



Local crowdfunding for a low-emission society: Investigating the concept of local climate crowdfunding in Norway.

## Socio-cultural factors: Opportunities and challenges for crowdfunding climate measures in Norwegian agriculture

A desk study



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## 1 Background

As part of the project COOLCROWD, this report provides an overview of preliminary findings and results from WP 2.2 about socio-cultural conditions for crowdfunding in Norway. The primary objective of the project is “to explore the potential of crowdfunding for climate-friendly agricultural projects in Norway as a novel, socio-technical practice that promotes a rapid transition to a low-emission society.” Together with partners from the transport sector, COOLCROWD intends to make it possible for people to fund mitigation measures at local farms and, in this way, provide benefits to local communities as well as reduce greenhouse gas emissions. During the project period of three years, the project aims to study the level of interest amongst the Norwegian public and the interest of farmers in partaking in crowdfunding. An important purpose of the project is to develop possible business models for local climate crowdfunding in Norway, including the legal framework. This report attempts to map some of the socio-cultural opportunities and barriers that form the background of getting crowdfunding to work in Norway.

## 2 About crowdfunding

What causes a “crowd” to give money to people they do not personally know through crowdfunding? There are many different reasons and motives, depending on different kinds of crowdfunding schemes. Nevertheless, research on crowdfunding shows that there are repetitive patterns among the participants of crowdfunding campaigns (Gerber and Hui 2013; Mæhle, Kleppe, Huijben and Drozdova 2017):

- Material or monetary rewards
- Social reward/recognition
- Support a creative idea, curiosity
- Altruistic intentions
- Support the case/goal the project strives to achieve
- Direct contact/relationship with the creators
- To be part of a community (local belonging or interest)

We can speak to four different forms of crowdfunding, depending on the type of schemes between project owner (founders) and funders. Crowdfunding can be (Mæhle et al. 2017):

- Donation-based (1), where funders give money with no expectation of getting something in return
- Reward-based (2), where donors get some kind of reward, albeit symbolic like a t-shirt
- Loan-based (3), where founders lend money and pay interest to the funders
- Equity-based (4), where the funders can buy equity in the project/product in form of shares

### 3 Crowdfunding in Norway

Crowdfunding has grown significantly in the Nordic countries in recent years, with Finland at the top, and Norway in last place (Østervold 2017). Most crowdfunding in Norway takes place on small crowdfunding platforms and is reward-based, while the rest is donation-based. Reward-based crowdfunding is easiest to manage due to public regulations (Shneor and Aas 2016: 47). A previous study (Ziegler et al. 2017) has documented the development of alternative sources of funding in Europe. Figure 1 (Gundersen 2017) shows total the total amount collected by crowdfunding in Nordic countries in millions of kroner.

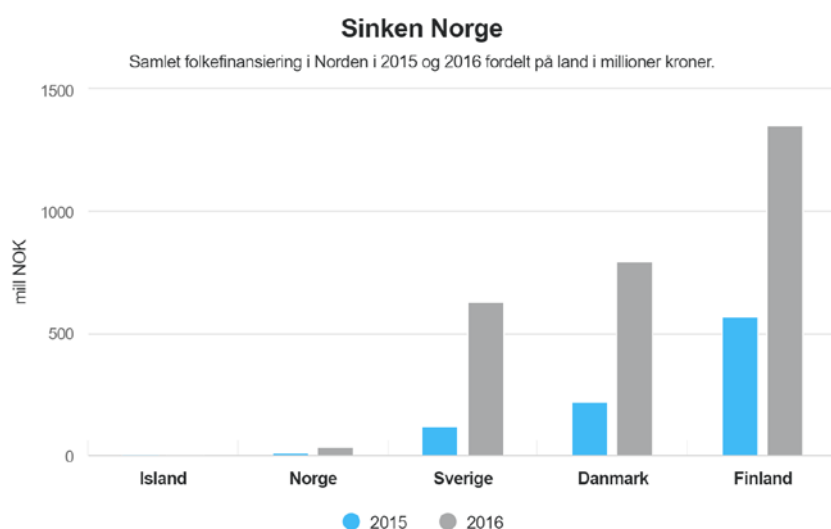


Figure 1: “Norway – the laggard”. Figures from Expanding Horizons: The 3rd European Alternative Finance Industry Report, converted to NOK in Gundersen (2017).

Rotem Shneor from the University of Agder points out some reasons why Norway lags behind the other Nordic countries when it comes to crowdfunding (Østervold 2017):

- Obstacles caused by Norwegian regulations
- The culture in Norway is characterized by the desire for low-risk investments
- Norwegians’ desire to keep good ideas secret
- An expectation that the state will pay
- Little knowledge about crowdfunding

However, Norway has some advantages, as there is widespread use of internet and social media, and residents show a high degree of trust in each other and the society/state. In Figure 2, we see that reward-based crowdfunding is the most popular in Norway.

