

NRC

Norwegian
Refugee Council

Remote Work & Internal Mobility

Our project aims to provide insights into how employees of the NRC understand and experience the practises of remote work and internal mobility, and to provide recommendations on how to further develop policies related to these practices

Authors

Christer Weisæth
Elisabeth Sundkvist
Håvard Norli Rensvold
Jasmin Ranginya
Ragnhild Gabrielsen
Trym Berger



UNIVERSITY
OF OSLO



Preface

Our project is conducted through the course, “SVPRO4000 – Prosjektforum – lederskap og organisering”, which is a part of our two-year master’s program “Organization, Management & Work” at the University of Oslo. The purpose is to give students experience with real-life issues in the working life and to provide room for interdisciplinary solutions and how to use acquired social science knowledge. The course collaborates with several external clients, where all students are divided into different project groups, mainly based on each individual preference. We were all lucky to get our first choice, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC). With the mandate given to us from the NRC we have aimed to provide insight into current employees’ understanding of practices of remote work and internal mobility. With this, we wish to provide recommendations to the NRC on how to further develop these practices through empirical evidence and a qualitative study in form of interviews with some of the employees.

We would like to thank the Norwegian Refugee Council for providing us with information about their organization. We would also like to thank our contact person in the NRC, Marita Skjæveland, for all her help with our project by putting us in touch with various employees who wanted to participate. We would like to express our gratitude to all the employees who participated in the interviews, thank you for your time, cooperation, and openness.

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Summary

The report aims to answer the mandate given to us by The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), where we've been asked to address and provide input on how the NRC can review and develop the policies and practices regarding remote work and internal mobility within the organization. Through the lens of how the employees of the NRC understand and experience the practices of remote work and internal mobility, we hope to provide insight and recommendations on how to further develop these practices.

With data collected through qualitative in-depth interviews with informants from the NRC, combined and supported with a broad theoretical framework, we have conducted an analysis that focuses on four main categories which we've understood to be core areas for the NRC to develop their practices towards. The categories are "Policies, Procedures and Communication", "Flexibility", "Career Development" and "Remote Management and Team Dynamics". These categories have been further broken down into relevant subcategories that highlight our findings through the interviews. Our conclusion will describe what we consider to be the areas in which the NRC can review and improve, and is what makes the basis for our recommendations, which will be presented as clear and concise bulletins at the very end of the report.

The conclusion will show how *flexibility* through working remotely is a preferred way of working for the majority of the informants we interviewed. In this, we emphasize the intention and significance behind the particular gathering which might generate more excitement and meaning, rather than going to the office just to fill the quota of office days. Followingly, it will suggest that the NRC should further develop the *policies and procedures* concerning remote work and internal mobility, seeing as our analysis suggests that neither the policies nor procedures practised today are satisfactory and that more time and resources should be spent on making a clearer and more in-depth framework to explain the contents and practise of these practices. This also relates to *communication*, as our data collection shows two key areas of communication where the NRC can improve: the transfer of information and routines and procedures for communication. The findings presented in our analysis show that the current communication is not seen as satisfactory by the employees. Concerning *career development*, we found that the NRC has a great reputation within the non-profit world. Most of our respondents highlighted NRC's brand and reputation as a motivator for wanting to apply and

work at NRC. This is a strength NRC can leverage in the initial attraction of new candidates. What is lacking is a clear career pathway for the employees and a lack of any formal structures for how one can develop into a new role at NRC. Finally, our analysis explores the *culture* of the organization in light of our research question. This includes *remote management*, *trust* as well as *teamwork* and *team communication*. We found that the personally connective aspects of the organization cultured stronger motivation to work. It appears that establishing some level of physical contact fosters an increased amount of trust for remote workers and facilitates better working conditions for individuals as well as teams.

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1.0 Introduction

The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) is the largest humanitarian organization in Norway. They work as a recognized international actor in issues and crises revolving and relating to protecting the rights of displaced and vulnerable people during crises. The work they do therefore long surpasses the Norwegian borders, with an international team and staff consisting of 16 000 humanitarians. Among these, there are “specialists”, people with specialized and unique skills and a certain competence, often relating to a specific area of expertise. The individuals are important for the NRC workforce, making the recruitment of such individuals crucial. The latter is a challenging task on its own, due to the complexity of the circumstances when hiring international staff. This task has moreover become increasingly more complex due to new standards and expectations in the labour market, where internal mobility, remote, and hybrid working structures often are considered to be reasonable and normal benefits. Hence, there is an increasing demand for flexibility.

The current policy of NRC explains that their workforce should ideally be located on national levels and contracts, meaning that their employees should be employed in their country of residence. The evident challenge, however, is that a lot of the competent and specialized staff that is required is not always accessible or attainable in the countries in which offices are held by the NRC. This can be due to non-resident staff not being able to relocate, for personal reasons, and/or because they wish to work remotely.

The latter point is the crucial implication and focus of this report. As the NRC recognizes, there has been a shift in the labour market, where employees wish for more flexibility in regard to remote work and internal mobility. This may especially be the case for international organizations such as the NRC. The NRC also recognises that the use of remote work is desired and perhaps needed in order to attract highly skilled people living across the world. It also enables the NRC to have workforces in the field and in strategic areas of cooperation across organizational units (internal audit, p. 24). The mandate given and described here over has led us to the following research question, which is:

Our project aims to provide insights into how employees of the NRC understand and experience the practises of remote work and internal mobility, and to provide recommendations on how to further develop policies related to these practices.

