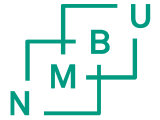


# The future of multilocal work and New Working Spaces in small and medium-sized urban municipalities and in rural municipalities: A Norwegian perspective

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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 multilocal 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.

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# 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*).

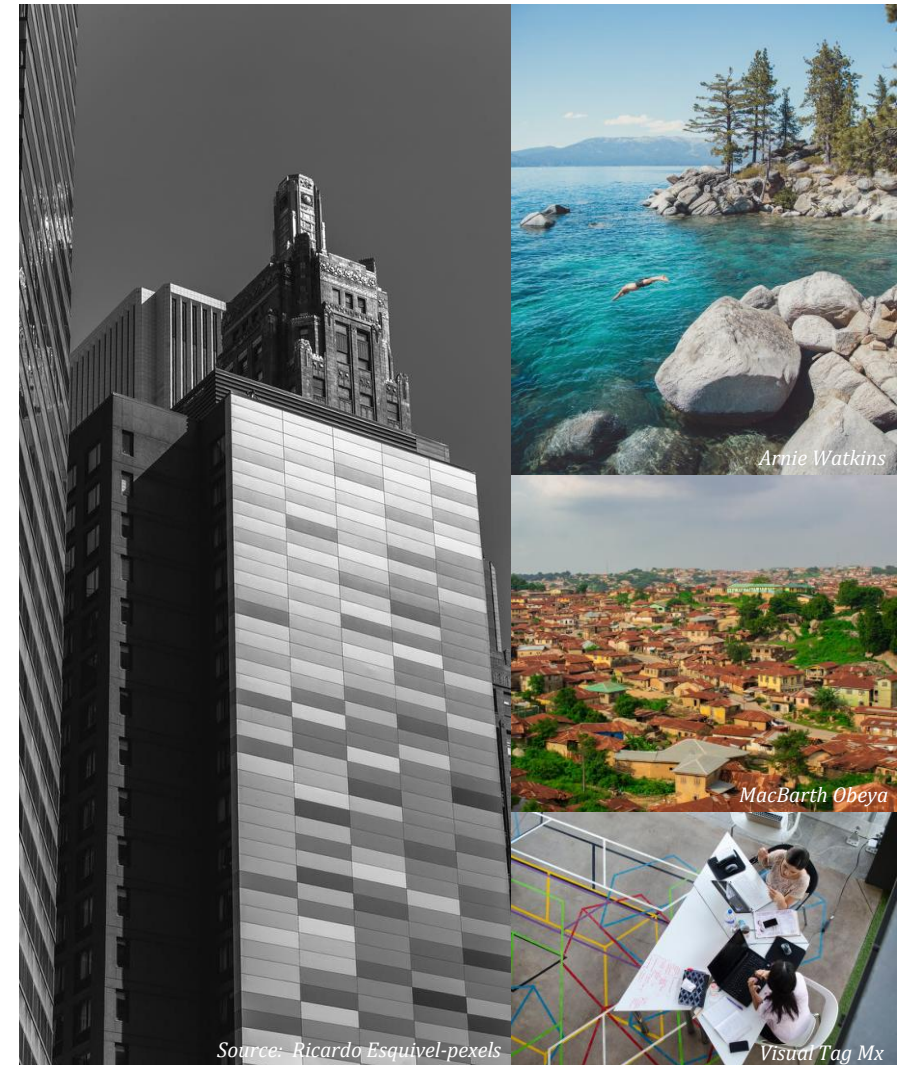
‘The forced experiment of the lock down can generate *more permanent changes in how and where people live and work*’  
Florida et al. (2021, p-3)



Source image: <https://www.glassdoor.com/blog/5-ways-highachieving-professionals-balance-work-life/>

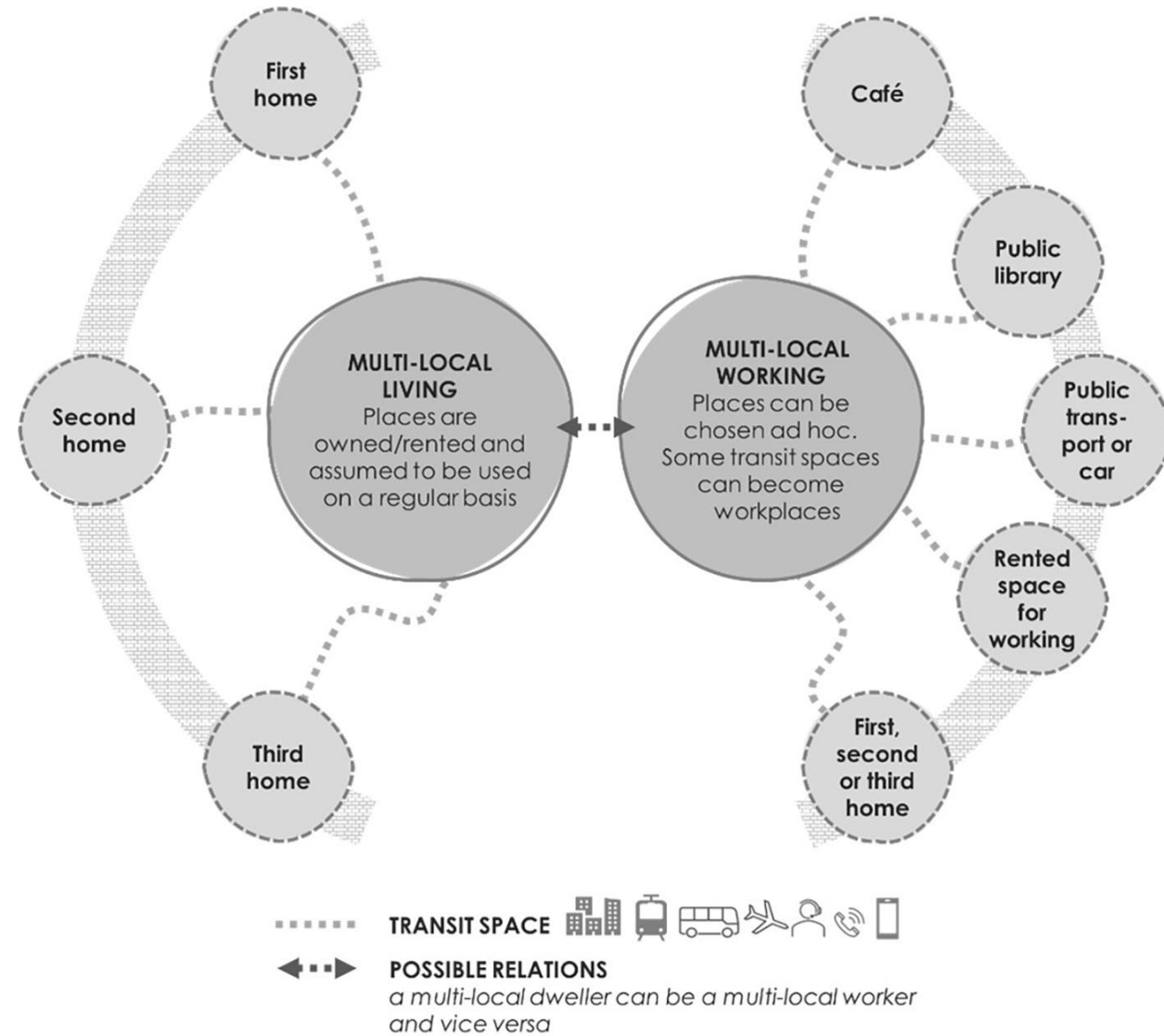
## Current debate

- ❖ 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*)

