The future of multilocational work and New Working Spaces in small and medium-sized urban municipalities and in rural municipalities: A Norwegian perspective

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Background

- ❖ Regional Development: NWS (shared workspaces, public libraries and coffee shops equipped as workspaces, and other collaborative hubs) in smaller municipalities and rural areas foster regional development, support new businesses, grow the labor force, and enable the adoption of new technologies (Hölzel & de Vries, 2021).
- ❖ Flexible Workspaces: Small centers attract remote and multi-locational workers by providing alternative, affordable workspaces such as NWS, compared to metropolitan areas (Greinke & Lange, 2022).
- ❖ Role of ICTs: These practices can operate effectively with or without the benefits of advanced information and communication technologies (ICTs) (Vartiainen, 2021).



Norwegian background

- ❖ **Policy Focus**: Renewed interest in revitalizing sparsely populated regions and distant communities since the early 2000s (Knudsen, 2018; Rye & Slettebak, 2020).
- ❖ Scholarly Analysis: Policies emphasize innovation, jobs, and value creation, but often focus more on rhetoric than actual willingness to live in remote areas (Knudsen, 2018).
- ❖ Local Debate: Emphasizes well-being and location attractiveness as societal goals, highlighting regional and local differences while avoiding generalizations (Knudsen, 2018).

The aim of this study is to explore opportunities for multilocational work, including the growth of NWS in small and medium-sized urban municipalities and in rural municipalities, and the resulting revitalization of these areas, focusing on the Norwegian context.



International and Nordic perspective

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International perspective



- ❖ There have been radical changes affecting both *living and working*. Sharing economy, technology and globalization are some of the influencing factors.
- **❖ A research focus worldwide** is on new trends of *living and working* (in residential and workplaces locations and preferences) and implications for urban and regional development, people and mobility (*before, during and after the Covid-19 pandemic*).

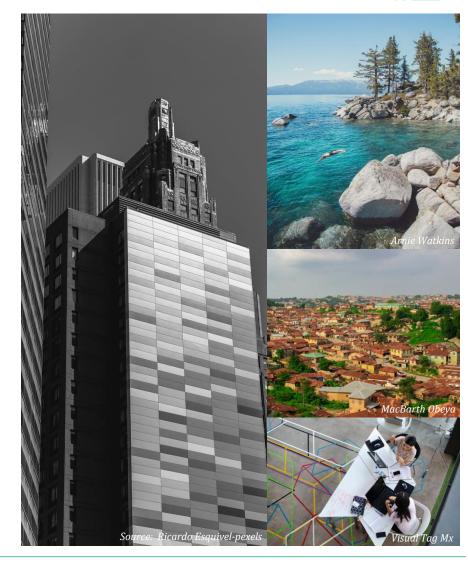
'The forced experiment of the lock down can generate *more* permanent changes in how and where people live and work' Florida et al. (2021, p-3)



Current debate

M P

- ❖ New debates have flourished among academics and policymakers around the *local-global development* and *centre-periphery model*.
- **❖** The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrates to us the importance of
- moving beyond the dichotomy peripheral/rural and urban
- developing sustainable strategies in decentralized areas (Di Marino et al., 2024).
- networking with communities' hubs (e.g., in third, fourth and fifth places)



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Conceptualization of multi-locality and 'New Working Spaces'

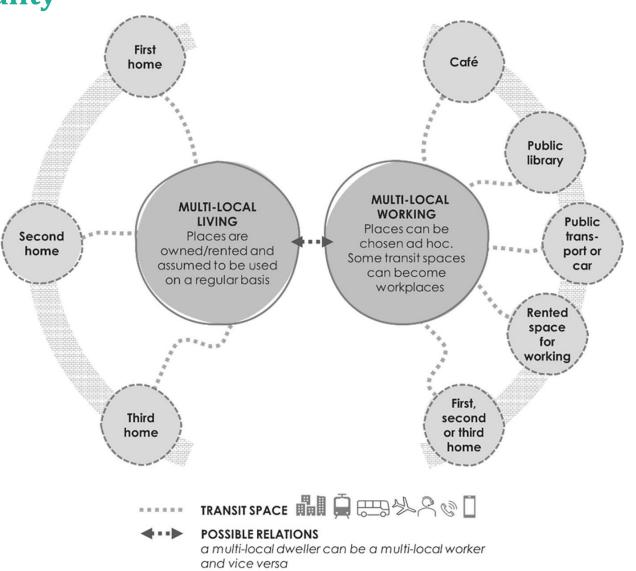


Figure. 2 Conceptualization of multi-local living and working (for transit space see Shier, 2016)

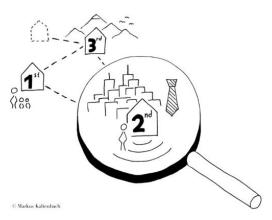
International and Nordic focus on multi-locality