### Forhåndssalg er størst i Norge

Folkefinansiering etter kategori i Norge fra 2012 til 2016.

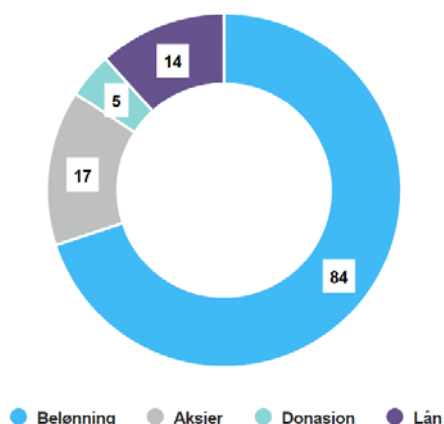


Figure 2: “Reward-based crowdfunding is most common in Norway”. Figures from Rotem Shneor retrieved from Gundersen (2017). Belønning = Reward, Aksjer = Equity, Donasjon = Donation and Lån = Loan

## 4 “Dugnad,” “the Law of Jante,” and the “village beast”

“Dugnad,” “the law of Jante,” and the so-called “village beast” are different social phenomena which are important characteristics of Norwegian culture and values. In the following, we will draw on literature that can illuminate the significance of these phenomena for the feasibility of crowdfunding initiatives related to climate mitigation measures on farms in Norway.

### 4.1 Can the Norwegian “spirit of dugnad” be a catalyst for crowdfunding?

It is not hard to argue that “dugnad” is a Norwegian phenomenon and a characteristic of Norwegian society, yet a good translation of the term is difficult to find. One might think that the word can be translated as “voluntary work,” but the Norwegian word “dugnad” represents more than that. Lorentzen and Dugstad (2011: 35) have written a book about the Norwegian “spirit of dugnad,” and they state that the Norwegian phenomenon has characteristics that make it a more complex concept:

- Traditionally, voluntary work relates to local belonging, but it can also be an imagined, experienced frame, such as a common interest
- No monetary compensation
- Equality among participants, a strong sense of community feeling
- Voluntary work often involves a social element (such as a party or a meal)

How are these characteristics transferable and related to crowdfunding? In the view of local belonging, crowdfunding might not always meet this criterion, except for those actually living in the area/region of the funded farms. However, when “dugnad” is rooted in common interests (such as

commitment to climate change, or interest in agriculture), the concept is largely transferable to crowdfunding. As Lotentzen and Dugstad (2015) point out, "belonging" or "the place" may concern interests or attitudes, in other words, something that touches people's interests. In this way, climate, environment, and sustainable agriculture are likely to appeal as fields of interest to the "spirit of dugnad." To quote Lorentzen and Dugstad (2011: 11): "If the feeling of an "us" is strong enough, the spirit of dugnad can be used everywhere."

In addition, "dugnad" is characterized by joint work. This is part of the "spirit of dugnad," which consists of contributing to the community without the expectation of getting something back, but with thoughts of reciprocity that "I'm making an effort now and others will do the same for me another time" (Vrålstad 2012). Figures from the Living Conditions Survey (Levekårsundersøkelsen) show that 38% of the population in Norway had done some voluntary work for organizations in 2017, with an average of 81 hours (Statistisk sentralbyrå 2017). Employment status and a high level of education both have a positive correlation with a high level of trust towards other people, strong social networks, and participation in organizational life (Vrålstad 2012). Young people participate less in traditional "dugnad," spending more time on the internet trying to influence political issues. Crowdfunding can benefit from this both on the funder side and on the project owner side. A crowdfunding project depends on double-mindedness, in that people give money, but also that funders share and spread the word about the project (Hui, Greenberg and Gerber 2014). During a crowdfunding campaign's collection period, sharing and spreading information about the project online can be a major part of the project's success. In this way, participants in crowdfunding projects can be both passive funders, but also active funders who help create awareness about the project. This becomes part of the "dugnad" in crowdfunding, which in turn contributes to the feeling of an "us" for those involved, which increases the chance of reaching the monetary aims of the collection campaign (Lorentzen and Dugstad 2011; Hui, Greenberg and Gerber 2014).

Lorentzen and Dugstad (2011: 12) describe today's society as a society where "[w]e move from an epoch characterized by community and unity to a period of individualism." Will this make it difficult to live by the "spirit of dugnad," which has the basis of "sacrificing" something for the community, when society is largely characterized by individualism? Maybe. Nevertheless, when it comes to volunteering, it is debatable whether the "spirit of dugnad" is primarily experienced and executed as a duty. In this way, attendance is the result of social control, rather than the desire to participate and contribute to the community (Lorentzen and Dugstad 2011). Since crowdfunding is not linked to showing up on a physical location, a consequence is the lost possibility of social control and the effect this may have on the degree of participation due to the sense of duty. However, donating money

(which is the most common form of crowdfunding) can be seen as easier than the effort required in traditional “dugnad,” where you have to show up and spend time doing physical work. In addition, many who previously predicted the “dugnad” a slow death, have seen the “spirit of dugnad” adapt to changes in society over and over again (Lorentzen and Dugstad 2011). Whether crowdfunding can serve as a new version of the “spirit of dugnad” in Norway, it can be seen as a new adaption to changes in society.