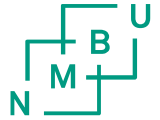




# Conceptualization of multi-locality and 'New Working Spaces'



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

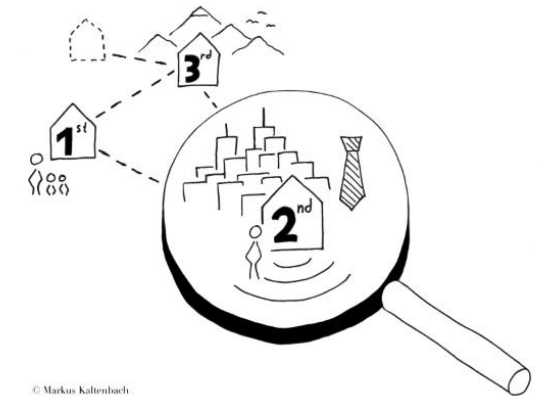


## International and Nordic focus on multi-locality

- ❖ **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.

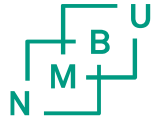


<https://no.fjordnorway.com/planlegg-turen/overnatting/hytter-og-feriehus>



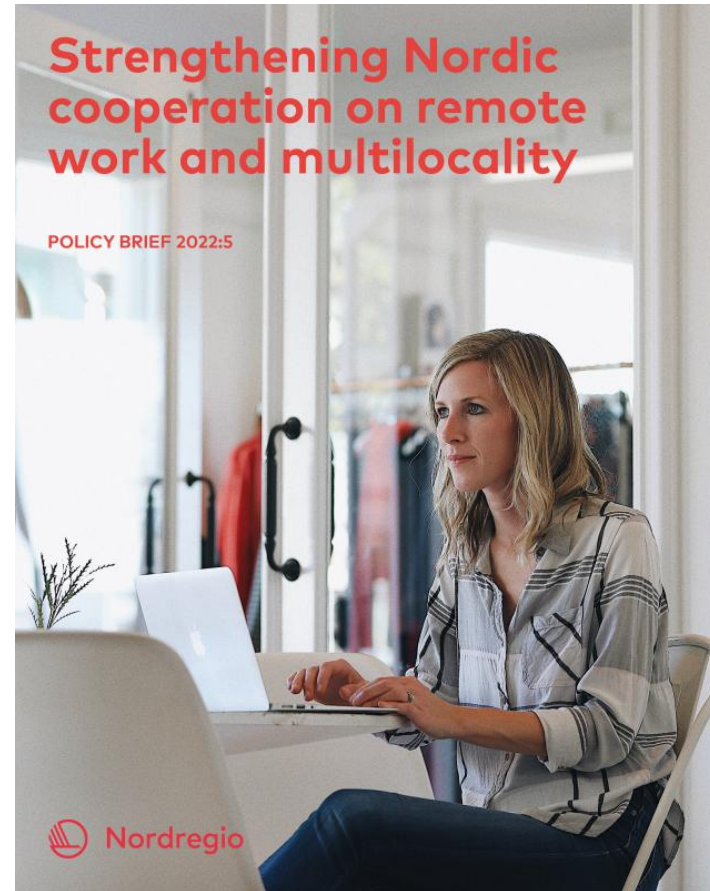
© Markus Kaltenbach

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

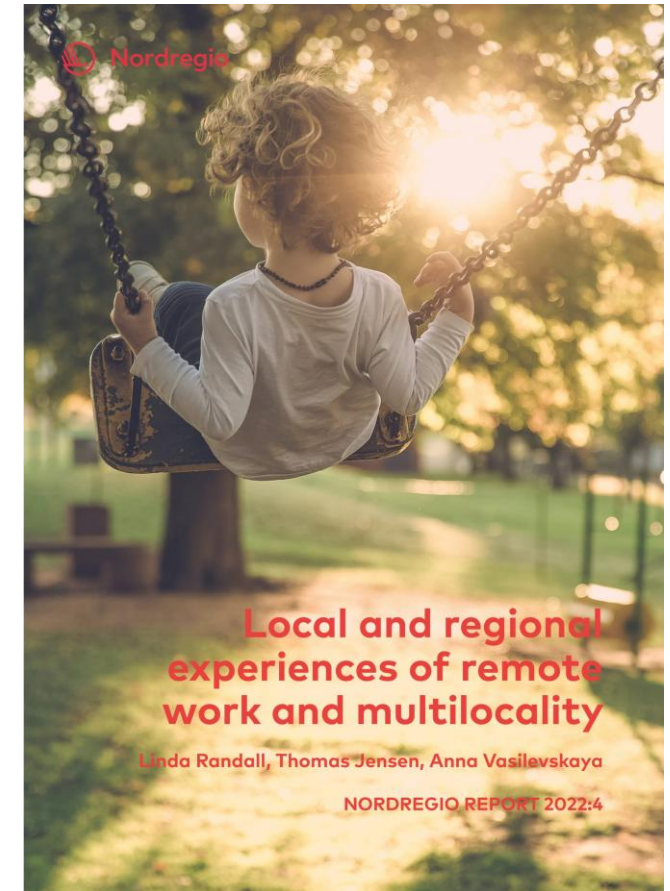


## Nordic Context

- ❖ **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/pb-2022-5-strengthening-nordic-cooperation-on-remote-work-and-multilocality/index.html>



