Thus, many of our informants wanted to continue their comfortable mobile lifestyles regardless of climate change, and some were even climate sceptics. Just a few had acknowledged their own responsibility towards the climate in terms of how they practiced or wanted to practice tourism mobilities in more pro-environmental ways. The reasonings of most of them were shaped by a neoliberal mindset and politicians' ways of dealing with climate crisis and new geopolitical changes and risks. This affected their lives and, to some extent, their holiday making. Informants living in rural Northern Norway needed politicians to secure transport infrastructure for locals and community development, in terms of tourism. Contextually, tourism was, in several ways, institutionalized on individual and political levels, and in relation to climate change, this was mainly linked to social and ideological dilemmas that reflected the authorities' reluctancy regarding environmental concerns.

Coping strategies for managing dilemmas: towards restrictions and regulations

Few of our informants talked about how they, on an individual level, could mitigate tourism mobilities and climate crisis dilemmas. Yet, the more pro-environmental informants were hoping for changes in consumer mentality, so that to save the planet, people would seriously start reflecting on their holiday making and stop excessive leisure travel. They wanted more people to reject the growth paradigm, thereby contributing to solving the dilemmas. In anticipation that after the pandemic, people would change their travel habits, one informant said:

> I just hope it settles into people's systems. That you don't have to go to the Mediterranean three times a year to refuel light and warmth. Or to Thailand even. Completely madness … Regardless of the pandemic, I think that we need to get rid of that growth mindset. You cannot operate with unlimited growth; the planet cannot afford that. We can pretend, right. It lasts our lifetime. … The idea that you can only pursue growth all the time, without it having consequences. You fool yourself. Pandemic or not.

[(Man 3)]

Despite being concerned about how travel restrictions would impact communities in Norway, most informants acknowledged the complexities of climate change mitigation and that it is necessary for political measures to be taken. Based on their embodied disposition for leisure travel, they talked about the need for governments to act, to take control, as "I do not know how we, as individuals, can solve it" (Woman 10). When reflecting upon how to cope with the dilemmas, many felt disempowered:

> Many think that 'I can't do anything about it anyway'. And then it doesn't really matter what I do or undertake. I think there are many who can come up with that line of thinking. Many of my mates think a bit like that. That they live somewhat isolated in their own bubble.

[(Man 21)]

When discussing political measures, informants also argued that if implemented, they needed to be calibrated to avoid affecting people's ways of living and that politicians ought to use incentives when proposing changes and not restrictions; they did not want regulations that would disrupt current neoliberal social order and its praising of individualism. This is evident in this expression: "Let's not exaggerate, it has to be a system which people can accept" (Man 13). Free public transportation was one concrete suggested measure, others were increased prices, taxes, quotas on traveling miles, and regulation on airport slots. A few informants did not travel much and were positive to air travel quotas: "That would be fine for me" (Man 16). One informant argued that global warming could be cured by investing in costly new technology. This would entail higher taxes, but people could also continue their mobile lifestyles.

When it came to coping strategies, most of our informants thus suggested various ways the authorities could regulate travel, however, hoping that this could be done without interfering with their mobile lifestyles. Thus, they were not caring for the sustainability of the visited destinations. These political coping strategies might not manage the ideological and social dilemmas. Just a few of them asked for changes in personal and social norms and addressed coping strategies that could manage existential, affective, and ideological dilemmas.

Consequences of managing dilemmas of tourism mobilities and climate crisis

The coping strategies suggested were mainly on the political level. Although governmental travel restrictions were accepted during COVID-19, imposing such measures in its wake "restrict our freedom. We who live in Norway and other Western countries are used to complete freedom" (Man 7). Moreover, in some interviews, it was claimed that to impose travel restrictions would put democratic and neoliberal values in danger: "Personally I react with protest. You should feel free to travel, free to do whatever you want, yes, do whatever you want" (Woman 10). Additionally, "It will be nearly impossible to come up with a solution that people will be satisfied with. As soon as you restrict people's freedom, they will be dissatisfied" (Woman 16). It could also lead to a "surveillance society or even a totalitarian society", as argued by man 2. Some of the informants claimed that travel restriction measures, such as quotas and taxation, would not be possible to enforce, as affluent Norwegians would be able to continue traveling, and people would search for creative ways to bend the rules.