Another relevant aspect of crowdfunding as a potential form of “dugnad” is that it may be important to know whether others and how many others will contribute. For many, the context is highly relevant. Nyborg (2017) refers to experiences from Public Good Game Experiments, which indicate that 20-30% of the population are free riders (do not contribute anyway), only 5% of the population are altruists (contributing regardless of what others choose to do), while about half of the population (40-80%) choose to contribute only if others do the same. Both trust and justice are important values in terms of collective efforts (Thöni et al. 2012). The awareness that a significant number of people are participating can increase confidence that their own donation actually contributes to the desired effect (while, at the same time, preventing a feeling of injustice by the fact that many others also "sacrifice" in the same way).

Another important characteristic of the “spirit of dugnad” is the feeling of belonging. Traditionally, there has been a local aspect (housing association, sports team), but belonging to an interest group etc. may be equally mobilizing. This is where crowdfunding can benefit from the “spirit of dugnad.” If the crowdfunding project can be anchored locally, there is a greater chance that more people feel a personal connection. Hence, you can embrace those who feel a belonging to the environmental aspect, as well as those who think it might be okay to support a local farmer in implementing climate measures. However, it is probably a prerequisite that people have an interest in environment and climate. People who do not engage in climate or environmental issues will probably not give money for climate action on farms, even local farms. Crowdfunding projects need to take the two target groups into consideration, and keep in mind that that how the campaign is framed might not necessarily work for both groups.

Crowdfunding can be seen as an online format of “dugnad” (Shneor and Aas 2016: 44). One known obstacle is that project developers are sometimes afraid that someone will steal their idea if they put it on a crowdfunding page. This may not be an obstacle given how COOLCROWD intends to use crowdfunding, as the aim is to fund existing climate measures rather than new inventions. Another drawback is that the lack of new inventions might make the projects seem "boring."

#### 4.2 The Law of Jante – an obstacle for crowdfunding?

"The Law of Jante" consists of ten rules that serve as strict social norms in the fictional city of Jante (Sandemose 1933). The laws are based on egalitarian ideas and are a strong criticism of individualism and the individual's ability to break out of established hierarchies. The ten rules of the Law of Jante are (Sandemose 1933: 85):

1. You're not to think you are anything special.
2. You're not to think you are as good as we are.
3. You're not to think you are smarter than we are.
4. You're not to imagine yourself better than we are.
5. You're not to think you know more than we do.
6. You're not to think you are more important than we are.
7. You're not to think you are good at anything.
8. You're not to laugh at us.
9. You're not to think anyone cares about you.
10. You're not to think you can teach us anything.

The Law of Jante has since become a familiar term to describe attitudes in Norwegian society in post-war times, and is still used to explain cultural differences between Norway and other countries (Bourrelle 2017, Palamara 2016). The following illustration of Norwegian culture from Canadian author Bourrelles (2017) provides an example of the Law of Jante (see Figure 3):

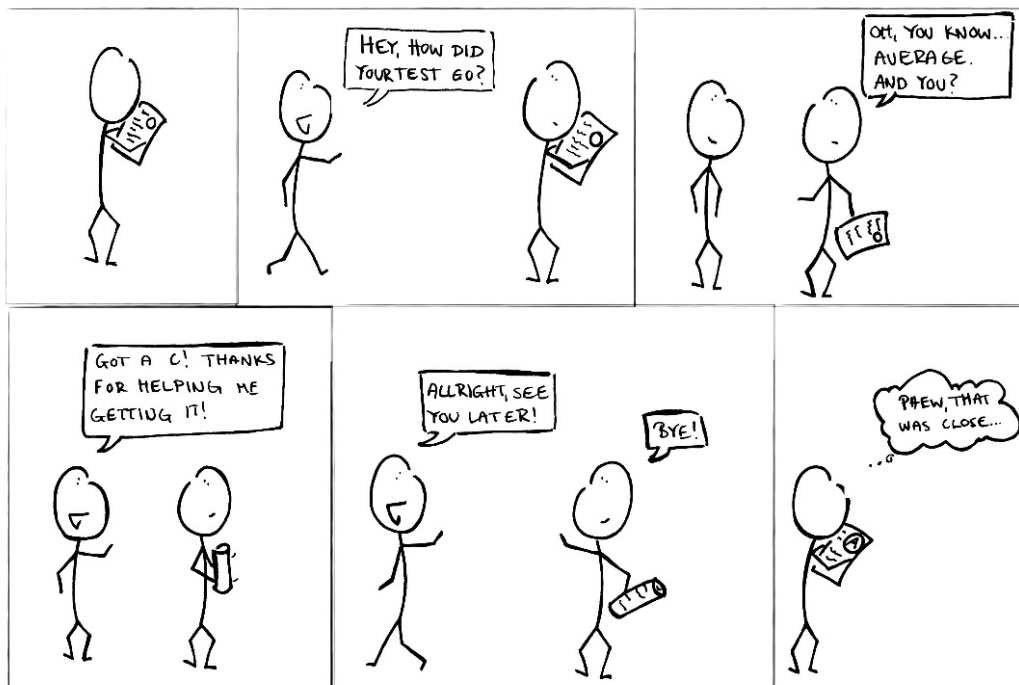


Figure 3: The Law of Jante. Illustration from The Social Guidebook to Norway: An Illustrated Introduction (Bourrelle 2017)