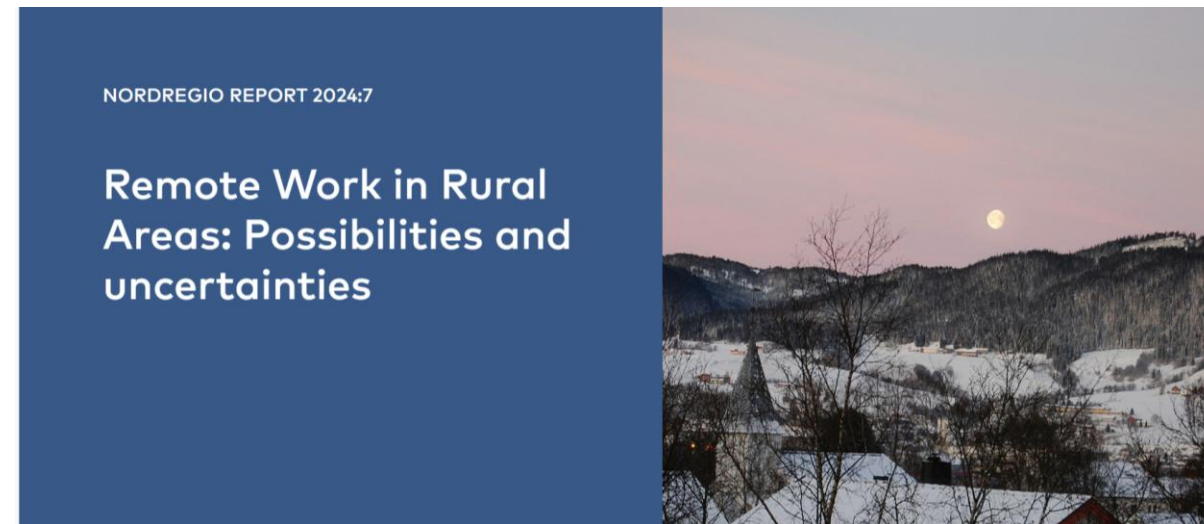
Source image <https://pub.nordregio.org/r-2022-4-local-and-regional-experiences-of-remote-work-and-multilocality/#>

## Nordic Context

- Nordregio reports 2024

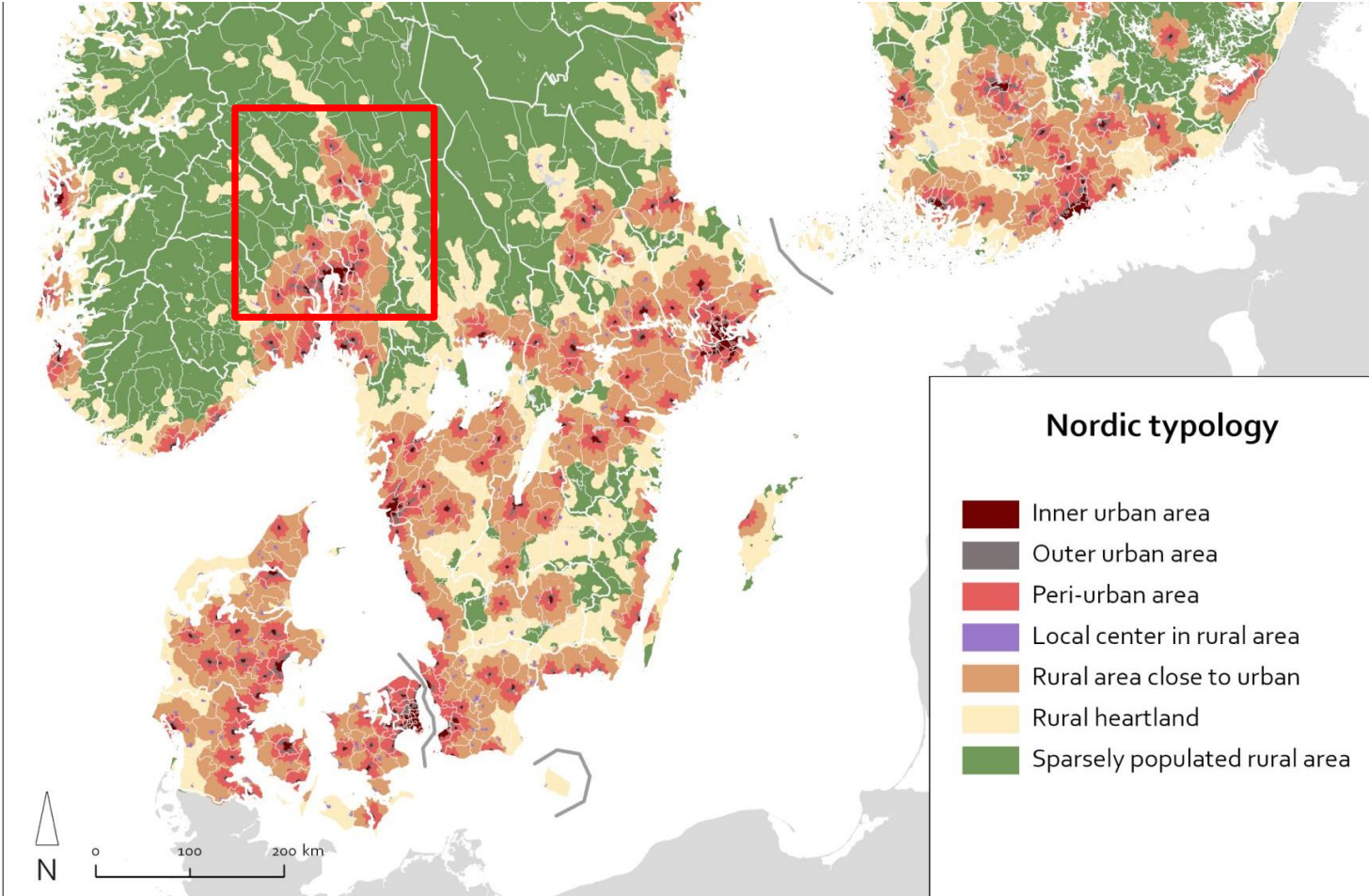
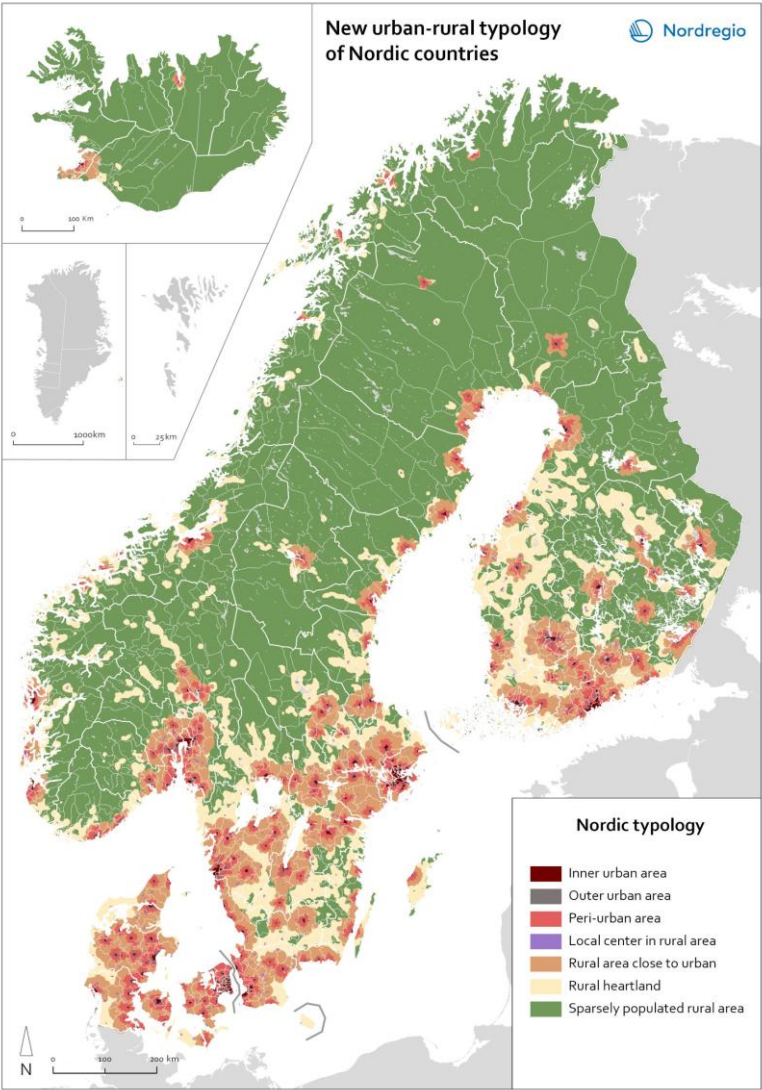