- ❖ **Dichotomized Settings**: Multi-locality is often studied as "urban vs. rural" or "city home vs. leisure home" (Nadler, 2016).
- ❖ Norway and Finland: Focus traditionally on second homes for tourism and recreation; recent studies cover prolonged use and multi-locational work (Næss et al., 2019; Lehtonen et al., 2019; Di Marino et al., 2023).
- ❖ Unexplored Topic: Job-related secondary residences remain uninvestigated in Norway, despite changes due to digitalization, flexible work, and the COVID-19 pandemic.



https://no.fjordnorway.com/planlegg-turen/overnatting/hytter-og-feriehus

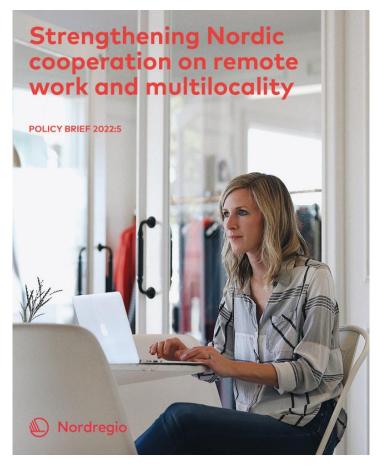


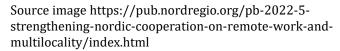
Job related residential multilocality https://kogerec.org/en/research/urban-planning/residential-multilocality/

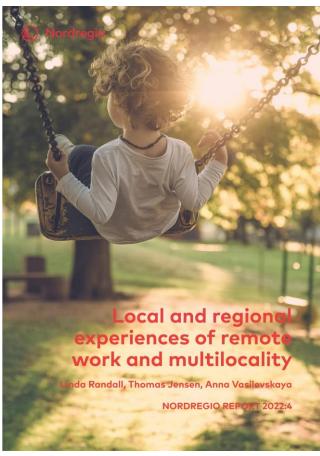
Nordic Context

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- The Nordic Council of Ministers for Regional Development focuses on digitalization and multi-locality
- The Nordic Countries face similar challenges identified in their national/regional agendas, such as policies on multi-local dwellings and changes in work locations, including similarities in the work culture, such as flexibility.
- Several studies have been already conducted.







Source image https://pub.nordregio.org/r-2022-4-local-and-regional-experiences-of-remote-work-and-multilocality/#

Nordregio



Nordic Context

Nordregio reports 2024

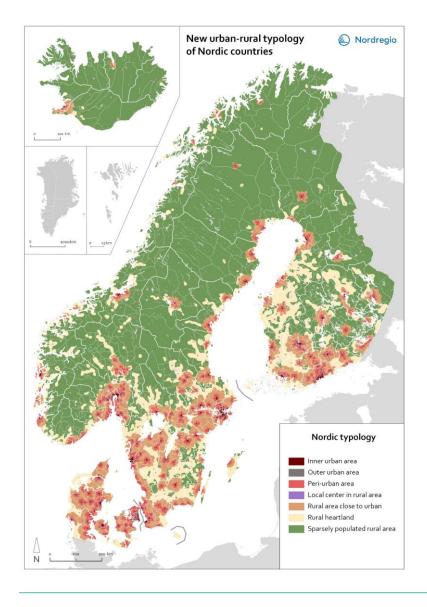


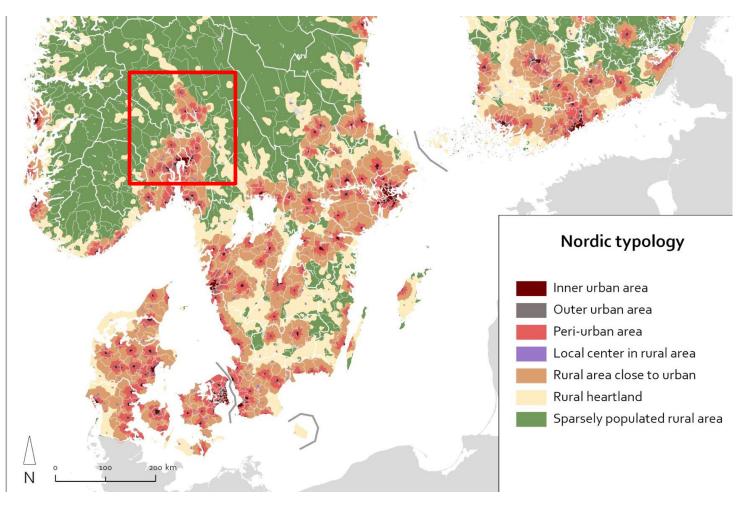
Remote Work in Smaller Towns: Possibilities and uncertainties (nordregio.org)

NORDREGIO REPORT 2024:7 Remote Work in Rural Areas: Possibilities and uncertainties

Remote Work in Rural Areas: Possibilities and uncertainties (nordregio.org)