The essence of the Law of Jante is that the majority of the population defines what is acceptable, and these norms act as a social control where those who stand out are excluded or rejected by this majority (Avant and Knutsen 1994; Stanghelle 2016). Additionally, "Jante" may also describe a person who is "an indecent, anxious person fearing the opinion of others" (NAOB 2018). The social pressure that everything should be alike creates jealousy, paradoxically, so it is best to lie low and not stand out.

There are ongoing discussions about whether the Law of Jante still is a real feature of Norwegian culture, and the debate occurs on a regular basis both in the media and in research (see e.g. Cappelen and Dahlberg 2017; Palamara 2016). Despite the fact that some believe the Law of Jante is outdated and does not exist anymore, it is still referred to and recent research has addressed this phenomenon. A retriever search for the Law of Jante shows that Norwegian newspapers included articles about this phenomenon 496 times in 2017. In *Aftenposten* (the biggest newspaper in Norway) 25 April 2014, Poppe (2014) poses the question "Does Norway's Law of Jante hamper economic and cultural development in Norway?" He claims that the Law of Jante prevents Norwegians from contributing to the development of society, as the fear of standing out prevents entrepreneurship, while oil wealth has given us a relaxed mentality (Poppe 2014).

Based on this, the fear of standing out can be an obstacle for crowdfunding in Norway. In the case of COOLCROWD, this is particularly important when trying to find farmers willing to participate in a project where the aim is to attract attention in order to implement climate mitigation measures on their farms. Therefore, the social network around the farmers (family, neighbours, and other farmers) can be of special importance. At the same time, there are several people who believe that the Law of Jante does not exist in Norwegian society anymore. Stanghelle (2016) wrote in a post in *Aftenposten*: "The law of Jante is abolished as a social force." If that is the case, it will be easier for crowdfunding projects to engage farmers who are part of networks characterized by such a culture.

Whether the Law of Jante exists or not depends on the farmer's social network. However, a more concrete factor may be where a farmer lives; much of the research on the Law of Jante shows this social code is more prominent in smaller communities. This rural phenomenon is known as "the village beast" (Palamara 2016; Bolkesjø and Brun 2006).

#### *4.3 "The village beast" - an endangered species?*

Tor Jonsson (1950) first used the term «village beast» in the short story "Liket." As the term suggests, this phenomenon is often associated with small and transparent societies (Brandth, Haugen and Kramvig 2013). The "village beast" refers to different types of social control and sanctions against people who stand out in one way or another. A strong norm of conformity is thus an aspect of social

control. A study from Norway has recently explored various attitudes and values based on where the respondents lived in terms of urban/rural dimension (Farstad 2016). Nothing indicates that the norm of conformity is distinctly rural, as the term "village beast" might indicate. The degree of social control can also be measured through the experienced occurrence of negative gossip. The proportion of the population experiencing this is quite low (13%). This phenomenon is mostly experienced at the village level, but only one out of five believes that this quality is troublesome (Farstad 2016). Balderheim (2014) claims that the village beast is primarily a term that is deliberately used to define rural areas as less attractive and with no developmental dynamics, and explains to how use of the term escalated in the media from the turn of the millennium.

If the village beast is not as unique and widespread as suggested, social control is nevertheless a relevant factor. The community's acceptance of new perspectives and initiatives may vary from context to context. Brandth et al. (2013) point out that not all entrepreneurs are equally dependent on the community's acceptance, but it is reasonable to assume that those engaged in commercial activity based on local resources—like farmers—are more dependent on local acceptance than others. Farmers do not have the opportunity to move, as they are geographically "locked" to the local community. Therefore, individuals can perceive the costs of acting across the community's interests and acceptance as high (Brandth et al. 2013).

## **5 Kari and Ola Nordmann - trust, social capital, and climate engagement**

### *5.1 Social capital and trust in fellow human beings*

Studies of success factors for crowdfunding in countries like the U.S. and China point to the importance of the entrepreneur's or project owner's social capital. The social capital that exists before and developed during a crowdfunding campaign is important (Shneor and Aas 2016). As mentioned initially, there are various reasons why people donate money to crowdfunding projects, but a common feature is some form of trust towards others. Social capital can be a term of importance in this case.