[Remote Work in Smaller Towns: Possibilities and uncertainties \(nordregio.org\)](https://nordregio.org)



[Remote Work in Rural Areas: Possibilities and uncertainties \(nordregio.org\)](https://nordregio.org)

# Spatial typologies

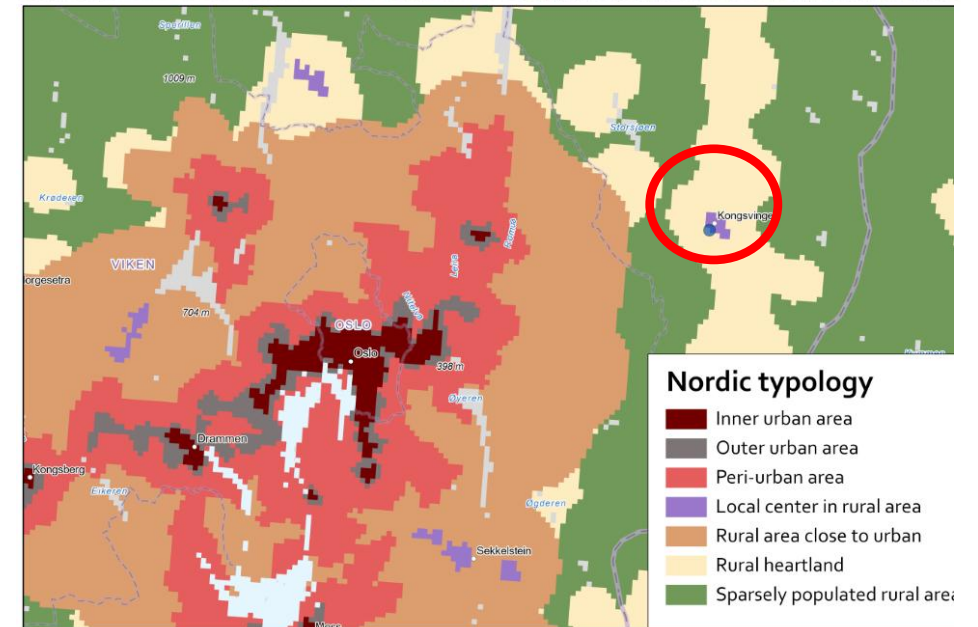




## Case 4: Kongsvinger, Norway: Frontier town on the river

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 19<sup>th</sup> 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.



Remote work in smaller towns: Possibilities and uncertainties (nordregio.org)

# 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):
	- <b>Small</b> : up to 4,999 inhabitants
	- <b>Medium</b> : 5,000–19,999 inhabitants
	- <b>Large</b> : at least 20,000 inhabitants
Average Rural Community Size	4,020 inhabitants
Criteria for Rural Communities	(Rye & Slettebak, 2020):
	- <b>Centrality</b> : Jobs and services accessible within 90 minutes by car
	- <b>Settlement Density</b> : More than 50% of the population lives in sparsely populated areas
	- <b>Labor Markets</b> : Over 7% of the working population employed in the primary sector

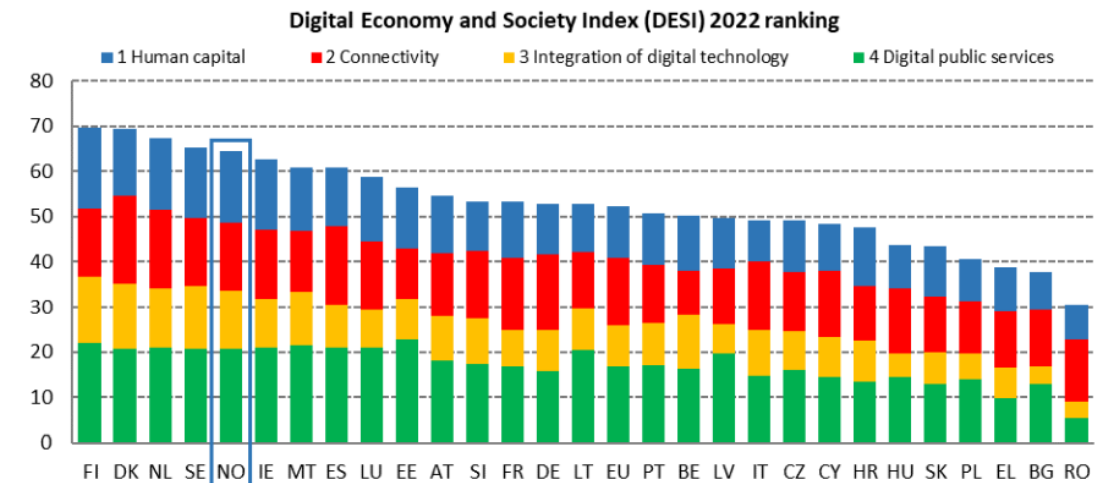
Number of Municipalities in Norway	356
Rural Municipalities	~200 municipalities (18.4% of Norwegians live in rural areas)
Population Trends	- <b>Centralization</b> : Population concentrated in and around major cities (Statistics Norway 2024)
	- <b>Decline</b> : Population numbers declining along the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