In the following, we will firstly introduce our chosen theoretical framework, which will lay the foundation for our analysis. Before we present the data from our conducted interviews, a section highlighting our methodological approach will be presented, with explanations of how and why we have chosen the qualitative approach when gathering data. Our analysis will then follow, highlighting and merging our theoretical framework with our findings from the interviews. The conclusion will summarize what we believe to be the main findings and results of the analysis, which in turn will make the foundation for our recommendations for the NRC, presented at the very end.

2.0 Theoretical Framework

2.1 Theoretical Framework and Previous Research

The recent decades have brought about unprecedented changes in the way we work and live. The shift from economic liberalism to neoliberalism introduced an increase in labour market flexibility as a means of allowing market principles to filtrate through all aspects of life (Standing, 2011, s.1). With this a new sense of agency followed, creating a new vision of “*people owning themselves as though they were a business*” (Gherson, 2011, p. 539) More recently, the COVID-19 pandemic, regarded by some as the “fourth industrial revolution” (Koutroukis, Chatzinikolaou, Vlados & Pistikou, 2022), enforced an already brewing new meaning of the “workplace”. One of the most significant changes has been the widespread adoption of remote work, remote management, and mobility within organizations, or internal mobility. These new ways of working have not only affected the workforce's physical location but also had a significant impact on the organization's culture, policies, and management practices. In this section of the report, we wish to explore the theory and previous research related to remote work, remote management, and internal mobility. The aim is to provide an overview of the existing literature and identify the most important findings in this area.

In this section, we wish to define the key terms and concepts related to remote work, remote management, and internal mobility. Next, we will explore the benefits and challenges associated with remote work, including the impact on productivity, work-life balance, and employee engagement. We will also discuss the implications of remote work for management practices, including the need for new communication strategies and performance management techniques. Additionally, we will review the existing research on internal mobility, which refers to the movement of employees across national borders for work-related purposes. We will examine the factors that influence mobility, including individual characteristics, organizational factors, and cultural differences. Finally, we will identify the key trends and future directions in remote work, remote management, and mobility research.

Regarding the selection of literature and relevant previous research, the group has made a choice based on a common understanding of what we want the literature and research to include. First and foremost, we have focused on finding literature through search engines such as WebOfScience, Oria, Idun, Google Scholar, and ScienceDirect. After collecting relevant literature, the group worked together to sort through and summarize the selected articles that we considered relevant for the NRC and the report. Throughout the entire process, we made continuous assessments and evaluations of relevance, quality, and whether the article's approach was necessary to be included in the current report.

2.2 Remote Work

Telecommuting is a term believed to have originated in the 1970's at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), the idea at the time was to move the work to the workers instead of moving the workers to the work (Allen et al. 2015, p. 41). Defining telecommuting has been challenging among scholars and telecommuting has been referred to among others as flex space, virtual work and remote work. Allen et al. (2015, p. 44) uses former definitions and a review of the literature to make a general definition of telecommuting:

“Telecommuting is a work practice that involves members of an organization substituting a portion of their typical work hours (ranging from a few hours per week to nearly full-time) to work away from a central workplace—typically principally from home—using technology to interact with others as needed to conduct work tasks.”

Margrethe H. Olson (1982, p. 182) defined remote as:

“Organizational work that is performed outside of the normal organizational confines of space and time. The term telecommuting refers to the substitution of communications capabilities for travel to a central work location. Office automation technology permits many office workers to be potential telecommuters in that their work can be performed remotely with computer and communications support.”

Remote work has become a popular global trend in recent years due to technological advancements, changing attitudes towards work-life balance, and the COVID-19 pandemic. Remote work thus enables employees to work from a location of their choosing: at home, a co-working space, in a coffee shop or even in another country.

The technological advancements enabling remote work are the possibilities for video conferencing, collaboration tools and cloud-based software that enable remote workers to communicate, collaborate and complete tasks as if they were physically in the organization's office. The technological advancements together with a changing working environment and the COVID-19 pandemic have changed the expectations of employees regarding the nature of work. Which in turn influences employers to participate in the development and adapt in order to retain and recruit the best-qualified employees.

Remote work entails both advantages, challenges, and disadvantages. Some advantages can be increased productivity, increased morale, better work-life balance, enhanced worker autonomy and leveraged remote expertise (Ferreira et al. 2021, p. 3). It also enables flexibility, which has been found to enhance organizational performance, as well as allowing the organization to remain operationally active in turbulent situations (Chattarjee, Chadhuri & Vrontis, 2022, p. 501-502) However, some of the challenges with remote work are communication, management, transparency, technological, training and maintaining team cohesion (Ferreira et al. 2021, p. 4). The disadvantages of remote work can be the feeling of isolation, lack of physical interaction, maintaining a work-life balance, increased workload, communication, technology dependency, knowledge sharing and infrastructure problems (Ferreira et al. 2021, p. 5). Some of the advantages are therefore in fact the disadvantages as well.