Social capital can be defined as "features of social organizations, such as networks, norms, and trust that facilitate action and cooperation for mutual benefit" (Putnam 1993:35). Hence, trust between people is a resource that can solve community challenges and problems through collective efforts. Based on this, social capital can be understood as an asset, consisting of trust and networks (Wollebæk and Seggaard 2011; Vrålstad 2012). Figures from Eurostat (2017) and the Living Conditions Survey (Statistisk sentralbyrå 2015), which measure interpersonal trust, show that Norway has one of

the highest degrees of interpersonal trust in Europe. Figure 4 illustrates this, where Norway, together with Finland and Denmark, scores highest on interpersonal trust.

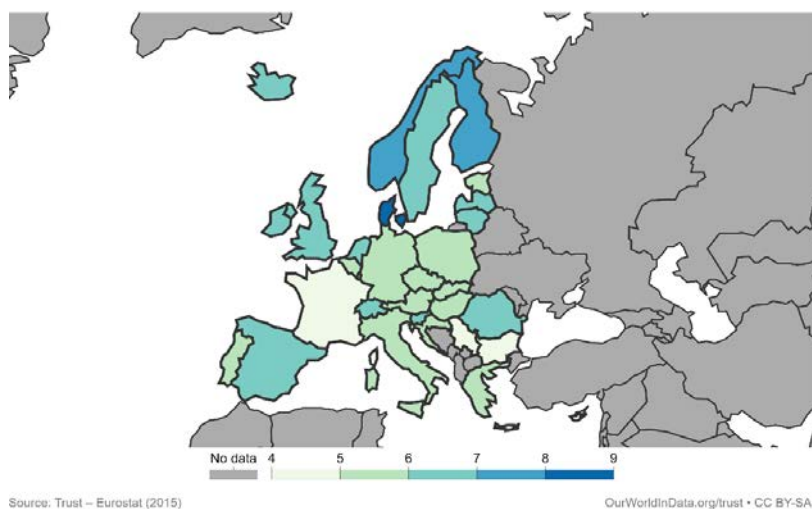


Figure 4: Confidence on a scale of 0 to 10 in European countries, based on the beliefs most people are trusting, from a low trust (0) to high trust (10). Average scores from Eurostat (2017) rendered in Ortiz-Ospina and Roser (2017).

A conflicting view of the trust aspect is that Norwegians are Europe's most naive population (Sødal 2009). Research shows that a society without social capital becomes less effective and more dangerous (Wollebæk and Seggaard 2011). Social capital is not normatively good in itself, considering the fact that social capital, just like other forms of capital, can be invested in both good and bad purposes.

As a part of COOLCROWD, we will take a look at Norwegians confidence in farmers, which can be seen as part of the farmers' social capital (resource). In this case, the farmers' social capital, both inside and outside crowdfunding communities, will be an important factor affecting whether people will contribute to crowdfunding campaigns. Traditionally, Norwegians have a high degree of trust in farmers, which we associate with a general support for Norwegian food production (NTB 2017). Several studies indicate that Norwegians prefer Norwegian food and that they support Norwegian agriculture (Matmerk 2018). Figure 5 shows the result of a representative survey done on the behalf of Matmerk (NTB 2017). 89% of survey respondents «strongly support» and «support» Norwegian farmers.