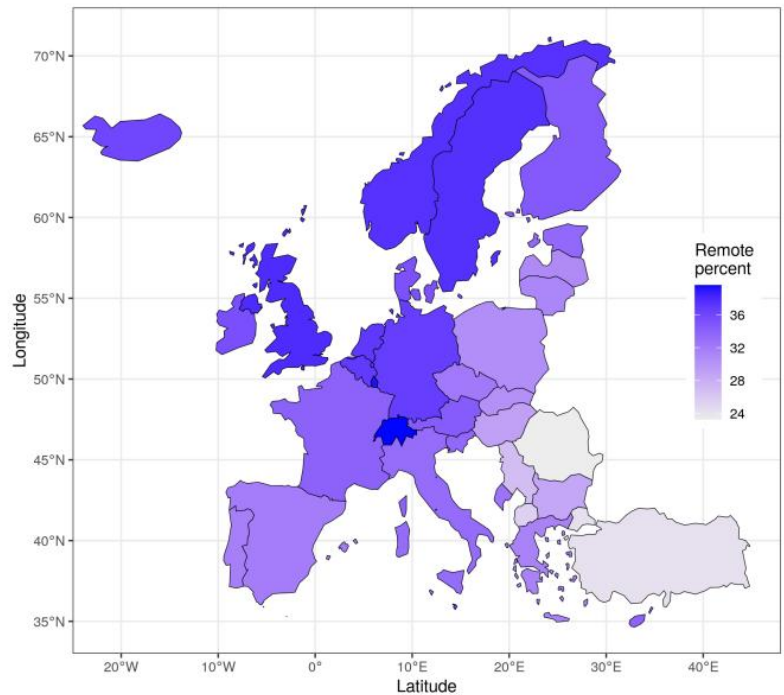
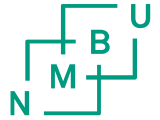
	DESI 2020	Norway DESI 2021	DESI 2022	EU DESI 2022
<b>1a1 At least basic digital skills</b> % individuals	NA	NA	79% 2021	54% 2021
<b>1a2 Above basic digital skills</b> % individuals	NA	NA	43% 2021	26% 2021
<b>1a3 At least basic digital content creation skills<sup>1</sup></b> % individuals	NA	NA	86% 2021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

	Norway	EU
	rank	score
<b>DESI 2022</b>	NA	64.3
		52.3

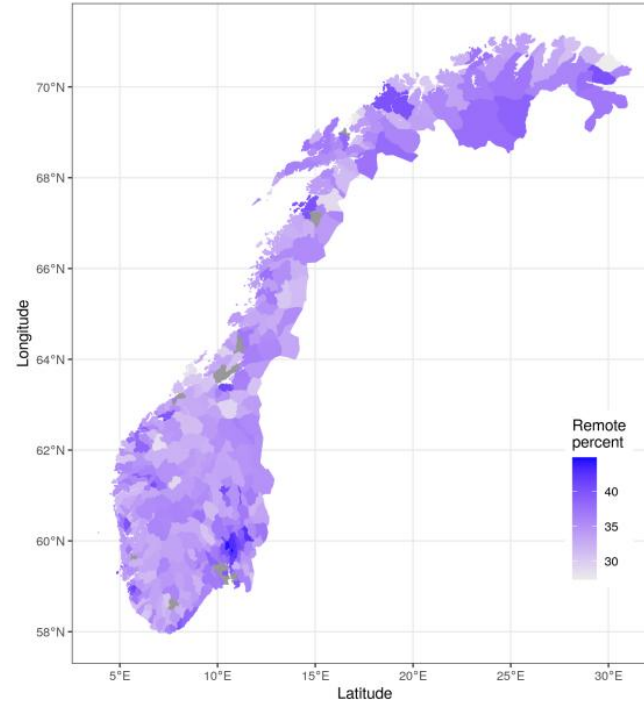


# Remote working in Europe and Norway

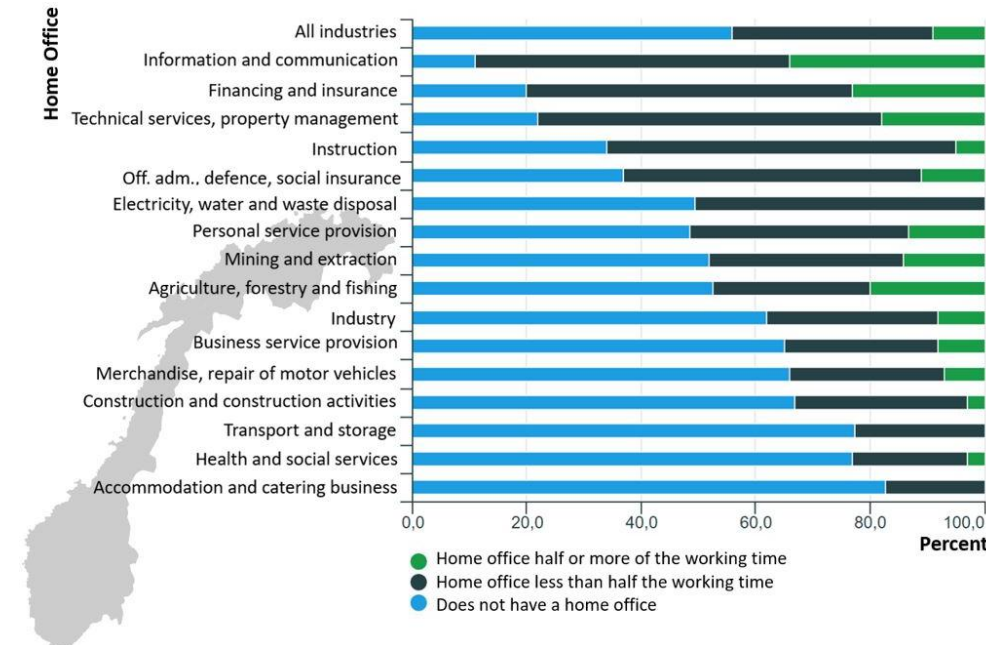
The future of multilocal work and New Working Spaces in small and medium-sized urban municipalities and in rural municipalities: A Norwegian perspective



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

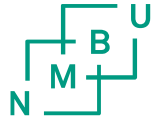


Percentage of workers who can work from home, Norway  
<https://www.ssb.no/en/forskning/discussion-papers/attachment/425729?ts=17303e44798>