Remote work in the context of NRC shall be understood as "staff work from another country than the location of their office" (internal audit, 2021). Even though this project mainly looks at remote work, it is also important to highlight that many of the advantages and disadvantages of remote work can be seen in the hybrid work life, where employees mix between working from home and working in-office.

2.3 Internal Mobility

Internal mobility is a concept used in particularly human resource literature and practices that refer to movement of employees and staff within an organization. This "movement" refers to employees moving from one job role, department, or location to another (Benson & Rissing, 2020). This might entail a change of position or job title, or promotions and demotions, where the movement offers an opportunity for employees to develop and/or gain new experiences and skills within the organization (Ng & Feldman, 2012).

Internal mobility can be a key aspect and practice within HR procedures such as recruitment and talent management. It can facilitate and have important implications for employee engagement, retention, and development (Koster & Benda, 2020) For example, Benson & Rissing (2020) found that high-performing employees who had internal mobility experience were more likely to stay with the company than people who did not go through such a process. Moreover, their article also found that internal mobility was especially important in highly competitive industries and work environments where there are many job opportunities. This is supported by Mathew Bidwell's (2011) article, which also finds that internal mobility can help retain "top talent" and increase employee engagement and job satisfaction. This is explained to come about through and because of reduced transitioning costs as training, onboarding and/or company culture, due to employees already being familiar with the company. Bidwell also comments that internal mobility is less financially costly for an organization, seeing as external hires often receive higher salaries than internal promotions. Internal mobility can also reduce turnover rates and costs. Thus, internal mobility can be considered a strategic tool for developing and retaining valuable employees, fostering, and nurturing talent, as well as organizational agility and innovation (Collins & Smith, 2006).

2.3.1 Talent Management & Commitment-based HR

Global talent management is a strategic approach to managing an organization's human capital, particularly when it comes to attracting, retaining, and developing employees with the necessary skills and competencies to achieve the organization's goals in a global context (Scullion & Collings, 2011). The concept of "scarcity" plays a significant role in regard to global talent management, as in today's increasingly interconnected world, organizations are competing for the best talent on a global scale, and effectively managing this talent is crucial for success (Porschitz et al., 2016, p. 344).

Internal mobility plays a significant role in global talent management, as it offers organizations a means to develop and retain high-performing employees, while also promoting diversity and cross-cultural understanding. By encouraging internal mobility, organizations can not only benefit from the unique perspectives and experiences of their globally diverse workforce but also foster a culture of continuous learning and development (Tarique & Schuler, 2010).

One of the key aspects of global talent management regarding internal mobility is the need for organizations to have a clear and comprehensive mobility policy in place. Such a policy could outline the organization's approach to international assignments, including the selection process, compensation and benefits, repatriation support, and other relevant factors. Organizations can support employees' mobility when they invest in resources and infrastructure, such as training and development programs, mentoring, and technology platforms that facilitate communication and collaboration among globally dispersed teams (Scullion & Collings, 2011).

Moreover, organizations can adopt a proactive approach to talent management by identifying high-potential employees and providing them with the opportunities and support needed to develop their skills and competencies, including international assignments and cross-functional projects (Farndale, Scullion, & Sparrow, 2010). This approach not only enables organizations to build a strong talent pipeline but also contributes to employee engagement and retention, as theories of commitment predict high-potential employees are more likely to stay with an organization that invests in their development and growth (Benson & Rissing, 2020).

Furthermore, we find that human capital theory predicts that internal hires will be immediately more productive than external hires (Benson & Rissing, 2020, p. 1475).

The concept of "the war for talent" has emerged as a significant challenge for organizations in the current labour market. This term refers to the intense competition among companies to attract and retain top talent in the face due to demographic shifts, such as lower population growth, low unemployment rates, and an ageing workforce (Becker et al., 2020). These factors have contributed to a tightening labour market, making it increasingly difficult for organizations to find and hire external candidates with the required skills and expertise.

Evidence shows that one approach organizations may differentiate themselves is to practice what we call a commitment-based approach to HR. We defined a commitment-based approach to HR as using best evidence and practice to structure the HR activities that an organization implements with its employees, where activities such as compensation policies, and how they recruit and give opportunities to the employees are based on mutual trust as opposed to control orientation of its employees. A meta-analysis of 19,319 organizations revealed a positive correlation between a commit-based HR approach and stock market value, profit, productivity, and market share, compared to a control-oriented approach (Combs et al., 2006).

Practices commit-based HR include among things to invest in the needs and development of all employees and provide job security, long-term employment, and good internal career opportunities. Furthermore, implementing commitment-based HR has been shown to cause a lower turnover, lower sick leaves, and greater engagement, loyalty, and responsibility among employees (Kuvaas & Dysvik, 2020, p. 26-27).

When it comes to career development as a method for contributing to commit-based HR, this encompasses both vertical (managerial responsibilities) and horizontal (specializations) career trajectories. Especially the horizontal path offers new opportunities for its employees. Modern career development has shifted the responsibility for acquiring skills onto individuals, who "lend" their time to organizations in exchange for valuable competence. Job security is no longer as crucial as obtaining unique, valuable skills that make one attractive for future career

opportunities. This shift has given rise to the concept of "borderless and changing careers." (Kuvaas & Dysvik, 2020). To mitigate some of this effect and for contributing to enhancing the perception of subjective career success, organizations must address factors such as breaches of psychological contracts, insufficient support from managers, and low perceived organizational support.