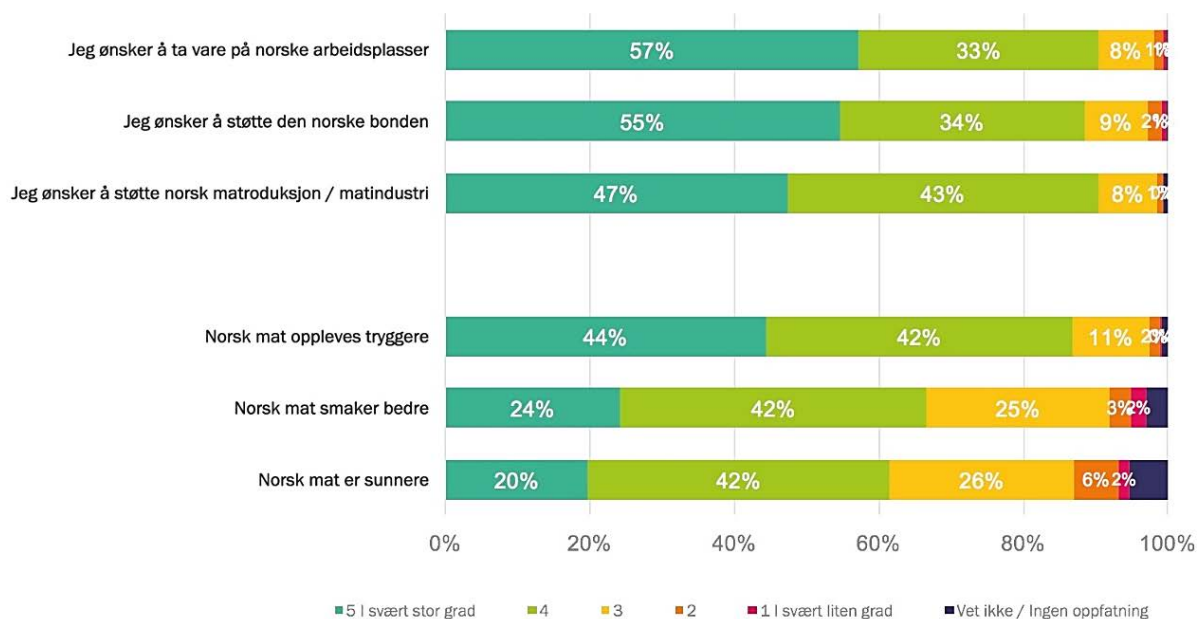


Figure 5: Reasons why Norwegians choose Norwegian-produced food rather than imported products (NTB 2017). Translation, from the top: I want to take care of Norwegian jobs, I want to support the Norwegian farmer, I want to support Norwegian food production, Norwegian food feels safer, Norwegian food taste better, Norwegian food is healthier.

This survey shows a general support for preservation of Norwegian jobs in agriculture. The fact that such a large proportion of the population supports Norwegian farmers is an indication that people trust Norwegian farmers, suggesting that farmers have a high degree of social capital. Furthermore, this favours Norwegians being interested in engaging in crowdfunding to support farmers.

As aforementioned one of the reasons for participating in crowdfunding can be the feeling of belonging to a community, often based on a common interest. COOLCROWDs' crowdfunding projects combine two themes, agriculture and climate. These themes may not appeal to the same group of people, and those who are interested in climate affairs may not be the same group interested in Norwegian agriculture. The group of people with an interest in climate issues are not likely to support Norwegian meat production, so we might lose support from this group. This conflict emphasizes the need to identify the group(s) the project should target.

There are also some Norwegians who believe farmers receive too many subsidies, so farmers' social capital among the Norwegian population can be somewhat mixed. However, crowdfunding can also contribute to strengthening farmers' social capital (Shneor and Aas 2016) by creating cohesion between contributors and farmers reaching the common goal of slowing climate change.

Nevertheless, the survey does not address the climate, and we do not know if those who wish to support Norwegian farmers are equally inclined to support climate measures.

## 5.2 The crowd – are Norwegians concerned about climate change?

According to TNS Gallup (2016), who annually investigates Norwegian’s attitudes towards climate change, Norwegians are concerned about climate change, but climate change is often considered less important than problems that affect them in the short term. Despite the fact that climate science provides increasingly certainty about the severe impact of climate change in the coming years, public concern has been declining—this is known as the “climate paradox” (Stoknes 2014). Figure 6 shows a ranking of issues the Norwegian population considers to be the country’s biggest challenges. Climate was seen as the second biggest challenge for Norway in 2015, but due to events such as the refugee crises and high unemployment from the decline in the oil sector, these factors were seen as larger challenges than climate in 2016.

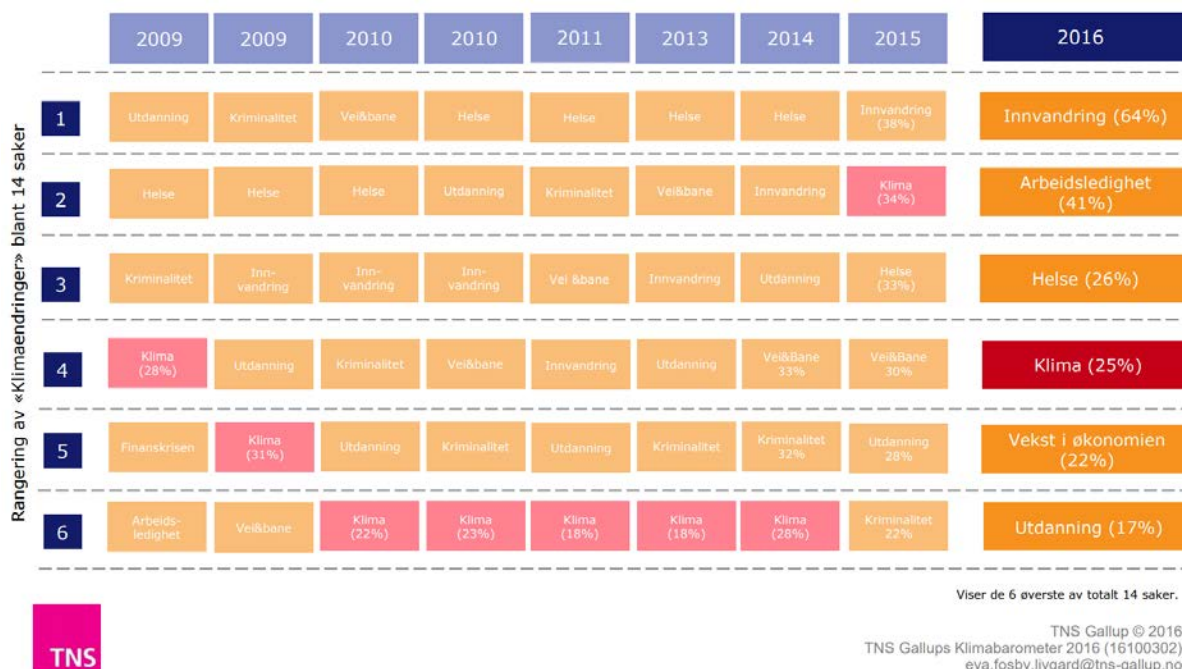


Figure 6: Ranking of "Climate Change" as one of Norway's four biggest challenges today, among 14 other possible challenges (TNS Gallup 2016).