Nordic Context

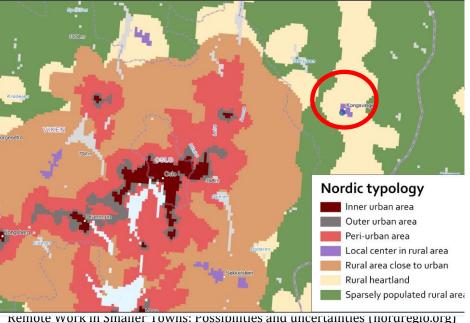


Case 4: Kongsvinger, Norway: Frontier town on the river

Kongsvinger has approximately 13,000 inhabitants and is located 150 km north of Oslo (Map 5). Located near the Norwegian-Swedish border, the town grew around the fortress constructed to protect Norway, but its significance diminished after the union between Norway and Sweden in the 19th century. However, the town started to grow again as the importance of trade increased, and the town was able to capitalise on its strategic location.

The old town just below the fortress is characterised by historic wooden houses and single-family housing. The town centre is largely modern and dispersed, separating shopping and public services (Image 19). The most attractive part of the town, along the river, is dedicated to education with both elementary schools and a higher education institution under construction, as well as sports facilities. The train station, as well as larger amounts of modern single- and multi-family housing, are situated on the opposite side of the River Glomma. Today, the hospital, the municipality, and Statistics Norway are the largest employers. Kongsvinger is considered the central urban agglomeration in a region of 45,000-50,000 inhabitants, which has implications for the demand for private and public services, including shopping, restaurants, cinema, theatres, etc. Its location along the river, and proximity to lakes and woodland areas, creates opportunities for sports and recreation. Connections to other urban areas are provided through the road network as well as the railway line between Stockholm and Oslo. Between 20 and 25% of the working population commute in the direction of the capital.







Norwegian context

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Population and municipality characteristics

Category	Details
Total Population	5,402,171
Urban Population	~82% (4,429,784 people)
Rural Population	Just under 1,000,000 people
Municipal Classification	Provided by Statistics Norway (2024):
	- Small : up to 4,999 inhabitants
	- Medium : 5,000–19,999 inhabitants
	- Large: at least 20,000 inhabitants
Average Rural Community Size	4,020 inhabitants
Criteria for Rural Communities	(Rye & Slettebak, 2020):
	- Centrality: Jobs and services accessible within 90 minutes by car
	- Settlement Density: More than 50% of the population lives in sparsely populated areas
	- Labor Markets : Over 7% of the working population employed in the primary sector

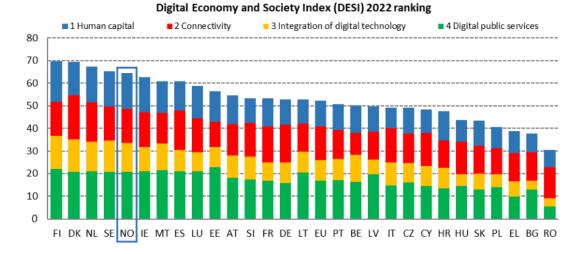
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	Number of Municipalities in Norway	356
	Rural Municipalities	~200 municipalities (18.4% of Norwegians live in rural areas)
	Population Trends	- Centralization : Population concentrated in and around major cities (Statistics Norway 2024)
		- Decline : Population numbers declining along the Swedish border and in northern Norway
	2020–2050 Population Projections	(Statistics Norway 2024):
		- 60% of municipalities are expected to grow
		- 20% will experience high growth (15% or more)
		- 140 municipalities are expected to experience population decline
_		

Norway and digital economy

- ❖ **Digital Leader**: Norway is one of the most digitalized countries globally.
- ❖ DESI 2022 Ranking: Norway excels in digital infrastructure, public services, and digital skills, ranking alongside other Scandinavian countries.
- **❖ High Internet Use**: Over 90% of Norwegians use digital public services or contact government agencies online.

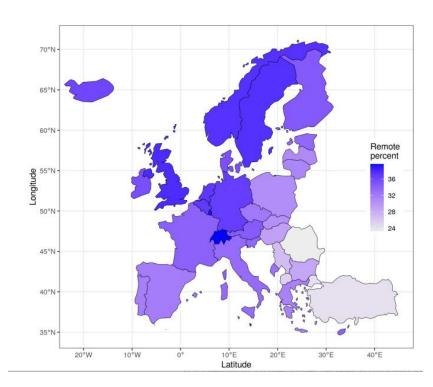
		EU		
	DESI 2020	DESI 2021	DESI 2022	DESI 2022
1a1 At least basic digital skills % individuals	NA	NA	79% 2021	54% 2021
1a2 Above basic digital skills % individuals	NA	NA	43% 2021	26% 2021
1a3 At least basic digital content creation skills ¹ % individuals	NA	NA	86% 2021	66% 2021
1b1 ICT specialists % individuals in employment aged 15-74	4.6% 2019	5.0% 2020	5.4% 2021	4.5% 2021
1b2 Female ICT specialists % ICT specialists	21% 2019	19% 2020	19% 2021	19% 2021
1b3 Enterprises providing ICT training % enterprises	44% 2019	33% 2020	33% 2020	20% 2020
1b4 ICT graduates % graduates	3.9% 2018	4.1% 2019	4.6%	3.9% 2020