Strategies for increasing subjective career success and contributing to the employee's own "borderless and changing career" include helping employees focus on job aspects they find interesting, fostering a sense of mastery, granting autonomy, offering recognition and respect, and encouraging knowledge sharing (Valcour, 2014). Job security, internal recruitment, and investments in learning and development (L&D) are initiatives that are linked to better organizational performance (Combs et al., 2006). This can be done by not only focusing on managerial support but also giving genuine opportunities for internal career development (i.e., horizontal career paths).

When it comes to the state of how companies use internal mobility, a study reveals that 96% of companies prioritize internal candidates for leadership positions (vertical), while 78% do the same for other roles. Despite this, only a mere 19% of businesses have established systematic methods for promoting internal career growth, which is mainly reserved for a select group of "talents." In a 2019 Enova study, it was discovered that 70% of organizations believed they would gain advantages by enhancing internal mobility and concentrating on the "employee journey" (HR Norge, 2021).

Summarized, rather than relying solely on external hires, companies can focus on developing their existing workforce through initiatives such as internal mobility and a commitment-based approach to HR. By investing in their employees, organizations can not only improve employee satisfaction and retention but also develop a talent pipeline that enables them to fill critical roles from within. As the demand for skilled workers continues to outpace supply, organizations must be proactive in cultivating the talent they need to remain competitive in a rapidly changing global landscape.

2.4 Organizational Guidelines

Having organizational guidelines are generally understood as key elements in almost any organization of a certain size and can be especially important when operating in organizations with high complexity and a large staff.

Policies and procedures can help and provide a shared framework for the organization, that in turn will facilitate common and similar and outcomes and results. The polices provide written down standards explaining how employees are to comply and govern their work tasks and organizational operations. The procedures are policies set to life and practice.

Hence, policies and procedures are some of the important functions that enables and enforces uniformity and consistency within an organization. This is a well-studied element of organizations. Academics can point to several important attributes for how procedures and policies work. Central to the topic, is how well-defined policies and procedures promotes consistency, fairness, mitigate risk and a means for of communication for values and expectations from mangers to their employees, and vice versa. Therefore, policies and procedures are also powerful tools to minimize or prevent the potential for errors, and therefore reduce the likelihood of legal liabilities. (Amadei, 2010). Moreover, rules of procedure can be helpful to ensure that processes are consistent and transparent. This is an important notion, as any procedure easily can be misinterpreted, ignored, or manipulated. Having clear and consistent policy in place can work as a preventive measure, that make decisions-makers accountable and a subject for scrutiny if needed (Shepsle & Weingast, 1987). Arranging and managing for success, or the lack of it, will be dependent on organizational factors such as resources, structure, and culture, as well as external factors and environment (Montjoy & O'Toole, 1981). To combat both new and existing task and issues, implementation of policies trough procedures acquires a clear definition of a problem, identifying relevant and available resources, and developing a plan for reach the desired goal. This also relies on good communication and coordination within the organization (Montjoy & O'Toole, 1981).

Communication is considered to be a decisive factor in organizations and can be crucial for the organization's survival and success. In an organization, the communication is not only a method

to transfer information from one person to another, but also a means to coordinate activities, build relationships and create community. Good communication helps to build trust and cooperation, and also promotes commitment among the employees. It also helps to reduce conflicts and misunderstandings and provides a clear understanding of expectations and areas of responsibility. An effective communication in organizations is linked to a higher productivity, better cooperation and increases satisfaction among employees (Jablin, Putnam & Roberts, 1987).

Communication can take place both vertically and horizontally in organizations. Vertical communication refers to communication between managers and subordinates, while horizontal communication refers to communication between employees at the same level in the organization (Robbins & Coulter, 2016). Communication can also be formal or informal and can take place both verbally and non-verbally. It is a continuous process of exchanging information and ideas between individuals and groups within the organization. It can include all forms of exchange, including oral, written and visual communication (Deetz, 1992). Effective communication in organizations requires clear and distinct communication, which gives the recipient the opportunity to understand the message and react to it in a meaningful way. This requires that the sender is aware of his communication style, and that the receiver is aware of both verbal and non-verbal signals.

Poor communication in organizations can lead to misunderstandings, mistakes and conflicts, which can have a negative impact on the organization's efficiency and productivity. In order to maintain effective communication in organizations, it is important to have clear communication channels and processes, and to invest in training employees in communication. This may involve training in both oral and written communication skills, as well as training in intercultural communication (Robbins & Coulter, 2016).

2.5 Collaboration and Culture: Remote Teamwork and Management

The report "Home Office in the Wake of the Corona Crisis", issued in 2021 by the Norwegian Work Research Institute (AFI), examines the experiences and challenges of employees who worked remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is a recent and note-worthy research contribution to both remote management as well as providing insight into the human factors that affect motivation and well-being at work. The report does not distinguish between remote work and working from home, however, the report contains a good starting point for understanding current trends of remote management and team communication.