If the government were to impose travel restrictions to help mitigate climate change, such measures could lead to social inequality, it was argued:

> Interviewer 1 – Is price the regulatory mechanism?
> Man 5 - I think so, I'm not happy that things are getting expensive, but I think it's the only effective regulation we have.
> Interviewer 2 – It will not affect the rich people.
> Man 5 – That is the big, most negative consequence. Those who do not have that many resources and who perhaps need a holiday the most cannot then afford it. It is an ugly consequence of this regulatory mechanism.

Travel restrictions could also stimulate conspiracy theories. Woman 21 argued: "I was thinking about conspiracy theories during the pandemic. I am afraid that if the authorities are going to start with strict environmental measures, that conspirations will flourish. That is scary".

A pro-environmental informant described the disruption of the social order in the pandemic as "a flash in the pan" (Woman 10). Already the summer of 2022, many Norwegians had started to fly abroad again, she argued. As she had been part of the environmental movement for many years, she knew it was difficult to change people's habits and perceptions of climate crisis. As it is now, small changes would not be enough. There is a need for stricter political measures to resolve these issues. She voiced her pessimism: "I have spent my entire youth in the environmental movement, and it is very arduous work. So, I'm not quite sure if we're going to turn around as dramatically as we must" (Woman 10).

Additionally, when people living in developing economies adopt our travel lifestyles, the globe and future generations will suffer even more. "I think when the large masses in China and India start travelling like we are doing now, then someone has to give in" (Man 5), without indicating whose responsibility it should be. Managing the dilemmas must be a global matter; that 'it must be a prerequisite that other countries do the same, that it is collective' (Woman 21), not just "little Norway, that aims to save the world" (Woman 14). Thus, if political measures were to be imposed to manage tourism mobilities and climate crisis dilemmas, they would have certain personal and ideological consequences. Travel restrictions would challenge people's individualistic mindsets and might have negative societal side-effects.

Discussion and conclusion

This paper has addressed the dilemmas of tourism mobilities and climate change among Norwegians during times of crises, in relation to the dilemmas' socio-cultural context, suggested coping strategies, and their consequences. We demonstrate that our informants are aware of social, ideological, existential, and affective dilemmas (Höijer et al., 2006; Mosquera & Jylhä, 2022). In that sense, they are not living in denial, in the way argued by Norgaard (2011), as they cognitively are aware of the climate crisis. However, most of them deny it as a personal responsibility, indicating that it is a matter of social inertia or cognitive dissonance (Brulle & Norgaard, 2019; Juvan & Dolnicar, 2014). In this concluding discussion, we address the issues related to the largest group of informants, the unconcerned action-rejecters, followed by the smaller group of pro-environmentalists, before discussing what they have in common. We conclude by suggesting some ways the dilemmas can be addressed more seriously.

The unconcerned informants acknowledge the dilemmas but dislike changing their travel lifestyles. They want to continue pursuing hedonic mobile lifestyles without taking personal responsibility or changing their norms. They represent a typical tourist mindset when it comes to climate change, in accordance with other studies (Becken, 2007; Canavan, 2017; Juvan & Dolnicar, 2014, 2021). Some of them are even climate sceptics and action-rejecters. Their worldviews are shaped by life in affluent Norway, a neoliberal mindset, and the authorities' evasive ways of dealing with climate crisis and reluctance towards terminating oil production. They think that coping strategies for managing the dilemmas are primarily the responsibility of politicians. Their institutional reasoning upholds narratives of neoliberal capitalism, and their political reasoning is a mix of the reactionary and the reformist categories, as introduced by Brulle and Norgaard (2019).

If authorities impose travel restrictions, our informants fear that personal freedom and democratic values would be abolished, and that Norwegians would rebel against such an ideological shift. Thus, they see few positive consequences on personal, institutional, and political levels in managing the dilemmas. The unconcerned informants align with the 29 % of the Norwegians who do not think that changing their behaviour would make much difference (PERITIA, 2022). Taking such actions is not part of their common-sense ideological thinking.