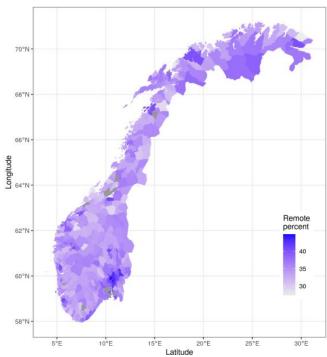
		No	rway	EU	
		rank	score	score	
DESI 202	22	NA	64.3	52.3	

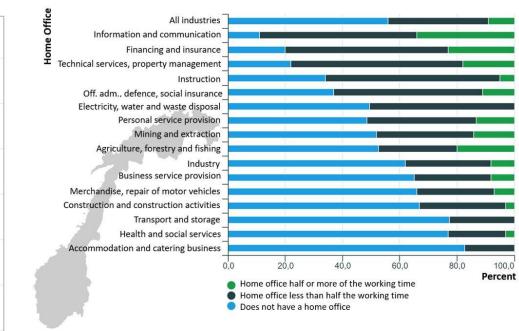


Remote working in Europe and Norway









Percentage of workers who can work from home, Europe https://www.ssb.no/en/forskning/discussion-papers/ attachment/425729? ts=17303e44798

Percentage of workers who can work from home, Norway https://www.ssb.no/en/forskning/discussion-papers/ attachment/425729? ts=17303e44798

Fig.1 Home office/other locations among employed (20-64 years), by business group (Statistics Norway 2022).

➤ In 2022-2023, 35-47% of the workforce in the **Nordic countries** worked remotely (Statistics Norway 2022). **In Norway**, 44% of the work force work remotely (with variations based on the job sectors), but a majority of this group works less than half of the time out of the office



Norwergian policies and legislation on multilocality and related concepts

- ✓ *fjernarbeid* (remote work)
- ✓ *hjemmearbeid* (working from home)
- ✓ The concept of *stedsuavhengig arbeid* (place-independent work) is used in the public sector

DENNE ARTIKKELEN ER PRODUSERT OG FINANSIERT AV NMBU - NORGES MILIØ- OG



Coworking kan gjøre bygda mer attraktiv

Coworking er mer enn kontorfellesskap og delt kontor. Nå er fenomenet på vei inn i norsk arbeidsliv.

NMBU - Norges miljø- og biovitenskapelige universitet

Mandag 09. november 2020 - 04:31





- Se for deg at du bor i en forstad eller enda lenger utenfor byen, men at du ikke trenger å reise inn til byen hver dag fordi arbeidsgiveren din - eller hjemkommunen din – tilbyr lokale kontor- og arbeidsmuligheter, sier forsker

Forandringen i arbeidslivet satte fart i mars 2020, da vi kastet oss rundt, lastet ned Teams og logget på Zoom, jobbet hjemmefra og ble mer digitale.

Samtidig opplevde vi at de store, faste strukturene rundt oss, som byene våre, tradisjonelle kontorlandskap og offentlig transport ikke var like klare for å takle en

Det kan bety et nytt syn på landlige områder som mer attraktive steder å bo, leve og jobbe – dersom arbeidsgivere fortsetter å være fleksible.

Arbeidsgivere ser at det er mulig

I Norge kan covid-19 framskynde en trend som allerede eksisterer i andre land

 Vi jobber hjemmefra, på hytta, på toget og på biblioteket. Dette er jo ikke helt nytt, men det er kanskje først nå at mange arbeidsgivere har sett at det er mulig. Og mange arbeidstakere ønsker seg nettopp dette, et mer fleksibelt forhold til hvor arbeidsplassen skal være, forklarer Di Marino.

Hun er førsteamanuensis ved Institutt for by- og regionplanlegging ved Fakultet for landskap og samfunn på NMBU

Tvunget til omstilling

Forskeren forteller at det ikke bare er korona som gjør at arbeidslivet endrer seg.

Forhold som globalisering, ny teknologi, finanskrisen i 2008, høyere arbeidsledighet og en voksende delingsøkonomi har betydning. Mange bedrifter presser kostnader ved å heller sette ut oppdrag enn å la fast ansatte utføre jobben.

Stadig flere mennesker velger - eller blir tvunget til - en frilanstilværelse med hjemmekontor, kontorfellesskap og kaféjobbing.

"JEG FIKK EN EKSTRA BOOST OG JOBBET MER EF BLE EN FANTASTISK LUNSJPAUSE.»

in rural municipalities: A Norwegian perspective

- Den digitale og fysiske arbeidspraksis vil eksistere på en mer hybrid måte i fremtiden, mener Di Marino.