The report examines the experiences and challenges of employees who worked remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study was conducted by researchers from the Norwegian Work Research Institute (AFI) and involved several data collection methods. It is based on a survey conducted by a total of 5038 employees of various sectors and industries in Norway, between the 24th of February and the 16th of March 2021 (AFI, 2021, p. 45). It is important once again to note that the study does not distinguish between working from home and working from anywhere. Additionally, it was conducted under very specific circumstances, during the COVID-19 crisis. These factors may have an influence on how one might interpret the data. Regardless of this, the report has had many key findings that have benefited us in our analysis.

An important finding of the report was the importance of good communication and collaboration between remote workers and their colleagues. Participants emphasized the need for clear communication channels and regular check-ins by managers and between employees, to ensure that everyone is on the same page and that tasks are being completed effectively. This is particularly relevant in light of the increased reliance on digital tools and platforms for remote collaboration. The report also highlighted the challenges of maintaining social connections and a sense of belonging while working remotely. Participants reported missing the social interactions and informal conversations that typically occur in a physical workplace, and some expressed feelings of isolation and disconnection from their colleagues. This highlights the importance of maintaining social connections and fostering a sense of community, even in a remote work environment (p. 37).

In terms of the impact of digitalisation on remote work, the report found that digital tools and platforms were essential for enabling remote work during the pandemic. However, the same report highlighted the potential negative effects of digital fatigue and stress experienced by remote workers as a result of increased screen time and heavy reliance on digital communication channels. While the impact of digitalisation on remote work cannot be denied, it is important for organizations to consider the human factors involved in remote work. The report emphasizes the need to balance digital tools with other forms of communication and collaboration to ensure a positive remote work experience. By adopting this approach, companies can help to improve employees' well-being and productivity, ultimately resulting in a more engaged and motivated workforce.

Overall, the report highlights the complexity of remote work and the importance of considering a range of factors, including work-life balance, communication and collaboration, social connections, and digitalisation. As the NRC continues to adapt to remote work practices, these findings can provide important insights into the challenges and opportunities involved in remote management and remote teamwork and inform about strategies for supporting employees in a remote work environment.

As we now have outlined our theoretical framework consisting of remote work, internal mobility, career development, organizational guidelines and collaboration and culture, we will continue with our methodical approach to answer our research question.

3.0 Methodological Approach

Our chosen methodological approach has been shaped by a number of different factors. The mandate given by the NRC has served as a springboard, off of which we decided upon a qualitative approach to the task. Qualitative research can be to explore complex social phenomena and understand individuals' subjective experiences. Interviews are a commonly used method in this type of research, allowing us to gather rich and detailed data directly from the participants. Furthermore, we wished to include qualitative interviews of various forms. By combining in-depth interviews or focus group interviews, our goal was to create as broad of an understanding of the data content as possible. Following this approach, we hoped to perform a high-quality analysis, fulfil our given mandate and be able to provide the NRC with useful insight of the subject matter. Our informants were well-informed of the purpose of the study by an extensive information sheet as well as oral communication, and we performed the semi-structured interviews by using an interview guide. Both documents are available as an attachment to this report. The interviews were conducted online in February and March 2023, and included a number of 13 informants employed by the NRC.

3.1 Selection of Informants

Our selection of informants has been influenced by a number of factors. Questions of the selection of informants is a central topic in qualitative research, as it shapes the data collection in a central way (Thagaard, 2013). One of our main concerns was to be able to reach employees globally. To better represent the width and dynamism of the organization, we wished to include informants working from several different countries. As the NRC is a global organization, this was a distinct wish from our side. Thankfully, we managed to accomplish this through good cooperation with our NRC contact. They worked as a facilitator, providing initial information to potential participants in our study. We were provided with their email addresses and were from then on solely responsible for our interactions. Due to the international nature of informants, we were only able to reach them digitally. It was therefore decided that we would only perform digital interviews, which we successfully did through a secure Zoom portal. Some informants were understandably not available to be interviewed, but as a whole the employees were very forthcoming and willing to be speak to us about their experiences.

The potential informants that were provided to us, all classify as specialists and experts in their respective fields. They all had several years of experience in the organization, and many also have had experience managing teams. This is beneficial for the quality of our study, as we were able to access information suited to the subject matter. The long-standing employment relation between the NRC and the informants is also something we consider to be positive, as they have a lot of experience with employment relations themselves, as well as having observed other employees and the organization through a number of years. This, we believe, has given them knowledge and possible tools that may be of great significance for the quality of our study.

In the recent decades, interviewing experts such as the ones represented in our study, has been regarded as a distinct interview form, sometimes referred to as “elite interviews” (Littig, 2009, p. 98). This particular kind of interview can pose certain challenges. As experts can be regarded as high-level individuals, they often have to adhere to tight schedules and prioritize important tasks over lesser ones (p. 105). Certain interviews were therefore cancelled or rescheduled, which added complexity to our coordination efforts. Due to a limited pool of resources as well as temporal constraints, we were only able to interview a total of 13 employees, of which 11 were individual interviews and 2 participated in a single focus group interview. We would have preferred to conduct more focus group interviews, but due to coordination difficulties between different informants as well as time constraints, we were not able to do this. Given more time, it may also have been interesting to interview a larger number of employees. In this case, it could also have been useful to speak to not only experts and specialists with a long history of employment in the NRC, but to include more recent employees or employees at a lower level as well.