**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



## Norwegian 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

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

# 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, innovation/shared hubs

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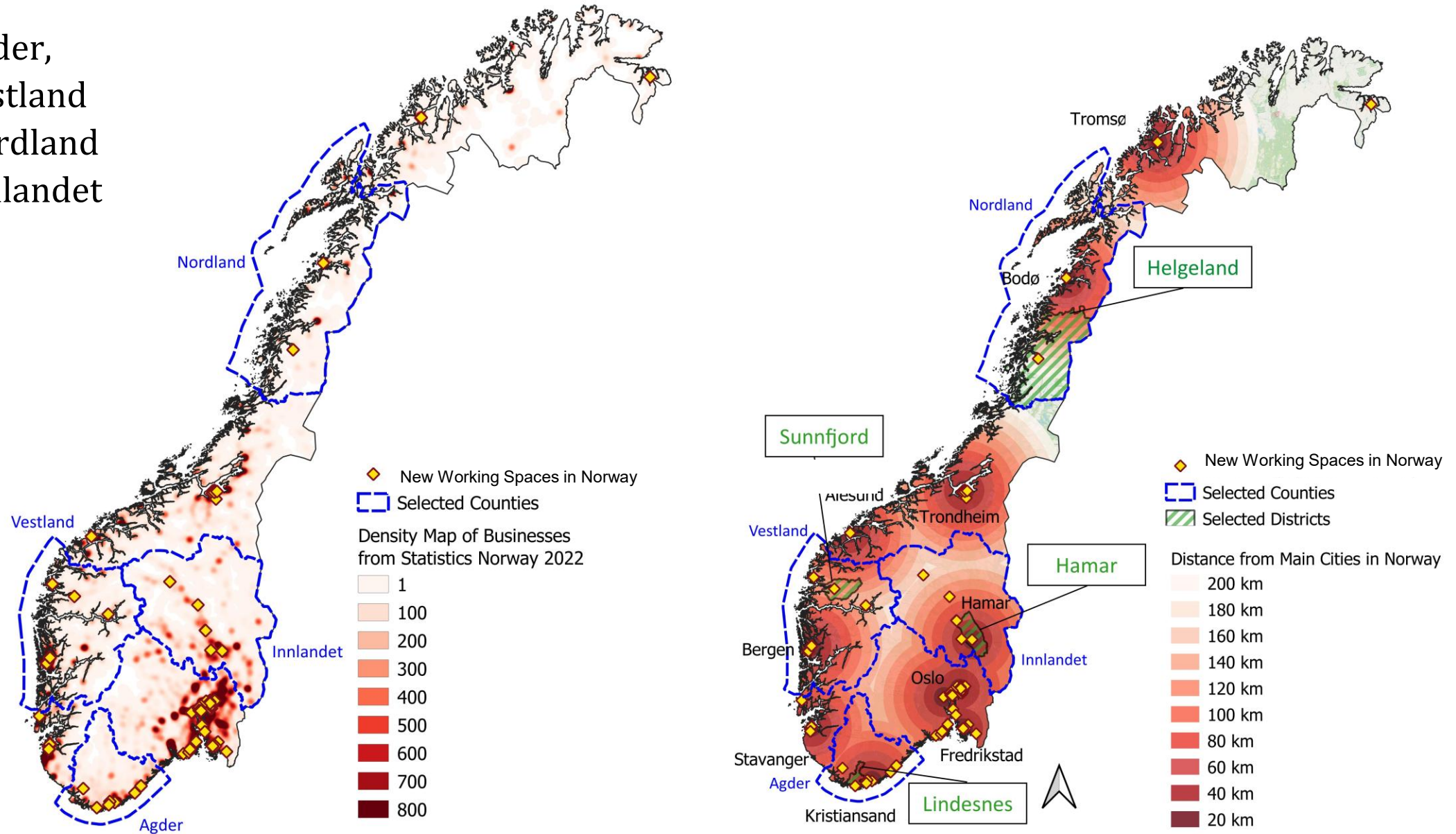
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# Rented and public shared workspaces/hubs

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

- ✓ Agder,
- ✓ Vestland
- ✓ Nordland
- ✓ Innlandet



# Financial support under pandemic

given by Innovation Norway –deadline May 22, 2020

**22 shared workspaces/start-ups got the funding**



SERVICES 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 coworking-spaces 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: 1 199 467
- DHUB AS: 1 528 000
- VÆXT MO I RANA AS: 300 000
- THEFACTORY AS: 2 162 000
- BERGEN.WORKS AS: 521 000
- EPI CENTER NORGE AS: 1 771 450
- 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-til-coworking-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 <sup>2</sup> )	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 open	8,000	–	–	Måløy
	Vestland	Unknown	not yet open	–	–	–	Sandane
Coworx	Agder	The CoWorx experience is an entrepreneurial hub and social environment	2018	300	26–27	52	Mandal
Væxt	Nordland	An inspiring environment for sharing culture and socialization, as well as an arena for networking	2012	1,800	60–70	50	Mosjøen
	Nordland			250			Mo i Rana
	Nordland			100			Hattfjelldal
	Nordland			250			Sandnessjøen
	Nordland		2022	250			Brønnøy
	Nordland		2022	110			Hemnesberget
Park Hamar Innovasjon Centre	Innlandet	Ideas grow and germinate	2018	6,000	190	20	Hamar
	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	Ål

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



## 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**

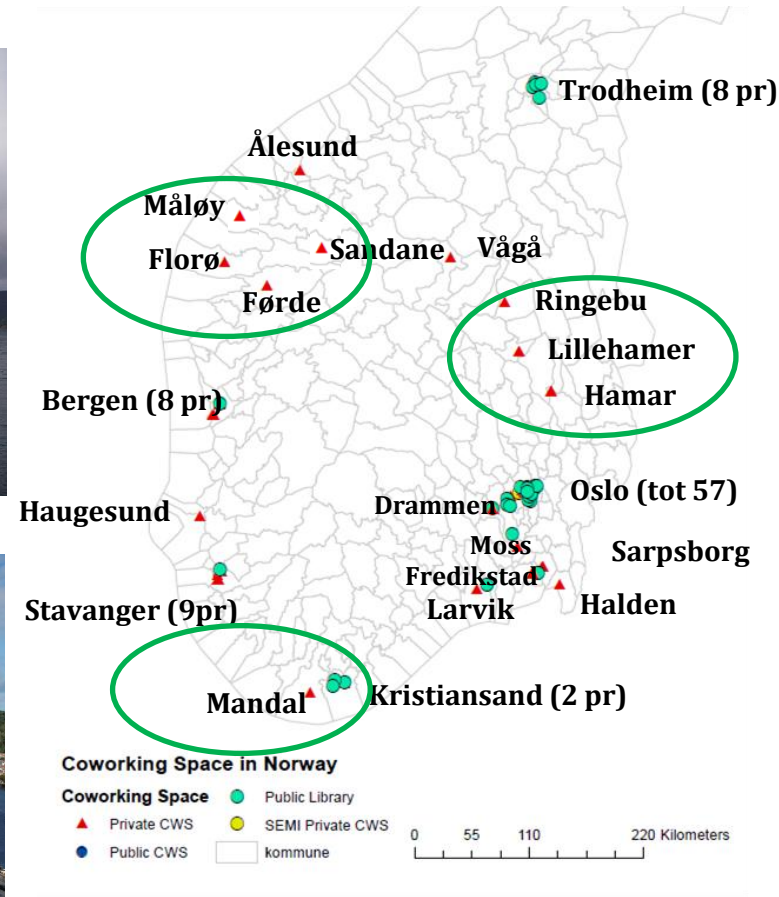
# 1 PeakSunnfjord/PeakSpace, Vestland

## 2 CoWorx, Agder

### Måløy



### Mandal



Chavoshi H and Di Marino M, 2021

## PEAKSunnfjord 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 m<sup>2</sup> -1700m<sup>2</sup> to 2500m<sup>2</sup>, and around 20 companies, now+ single members (which can also rent a hot desk). **100 members**

In Florø, Peak opened in February 2019 -- 450m<sup>2</sup>, 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),

- 300m<sup>2</sup>, **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.