Di Marino forsker på fleksible arbeidssteder og særlig på vekslingen mellom flere arbeidssteder. Hun er opptatt av folk som jobber fra kontoret, fra et kontorfellesskap, på hjemmekontor, kafeer, biblioteker og på offentlig transport og mener coworking-spaces er kommet for å bli.

Mer hybrid

- I et postpandemisk scenario kan småbyer og landlige områder bli revitalisert gjennom tilstedeværelsen av nye innbyggere som jobber fra sitt første hjem eller ikke-innbyggere som jobber fra de andre hjemmene. Folk vil bli mer og mer multilokale. Dette betyr at de vil jobbe og bo flere steder, sier Di Marino.

4.no/nyheter/i/OQEwE1/ny-arbeidshverdag-paa-nett?fbclid=lwAR2EpZvc_2S2dt4iUWa4B-e8aSDV-merneiYJCJKwo5w

Folk vil bli mer og mer multilokale. Dette betyr at de vil jobbe og bo flere steder, sier forsker Mina Di

Nye arbeidsmåter

- Covid-19-pandemien kan forårsake flere endringer i arbeids- og bomiljøene og folks vaner. Noen jobber blir transformert til digitale former og praksis. Under pandemien har digitaliseringen, ny arbeidspraksis og ny kunnskap virkelig hjulpet folk til å møte ekstreme situasjoner, reagere og tilpasse seg de eksogene kriser som denne og fremtidige pandemier, sier forsker Mina Di Marino.

Et arbeidsmiljø for bygda?

Kan såkalt «coworking» gjøre det mer attraktivt å legge arbeidshverdagen til småsteder?

Det engelske begrepet beskriver en blanding av fleksible og faste arbeidsplasser, som brukes av både fast ansatte og frilansere fra ulike

Ifølge Mina Di Marino, førsteamanuensis ved Institutt for by- og regionplanlegging på NMBU, kan slike arbeidsfellesskap ha noen fordeler på småsteder: Større lokaler enn i byene, kortere reisevei og potensielt mer variert kompetansesammensetning. I tillegg blir gjerne pandemiutfordringer lettere å hanskes med, leser vi i Forskning.no.



Outcomes from the Norwegian cases

A mixed-method approach

GIS analyses/construction of a database

Desk research

Interviews with managers

Analysis of policies on digitalization, innnovation/shared hubs

Mina Di Marino

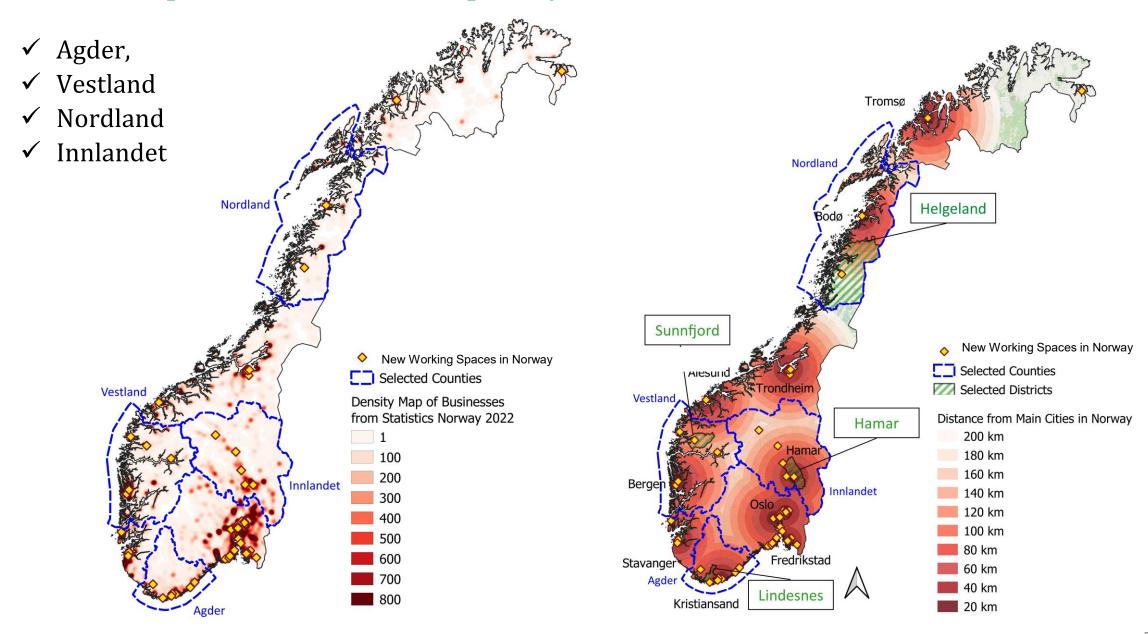
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Rented and public shared workspaces/hubs



Di Marino M., & Chavoshi H.,. T. Andersen & S. Nenonen (2023). The future of multilocational work and New Working Spaces in small and medium-sized urban municipalities and in rural municipalities: A Norwegian perspective. Norwegian Journal of Geography https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00291951.2023.2249480

Financial support under pandemic

given by Innovation Norway –deadline May 22, 2020 22 shared workspaces/start-ups got the funding



FOR INTERNATIONAL COMPANIES ABOUT INNOVATION NORWAY

NO Q

We contribute to sustainable growth and exports for Norwegian businesses through capital and expertise.