Further, the survey showed that commitment to climate issues is bigger among the younger generations, and that 43% of the population thinks Norway is doing little to adapt to climate change (TNS Gallup 2016). If we interpret this as a wish for more climate mitigation and adaptation measures, it is a good starting point for crowdfunding of such measures.

## 6 Are farmers willing to implement climate measures on their own farms?

Brobakk (2017) carried out a survey with Norwegian farmers that investigates attitudes towards climate change. 73% of survey participants (N = 623) stated that they do not agree with the claim that Norwegian agriculture produces too much greenhouse gas emissions, and 80% believe it is more important to reduce emissions from other sectors. Based on this, it seems like Norwegian farmers may not feel a great responsibility in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Other surveys point to the same conclusion. In the survey “Trends in Norwegian agriculture” conducted by Ruralis every other year, farmers outline which tasks in Norwegian agriculture should be prioritized higher, lower, or the same as today, over the course of the next 5 years. Figure 7 shows the results of this question from 2018. A large majority of farmers do not wish to prioritize climate measures and measures related to climate higher than tasks directly related to food production. It is important to note that the question asks whether a task should be prioritized more or less than it is today, which mean that if a policy has high priority already it won’t necessarily get high “scores” in this type of question.

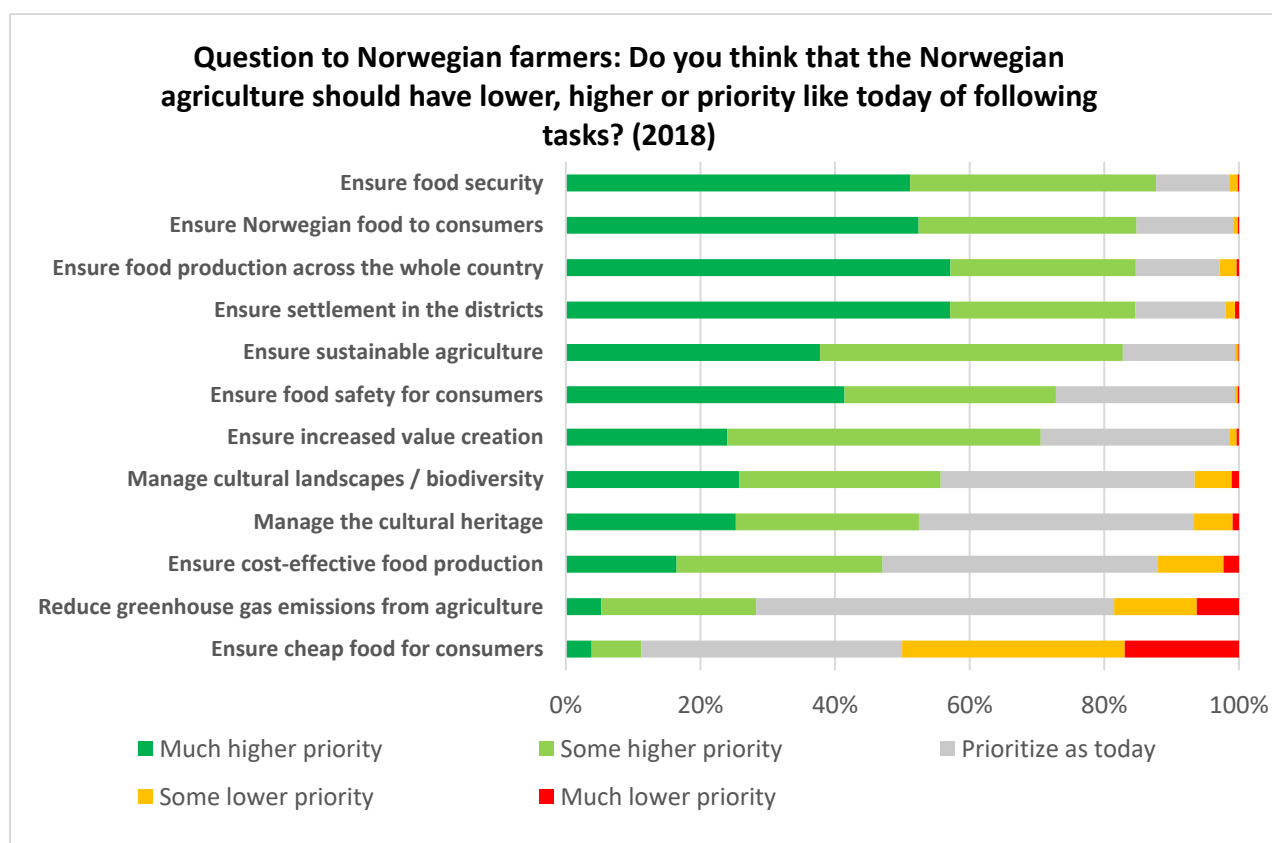


Figure 7: Agricultural policy priorities. The figure is an updated version of the same figure in Brobakk 2017, but with numbers from the 2018 survey.



Figure 8 (Brobakk 2017) shows what farmers emphasize as important “push factors” in order to implement climate measures on their own farm. "Better paid to produce food in a climate-friendly way" and "introduction of new grants or support schemes" are factors that most farmers point out. This clearly shows that economic incentives are important for implementing climate mitigation measures on Norwegian farms. Based on this, if “only” money is needed, crowdfunding can be effective in helping more farmers implement climate mitigation measures on their farms. The question is whether this indicates that the measures must be fully financed through crowdfunding, or whether farmers are willing to contribute themselves.