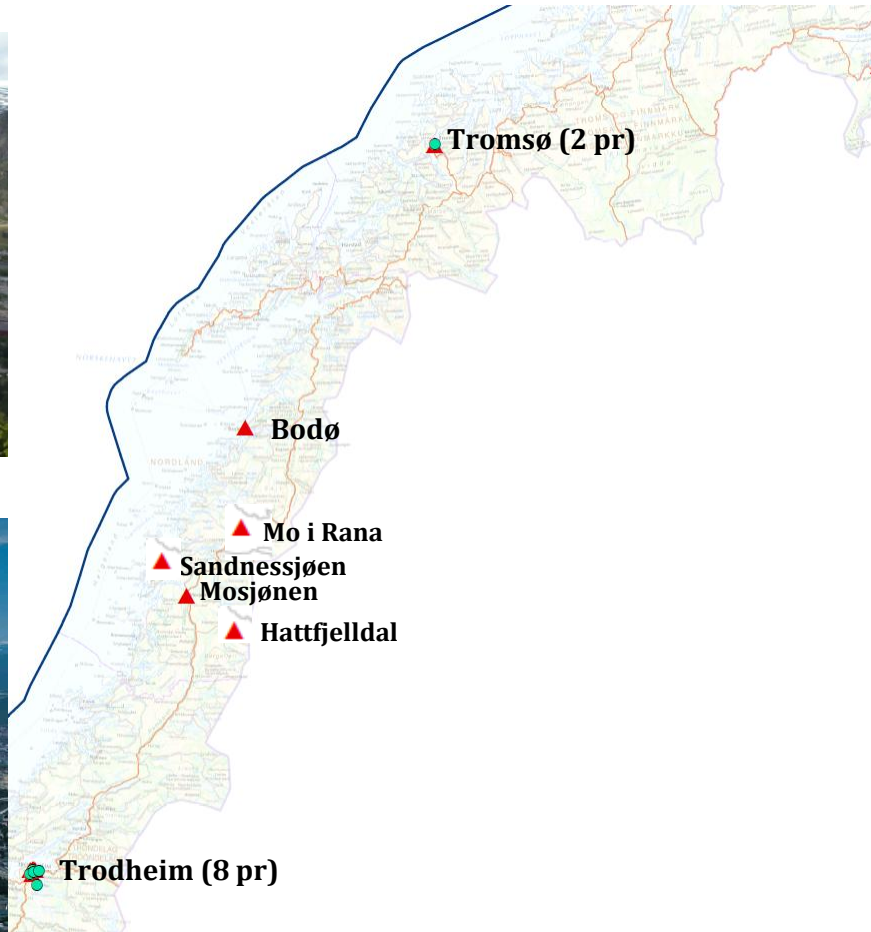
- Hadeland 29.500 inh, 15 km –north of Oslo
- Svalbard –Arctic area
- Rabema 42 south-west Oslo
- Luster 400 km from Oslo
- Lillehammer
- Kunserdel 110 km from Kristiansand

## 2 Væxt, Helgeland

### Mosjøen



### Mo i Rana



Chavoshi H and Di Marino M, 2021

**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.

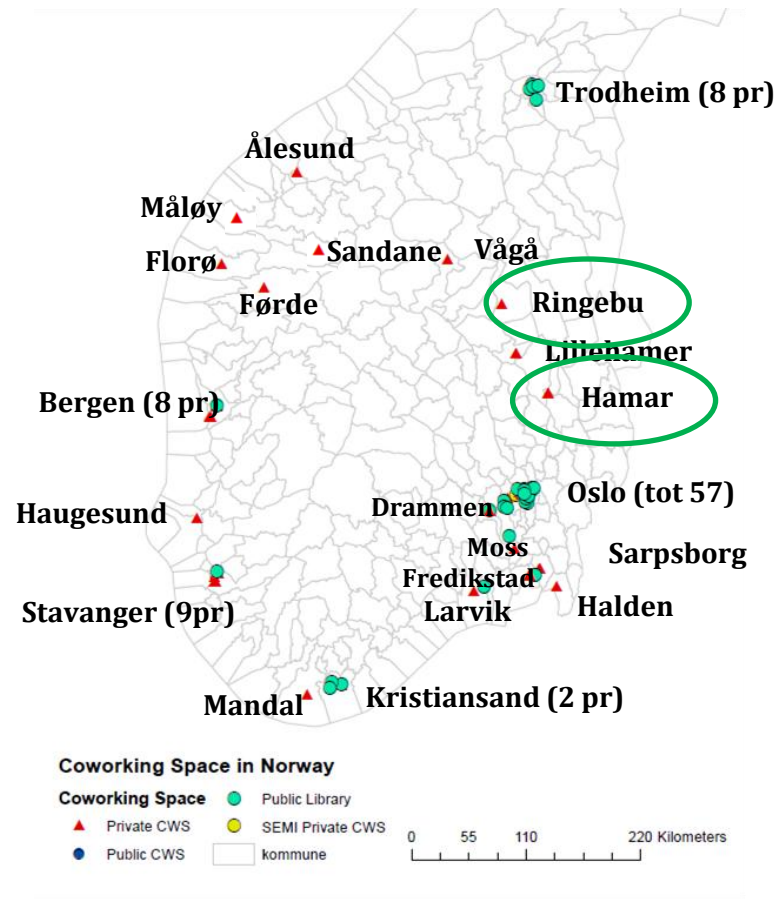
During the pandemic, i Mo i Rana, they closed for a limited time, while i Møsjonen 90% were at the workplace

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 m<sup>2</sup> 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 start-ups 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