We contribute in projects for:

Startups

Innovation and development

Export and internationalisation

Tourism and agriculture

Innovation Norway is the Norwegian Government's most important instrument for innovation and development of Norwegian enterprises and industry.



Mesh, et av de mest populære coworking-spacesene i Norge. Arkivfoto: Alex Asensi

Deler ut 57 millioner til coworkingspaces og gründerhuber

- Kan gjenoppta mye av det vi måtte legge på is, sier Andreas Nilsen, daglig leder i Flow.

55.000.000 NOK from 700.000 € to 20.000 €

- STARTUP NORWAY AS: 7 000 000
- VÆXT MOSJØEN AS: 550 000
- 657 OSLO AS: 4 200 000
- MESH OSLO AS: 4 827 834
- DIGS AS: 2 224 492
- FLOW COWORKING AS: 1199 467
- DHUB AS: 1 528 000
- VÆXT MO I RANA AS: 300 000
- THEFACTORY AS: 2 162000
- BERGEN.WORKS AS: 521 000
- EPI CENTER NORGE AS: 1771 450
- CREATOR MAKERSPACE AS: 1 500 000
- IMPACT HUB BERGEN AS: 1 080 000
- COWORX AS: 1 630 000
- TORVGATA 7 DRIFT AS: 162 700
- WORK-WORK AS: 750 000
- SOCENTRAL AS: 2 084 800
- INNOVATION DOCK AS: 1 937 000
- STIFTELSEN SEED FORUM NORWAY: 710 000
- SHE COMMUNITY AS: 3 220 000
- KATAPULT OCEAN AS: 2 000 000
- ANTLER AS: 775 000
- GRÜNDERLOFTET AS: 103 000
- COFOUNDER MANAGEMENT AS: 610 000
- INSPIRATOR AS: 200 000
- MOMENT HOLDING AS: 450 000

https://shifter.no/nyheter/deler-ut-57-millioner-tilcoworking-spaces-og-grnderhuber/186985



Peripheral/rural areas of Norway

Table 1. New Working Spaces (NWS) observed in the selected five counties (Source: desk research and information from interviewed managers)

Name of the NWS	County	Concept****	Year	Size (m ²)	Members	Companies	Municipalities
Peak Sunnfjord	Vestland	Vacant office space and coworking space in the center of western Norway	2017	450	100	20	Florø
	Vestland	Innovation in creative interaction	2019	2,500		10	Førde
	Vestland	Modern business center in Måløy, a multifunctional hub	not yet	8,000	_	_	Måløy
			open				
	Vestland	Unknown	not yet	_	_	_	Sandane
			open				
Coworx	Agder	The CoWorx experience is an entrepreneurial hub and social environment	2018	300	26–27	52	Mandal
Væxt	Nordland Nordland Nordland	An inspiring environment for sharing culture and socialization, as well as an arena for networking	2012	1,800 250 100	60–70	50	Mosjøen Mo i Rana Hattfjelldal
	Nordland			250			Sandnessjøen
	Nordland		2022	250			Brønnøy
	Nordland		2022	110			Hemnesberget
Park Hamar	Innlandet	Ideas grow and germinate	2018	6,000	190	20	Hamar
Innovasjon Centre	Innlandet	A place where people and ideas meet	2018	600	25–30	10	Ringebu
Tanken Coworking	Viken	Creation of a social and competence-rich community	2017	750	10–12	3–4	ÅI

Florø	8,900 inh.
Førde	10,420 inh.
Måløy	3,300 inh.
Sandan	e 2,500 inh.

Mosjøen 9,700 inh.
Mo i Rana 18,900 inh.
Hattfjelldal 1,300 inh.
Sandnessjøen 6,100 inh.
Brønnøysund 5,045 inh.
Hemnesberget 1,259 inh.
Hamar 29,520 inh.
Ringebu 4,385 inh.
Ål 4,716 inh.

Notes: *For the concepts of each NWS see each NWS's home page on the Internet; **Some Norwegian text has been translated into English by the authors of this article

N M J

Peripheral/rural areas of Norway, the public support

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In terms of public support,

- ➤ the **Innovasjon Centre** (Innlandet) is supported by Ringebu Municipality
- ➤ **Park Hamar** is supported by the municipalities of Løten, Hamar, and Stange, and the Hamar district.
- ➤ In the case of the **Væxt (Nordland)**, the six municipalities in which the NWS are located have participated in compiling the business plans of the NWS.