3.2 Reliability and Validity

In qualitative research, questions of reliability and validity are a central matter of the field (Tjora, 2021). A common criticism of qualitative studies is that there may be a risk that the results could be shaped by the researcher's personal opinions and biases. We have however made several active choices in our study to counteract such potentially harmful effects and increase internal validity. First, we have utilized a well-documented analysis method using close text coding. The interview guide and its content are also available as an attachment at the end of this report. In the analysis, we have included quotes from the informants and tried to

draw clear distinctions between which statements apply to all informants and how they differ from each other. On the matter of representativity, a sample of 13 informants cannot be said to be representative of the entire group. It would therefore be problematic to claim that the findings of this study can necessarily be generalized to other samples and situations. Therefore, to increase representativeness to the extent possible within the scope of the study, we wished to include informants that would represent diversity in sex, gender, race and nationality. This is a form of "purposive sampling", where informants were recruited based on the contrasts in their life situations (Gobo, 2007, p. 418). In the same vein, the informants were in contrasting employment situations, and on different contracts. Some were on national contracts, some were on international contracts, some were working remotely and others not. This was done with the goal of revealing similarities or differences in their experiences and thus ensuring a more representative sample despite its modest size. However, our access to the informants were given through our contact person at NRC, as they sent our interview request in hopes of gathering more informants. This may have affected our sample, although it quickly seemed that remote work was a topic of excitement which collected a wide range of informants.

3.3 Ethical Concerns

In the preparation and conduct of our study, we felt a strong wish as well as a moral obligation to take ethical aspects into account, as it is crucial in all scientific studies. Our goal was to produce interview data in an ethically sound way, and to consider the implications of this manner of personal interaction, as recommended by Steinar Kvale (2007, p. 21). In every step of the process, we found it is especially important to ensure that participation in studies did not lead to unintended effects or negative consequences. It was of the utmost importance for us to ensure that the ethical aspect was at the forefront and that the informants felt taken care of. The National Research Ethics Committees (NESH) have published research ethical guidelines for social science and humanities, which we chose to use as the basis for carrying out our study (NESH, 2021). This way, we could ensure good and responsible scientific research practices.

Following recommendations from the NESH guidelines, we prepared an information letter, which was sent to potential informants. The letter contained information about the study, its themes, and the participants' rights as potential informants. This information was also sent to NSD, the Norwegian Centre for Research Data, and we received approval to go ahead with the

study. We informed our participants that participation was voluntary and that their personal information would be protected. Both before, during and after the interviews, we reiterated the information from the information letter and encouraged the informants to ask questions if they had any doubts or concerns. In the actual transcription, we also chose to omit their names and potential information that could be linked to the specific informant. The anonymization also extends, as far as possible, to personal stories or experiences that can easily be tracked to an employer in a way that might be damaging to their professional relationships. As previously mentioned, we were given access to our informants' contact information through our contact person in the NRC. In this kind of situation, one may run the risk of the potential informants feeling a certain pressure to participate. However, we believe that the method of contact was the least invasive possible, by our NRC contact simply providing information to the potential informants, and all follow-up contact being initiated by us. This should have minimized the risk of any adverse effects on the ethical aspects of our way of contacting potential informants.

3.4 Execution of Interviews

Our strategy for conducting the interviews where to have two interviewers present. We had beforehand delegated the different responsibilities between the main interviewer and the support interviewer, where the former had the responsibilities of asking the questions and facilitating the interview, and the latter had the responsibilities of the practical considerations surrounding the interview (recording, taking relevant notes, etc.). We saw this as an advantage, where due to the nature of a semi-structure interview, it would be advantageous to lessen the cognitive load of the main interviewer, in order to be able to adapt the interview and asking good follow-up questions. Additionally, having a second interviewer who did not participate in the main interaction, allowed them to observe the conversation in a more objective matter, allowing them to pick up relevant points and ask important clarifying or follow-up questions that the main interviewer missed. Lastly, we found this strategy to contribute to emotional support and as a fail-safe, making the interview process more comfortable for the interviewer. In the later stages of performing the interviews, the project group decided to switch over to having one group member for interview, due to time constraints and the fact that the whole project group felt more secure in the interview process in these later stages.

As previously mentioned, all the interviews were conducted on Zoom due to the international nature of NRC. This was also an opportunity for the project group to gather and contribute to the empirical evidence of using information and communication technologies in qualitative interviews. Although the research on the use of digital technologies in data collection is still in the early phases, preliminary research shows that it can have several advantages. Among these and specific for Zoom, is ease of building rapport, convenience, and user-friendly interface (Archibald et al., 2019). Other studies have found a richer ability to collect data from the participants, due to their willing to share personal experiences and perspectives. The authors argued the reason for this was that the participants' were in their own private setting, which afforded them both convenience and comfort in the interview setting (Oliffe, et al., 2021, p. 6). This support other evidence that you can reach high quality and depth of personal information in a digital setting and that sensitive topic can be comfortable discussed in an online setting (Oliffe, et al., 2021, p. 6). Disadvantages with Zoom interviews are often related to that the researcher miss subtle nuances such as body language and facial expressions, that could provide valuable information in context with what is being said. Missing these valuable signals may be further amplify by technical difficulties.