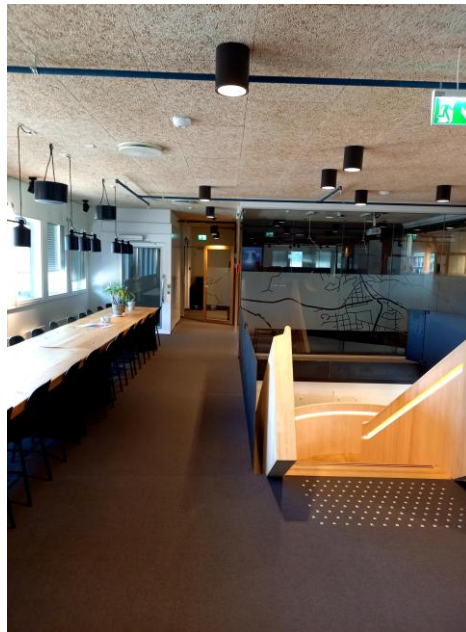
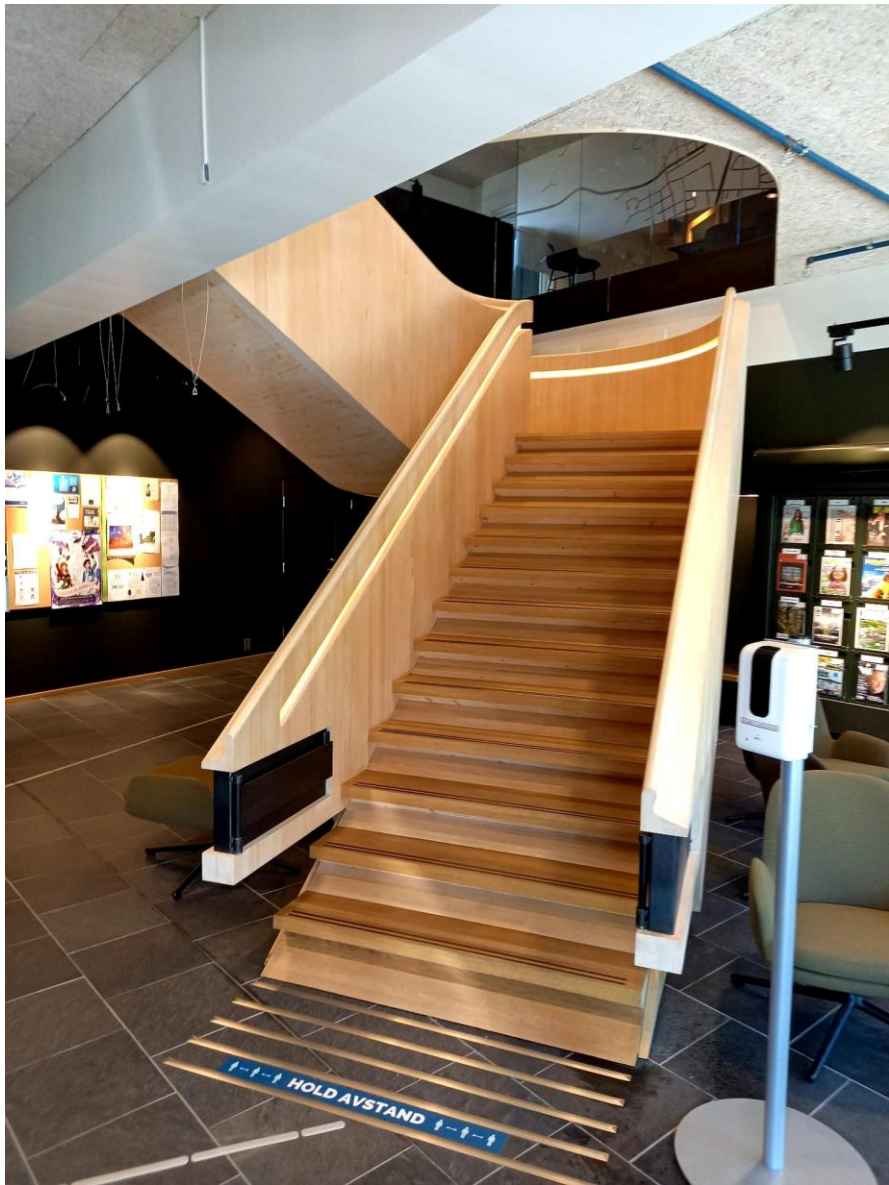
Pictures by Di Marino M., 2022



Pictures by Di Marino M., 2022

# 4 Innovation centre a Ringebu –Innlandet -Norway

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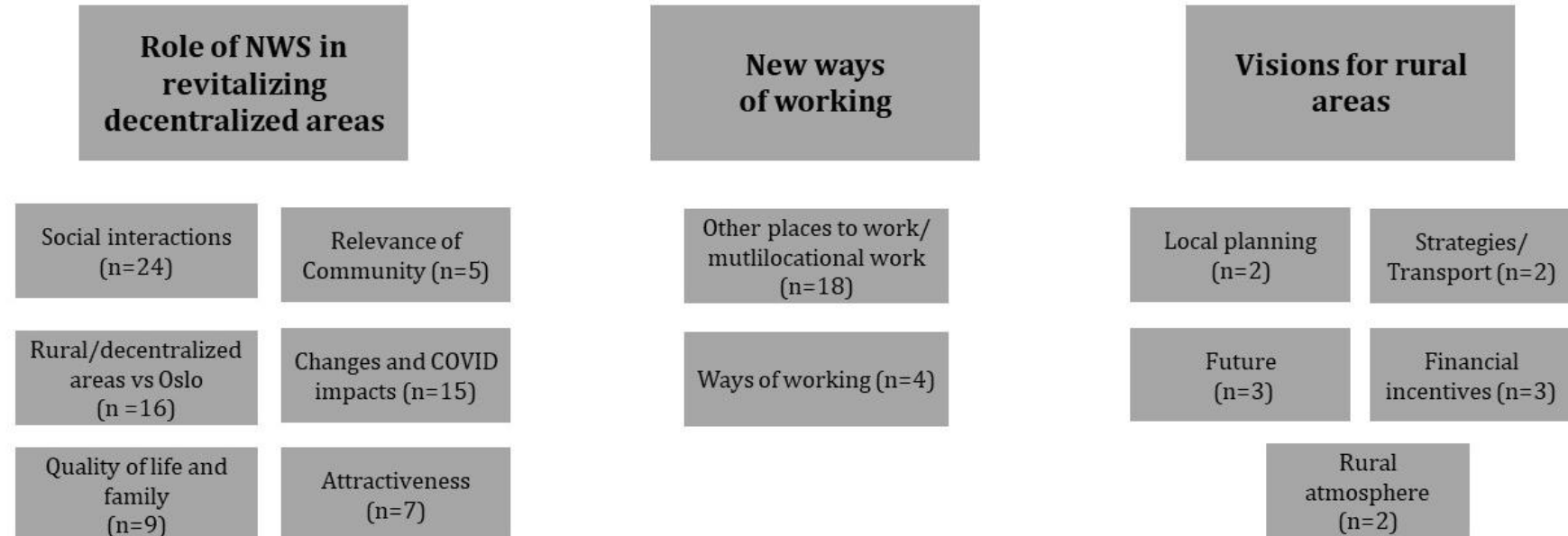
# Main results from the interviews with the managers

## 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



# Concluding remarks



- ❖ These cases of **rural/peripheral areas** 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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