The pro-environmentalists are very much aware of the dilemmas and seek to adapt their travel habits to match this recognition. They are critical towards neoliberal values and call for a new mindset that would lead to more responsible tourism practices. Moreover, they also question the authorities' willingness to take serious climate crisis actions. Those being more radical (Brulle & Norgaard, 2019), work towards and ask for coping strategies that would manage the dilemmas on individual, institutional, and political levels. Yet, they are unsure if it is possible to turn around in due time, observing Norwegian's back to normal travel practices between pandemic lockdowns and in their aftermath. They acknowledge that the COVID-19 disrupted tourism's social order could not last. The COVID-19 pandemic crisis was therefore not the window of opportunity to "rethink and reset tourism toward a better pathway for the future" (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020, p. 610), as hoped for by critical tourism scholars.

Our main message is that neither the unconcerned nor the pro-environmentalists see any easy ways out of the predicaments of tourism mobilities and climate crisis. Both groups acknowledge stricter regulations on national and international levels as the way to go. While the unconcerned do not see their personal responsibility in managing the climate crisis, the pro-environmental informants realize the need for policies that will change tourism as a social institution. They demand major structural transformations – away from neoliberal growth ideologies and mindsets.

The conclusion is that our informants have conflicting views on the future of tourism mobilities considering climate crisis. Yet, they agree that tourism must be regulated. The most challenging aspect of managing the social dilemma of tourism mobility and the climate crisis is their "tragedy of the commons" character (Hardin, 1968) on a global scale. Hardin's proposed solutions were to either divide the common grazing land into private lands, where landowners must adjust the size of their herd to the land's capacity, or to implement some form of governmental regulation. Applying his first solution to the global climate crisis could be to divide responsibilities between nations. This is being done to varying degrees, with some governments taking action and others not. In Norway, the reformist Green Shift model advocates for new forms of production (Brulle & Norgaard, 2019), both technologically and financially, without ceasing oil production and aims to foster green tourism growth. The second solution, regulation, is challenging at a global level in the absence of a global authority. Currently, there are numerous high-level international discussions and a series of UN meetings and protocols addressing the issue, but with limited results. In terms of tourism, this field's expertise is underrepresented in the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (Scott & Gössling, 2022).

As an alternative to Hardin's suggestions, Ostrom (1990) has voiced a third solution: collective regimes based on collaboration and cooperation. The parallel to the global climate crisis would be collaborations between nations, global corporations and organizations. One good example is the European Union, which played an active and successful role in combating COVID-19 (Boin & Rhinard, 2023) and has strongly addressed climate crisis issues and implemented climate policies over the years (Cifuentes-Faura, 2022). EU's pandemic management shows that it is possible to manage social, existential, and affective dilemmas through national and collaborating regimes. Thus, issues conceived of as a global cultural trauma (Brulle & Norgaard, 2019) can be coped with through active cooperative regimes and citizen support (Heimtun & Viken, 2023).

In a similar vein and regarding mitigating tourism mobilities and climate crisis dilemmas in Norway, practical environmental measures could be introduced through Nordic collaborations. Such policies would intervene with neoliberalist regimes, policies, and ideologies. However, powerful tourism and other capitalist forces work against such transformations (Scott & Gössling, 2022), and climate change mitigations have low political priority in the Nordic countries (Gram-Hanssen et al., 2023). Yet, it is our duty not to give up and to call for more pro-environmental mindsets and actions on individual, institutional, and political levels in avoiding the journey towards the climate apocalypse.

The major challenge is to engage ordinary people in the climate crisis debates. There is a parallel to this related to nature. The Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation has shown a series addressing the dismounting of Norwegian nature, related to the sea, the expansion of recreational areas and second-home development, and the decrease of primeval forests, only covering 1.7 % of the Norwegian forest in 2024 (Sverdrup-Thygeson, 2023). The series has been an eye-opener and has sparked a comprehensive debate. When contested issues occur nearby, people engage. One problem with the climate crisis in Norway is that its impacts seem too far away or too diffuse. There is clearly a need for someone to persuade unconcerned Norwegians of its relevance. Without a viable climate, there will be no nearby nature to enjoy. There is a need for a national and global therapy; discussing the problems normally helps.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Arvid Viken: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Bente Heimtun:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization.

Data availability

Data will be made available after the end of the project in 2025 in a limited way.

Declaration of competing interest

None.

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