➤ These spaces are used by freelancers, start-ups, and, in several cases, **as permanent premises by public and private companies**

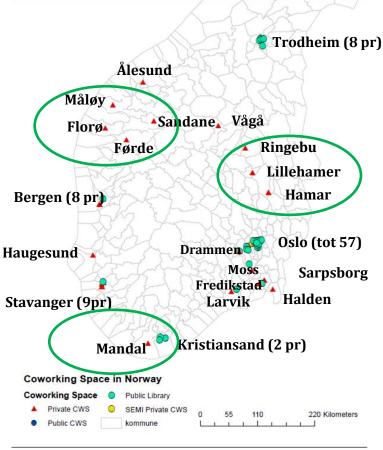
1 PeakSunnfjord/PeakSpace, Vestland 2 CoWorx, Agder

Måløy



Mandal





Chavoshi H and Di Marino M, 2021



PEAKSunnfjørd has 4 premises in Vestland, **Florø, Førde, Måløy and Sandane** (open soon).

 In Førde, Peak opened in 2017 with 4 companies involved and they started renting 400 m² -1700m² to 2500m², and around 20 companies, now+ single members (which can also rent a hot desk). 100 members

In Florø, Peak opened in February 2019 — 450m², 10 companies +single members

- Førde 10420 inh.
- Fløro 8900 inh
- Måløy 3300 inh _new premise and concept in Måløy multifunctional hub
- Sandane 2500 inh

CoWorx I **Mandal** (Agder),

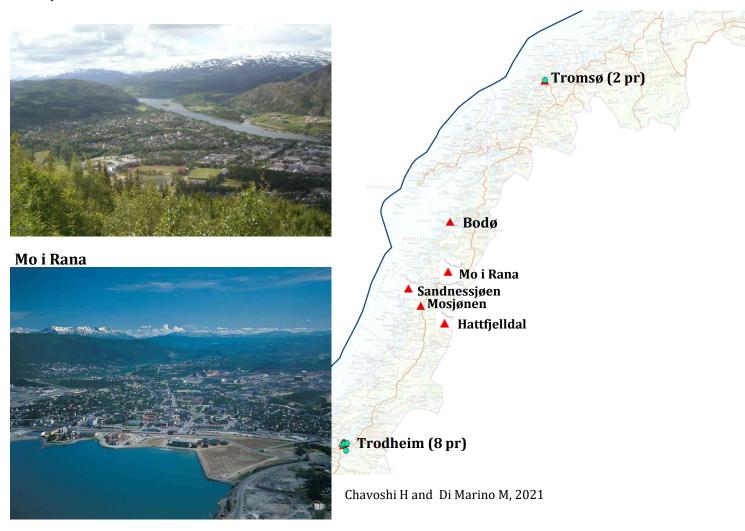
- 300m², 26-27 members
- Mandal 11.050 inh.

The founder works with the new model of **Remote work Norge** – how to involve local municipalities in finding spaces and communities who are interested in working remotely and develop innovation.

- Hadeland 29.500 inh, 15 km -north of Oslo
- Svalbord –Arctic area
- Rabema 42 south-west Oslo
- Luster 400 km from Oslo
- Lillehammer
- Kunserdel 110 km from Kristiansand

2 Væxt, Helgeland

Mosjøen





Væxt (Helgeland). They opened i **2012.** 100 companies and ca. **60/70 members**

- Mosjøen 9700 inh
- Mo i Rana 18.900 inh
- Sandnessjøen 6.100 inh
- Hattfjelldal 1300 inh

In Møsjonen, they have the largest space and then i Mo i Rana. There are several companies in different sectors.

Aims The shared working environment VÆXT will be an arena for networking, sharing culture and socializing in an inspiring environment.

They gather competences and expertise in innovation to small districts. The municipalities have taken part in the business plan. Væxt is a valid alternative than Oslo and Trondheim. These spaces make Helegland vibrant and alive. This becomes a hub community for those who used to run this business at home.

During the pandemic, i Mo i Rana, they closed for a limited time, while i Møsjonen 90% were at the workplace

Financial supports and also from the public sectors are needed to run in this part of Norway.

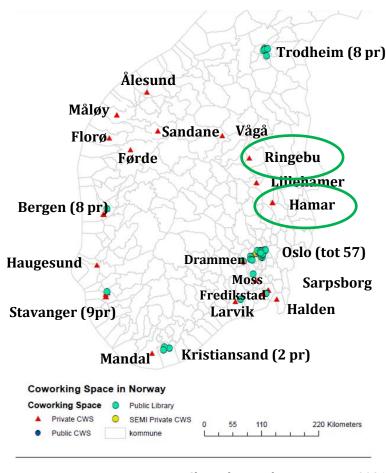
During the pandemic, 5 persons move to Væet from Oslo, establishing their business there.