The project group found that the execution of the online interview went surprisingly well, confirming the existing literature that building rapport and getting the informants to open up and engage was not hindered by the online environment.

3.5 Execution of Analysis

As we wished to write an analysis which centres around the informants' own experiences, we chose to do a thematic analysis of our data. A thematic analysis is well suited for analysing interviews because of its theory-independent approach, where the goal is to recognize themes which are a group of common features/categories (Johannessen, Rafoss & Rasmussen, 2019, p. 279). We followed Johannessen, Rafoss & Rasmussen's four-step guide for doing a thematic analysis, which consists of *preparing*, *coding*, *categorizing*, and *reporting* (2019, p. 282). When coding our interviews, we code-texted which means to develop codes from the content of the interviews, that in detail explains what was said (Tjora, 2012, p. 179). This provided an overview of our data, which we thereafter categorized into four different themes: (1) *Remote*

management and Team Dynamics, (2) Flexibility, (3) Policies, Procedures & Communication, and (4) Career Development.

Only three of us coded the interviews in effort of avoiding too many differences in the interview excerpts and coding. We started off coding one interview each before we discussed our findings to ensure that we were operating within the same vision. As the three of us also had been part of conducting the interviews, we ensured that we coded the interviews we had been a part of, as we thought the familiarity would be an advantage. Together we then decided the four categories which made our coding-styles thereafter somewhat similar to each other. The categorizes were modified and added subcategories after we completed coding all our interviews and gathered with the rest of the group.