### Which factors can contribute to implementing climate mitigation measures on your farm?

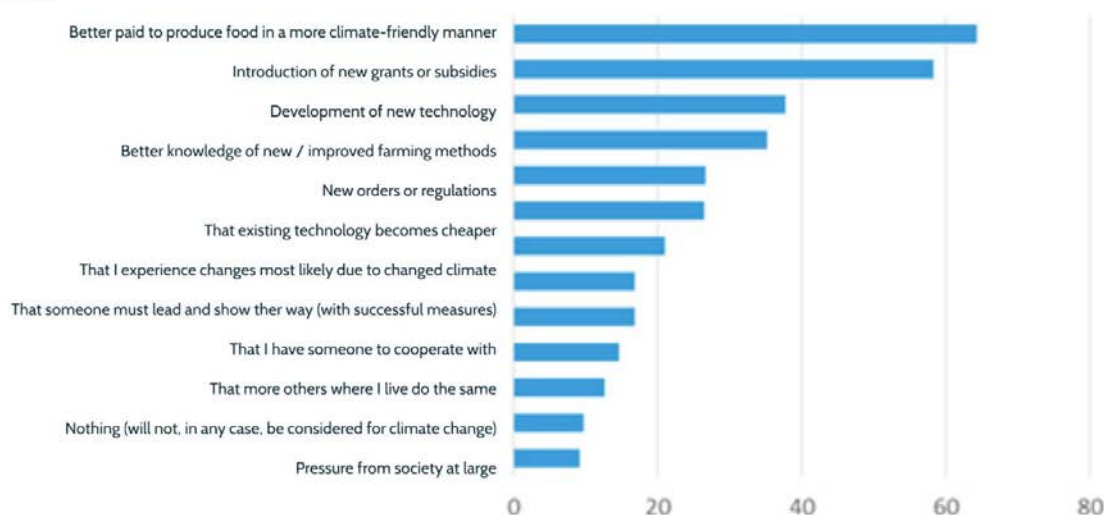


Figure 8: Which factors can contribute to implementing climate mitigation measures on your farm? (Brobakk 2017)

## 7 Summary

Both opportunities and challenges emerge when looking at how socio-cultural factors affect crowdfunding of climate measures on farms in Norway. Several of those factors can be viewed in the context of how people relate to each other. As one of the countries with the highest degree of interpersonal trust—an important factor in crowdfunding—Norway should be well-positioned to make crowdfunding a success. The success of a crowdfunding campaign depends on other factors like the project owners’ degree of social capital. In this case, it can be argued that Norwegian farmers have a high degree of social capital; at a minimum, they have broad support among the population in running Norwegian food production.

In addition, the belief in the existence of the "spirit of dugnad" among Norwegian people—that people are used to contributing to their community without any request to receive something in

return—can be an opportunity for crowdfunding to work, especially if this "spirit of dugnad" is true to reality.

In the same way that high level of trust can act as an opportunity, the characteristics of Norwegian society in terms of the "Law of Jante and the "village beast" may act as barriers. Whether, or to what extent, the Law of Jante and the "village beast" exist remain to be seen; however, what remains true is that jealousy and people not wanting to stand out can be a challenge in getting Norwegian farmers and others to participate in crowdfunding campaigns.

The attitudes of Norwegian farmers towards climate change, and their feelings of responsibility to reduce global warming, may be more important than the aspect of social control. Previous research indicates that most farmers are not concerned with climate change; higher payments and/or subsidies for implementing climate mitigation measures may be what it takes to change their mind. In this view, farmers' attitudes can be a challenge as well as an opportunity for crowdfunding of climate mitigation measures on Norwegian farms.



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