3 Parkhamar, Hamarregion

Hamar Kommune







Chavoshi H and Di Marino M, 2021

Parkhamar

They opened in **2018**, Parkhamar is working with 62 municipalities. 3 buildings which are in the same area, in total 6000 m2 in Hamar. **190 members.**

Different companies joint **Parkhamar**. Employees from private and public sectors, e.g., Norwegian Research Council.

Aims:

- dropping the barriers and silos. In Park, there are coworking for startups and big businesses _banks
- sharing the open spaces and knowledge

Companies in the sectors of GAMING, FILMS; FABLABS, Research IKEA, TECH FOR BUSINESS; NTNU.

- 3d printing /equipment
- 80-100 seat in the lunch areas

They worked with the attractiveness of the region. Hamar has become more attractive! Many people moved to the region.

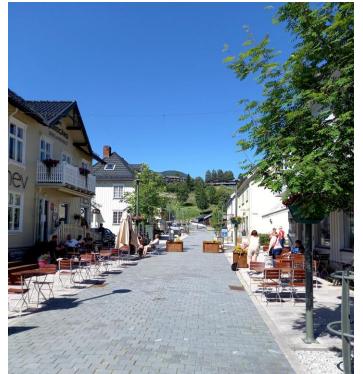
Financial supports - learning services for companies which visited PARK to learn (e.g., 22 companies from different countries).

Behind PARK are the municipalities of Løten, Hamar and Stange and a broad business community in the Hamar region.

Several joint activities with other shared workspaces/accelerators MESH and SoCentral



4 Innovation centre a Ringebu -Innlandet -Norway













Pictures by Di Marino M., 2022

4 Innovation centre a Ringebu –Innlandet -Norway





Pictures by Di Marino M., 2022

4 Innovation centre a Ringeby –Innlandet -Norway The future of multilocational work and New Working Spaces in small and medium-sized urban municipalities and in rural municipalities: A Norwegian perspective

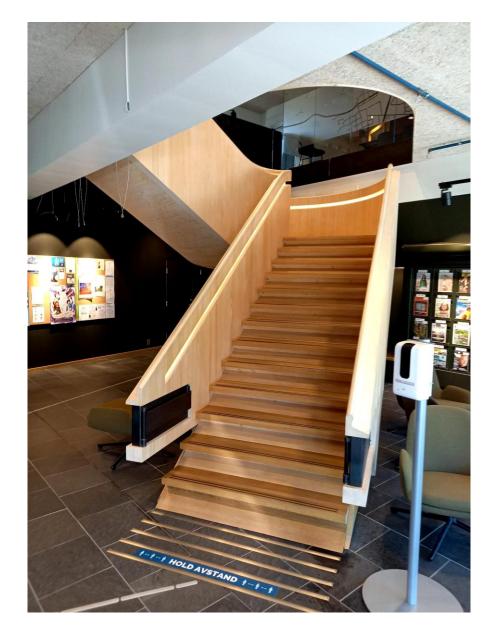






Pictures by Di Marino M., 2022

4 Innovation centre a Ringebu –Innlandet -Norway









Main results from the interviews with the managers

Main topics of the questions (N=20)

- The role of NWS in decentralized areas
- Impacts of COVID-19
- Future challenges and trends

Among the main outcomes

- Multifunctional hubs for revitalising the municipalities
- High digitalization/innovation
- Combination of multiple places for working (home, office, shared workspace spaces)
- Quality of life

Role of NWS in revitalizing decentralized areas

Social interactions (n=24)

Relevance of Community (n=5)

Rural/decentralized areas vs Oslo (n = 16)

Changes and COVID impacts (n=15)

Quality of life and family (n=9)

Attractiveness (n=7)

New ways of working

Other places to work/ mutlilocational work (n=18)

Ways of working (n=4)

Visions for rural areas

Local planning (n=2)

Strategies/ Transport (n=2)

Future (n=3)

Financial incentives (n=3)

Rural atmosphere (n=2)

Concluding remarks



- These cases of **rural/peripheral area**s of Norway confirm that these NWS can contribute to prevent the migration of young people and/or attract new young people from the metropolitan areas, considering also possible local issues (nature conservation, transportation, and planning, provision of local services).
- Unlike other studies which mention the need of training local people with entrepreneurial skills (e.g. Avdikos and Merkel, 2019), in the Norwegian case, people are already highly skilled (see the background, capacity of networking and see the potentials of this spaces). The Norwegian spaces are very independent, and well recognized within the local communities.
- There are visions and scenarios for the future of work in the small towns and peripheral/rural areas, and they are mainly supported by both private and public investors with very innovative ideas (see e.g. ability to attract companies and members before and under pandemic) in Norway.
- The study contributes to move beyond the 'urban-peripheral (rural)' dichotomy and develop sustainable strategies in decentralized areas.

THANK YOU!

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