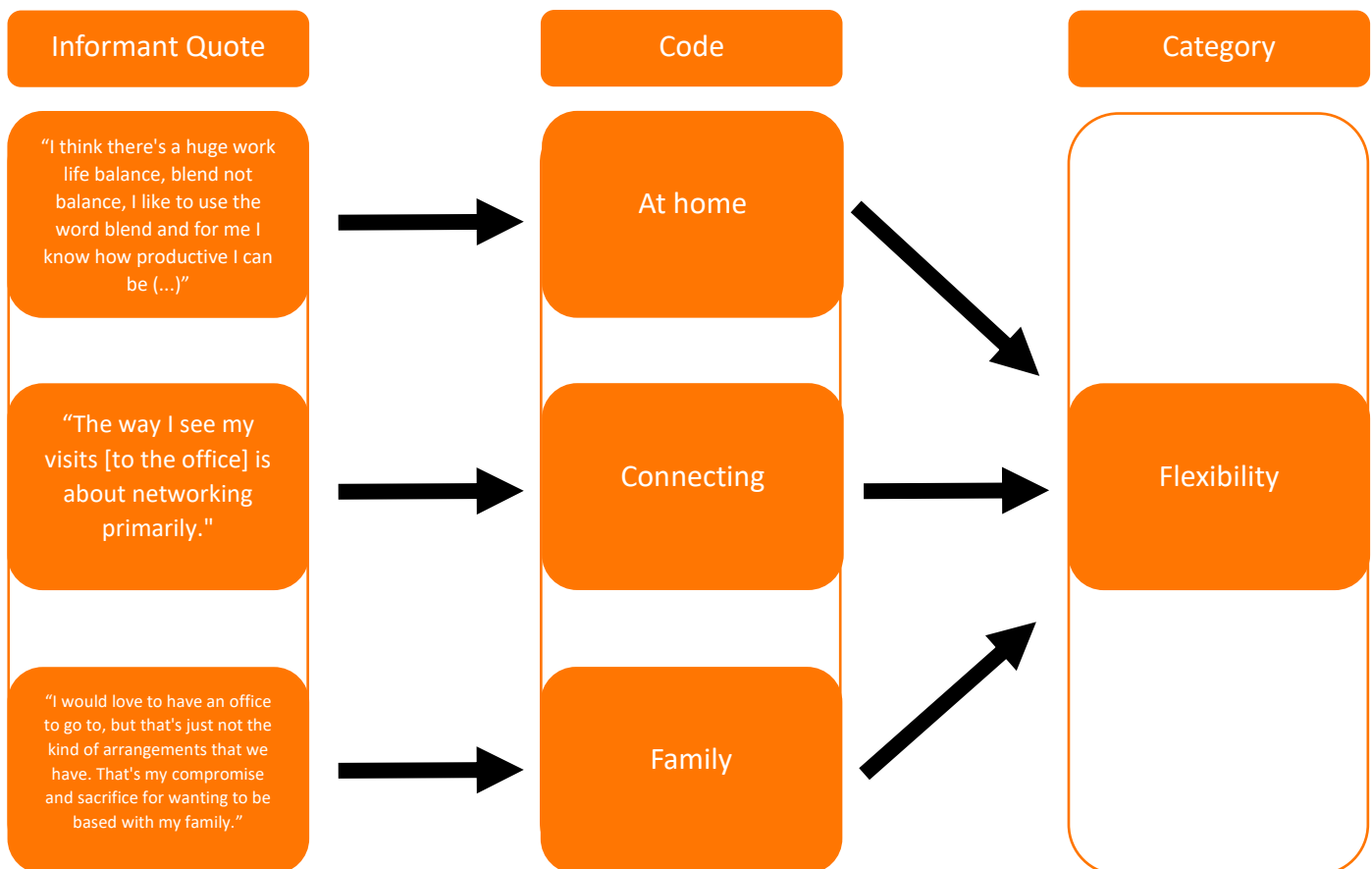


Figure 1 – Illustration of Coding Process

Above, in figure 1, we have illustrated our coding process. Showing how different informant quotes were coded into subcategories, and in the end coded into a main category. The finding in the coding process lays the groundwork for the analysis.

4.0 Analysis

4.1 Remote Management and Team Dynamics

4.1.1 Remote Leadership

Remote leadership and remote management in the both the humanitarian and private sector have become increasingly important in recent years, especially with development of digital tools and the urge for more flexible work conditions. While remote leadership presents many opportunities for organizations, including NRC, to expand their reach and impact, it also comes with its own set of crucial challenges. Scholars within management theory argues that good leadership is only maintained by effective communication with employees, promotion of transparent team dynamics and solving issues arising rapidly (Buffer, 2019). We may clearly spot some issues and potential for further growth based on our feedback from NRC employees both on a managing and employee level. This part of the analysis will be specifically looking into elements targeting the discussion of leadership and NRCs experiences with managing a development aid organization remotely.

4.1.2 Remote Leadership and Sustainable Meeting Balance

A first key-point stated by informants has been the limitations in building trust and establishing clear expectations. Some of the employees say it this way; *“Leaders and managers of all different levels of the organization must be intentional about creating opportunities for regular check-ins and feedback sessions”*, thus, to ensure that employees feel supported and connected to the organization. However, informants' emphasis that it needs to be a balance between established check-ups, hence, to not create a practice of unnecessarily check-ups. Although, there is a known fact that researchers between them emphasise the importance that staff members would have different interests on how often they would like to be approached by their manager (Buffer, 2019). One of our informants claimed:

The first year of COVID, let's say in 2020, there were a lot of scheduled meetings, like team meetings, like morning meeting and afternoon meeting, just for the sake of connecting the team. And it was overdone a bit.

Informants' emphasis that each manager needs to point out the balance they feel most comfortable with to make sure there is a sustainable number of meetings between the team and the manager, without creating an obstacle for workflow.

Another important challenge of remote leadership is managing and providing staff support. When employees are working remotely, it can be difficult to build a deep and profound bond between the employee and team member (Buffer, 2019). Leaders must be proactive about fostering a sense of community to share emotions and downsides which employees might face during their employment. One of the informants claimed that: *“My manager really checked on me and she really offered me support. For instance, she told us that if you need to take time off from work or if you still feel you’re not able to work just let me know. She pointed out lastly that if I need a break, my manager could get someone else to do the job needed during my absence”*. The analysis suggest that leaders must be mindful and encourage employees to take breaks and prioritize self-care, especially during troublesome times. Leaders must further be adept at using digital technologies to communicate and collaborate with remote team members, as well as managing remote work arrangements and ensuring that employees have the necessary emotional resources and support to be successful in their work at NRC.

Another challenge of remote leadership is ensuring that employees have access to the necessary resources and support to be successful. This includes everything from reliable internet connections to adequate training and stock of essential equipment (Buffer, 2019). NRC acknowledges the connectivity issues the humanitarian sector experiences quite thoroughly when operating in countries dealing with conflict and humanitarian crisis may have an impact of employee’s access to support and equipment needed in every situation given.

4.1.3 Remote Leadership and Organizational Trust

Trust is a crucial aspect of organizational culture that can impact the success of remote work and remote leadership. Organizational trust can be defined as a psychological nuance which involves the intention to accept vulnerability based on the positive expectations in regard to other people's intentions and behaviour (Julsrud, 2018). In a remote work environment, trust between employees and management can be both an issue and an opportunity. Trust is essential for building strong relationships, fostering collaboration, and achieving organizational goals. However, remote work can create challenges for building trust, such as lack of face-to-face interaction, communication barriers, and difficulty in monitoring employee performance.

One of the main challenges of remote work is building trust between employees and management. According to some informants “*There has been and is a lack of connection between line managers and their line staff due to remote working*”. These barriers can make it difficult for employees to build relationships with their colleagues and managers, which can impact trust. In addition, remote work can create a sense of isolation, which can lead to mistrust and disengagement (Buffer, 2019).

However, remote work can also be an opportunity for organizations to build trust. According to another informant we interviewed claimed that:

Remote work can increase trust between employees and management. This is because remote work requires a high level of trust between employees and management to do the job required remotely.

To build trust in a work environment, organizations need to focus on communication and collaboration (Julsrud, 2018). Another informant said:

Confrontation is easier for me by sending emails, messages and follow up with a meeting. It’s easier for me to discuss my problems with you while you are behind screen than in front of me.

The informant argued that the distance between the screens create less stressful options for confrontations and may open new rooms for transparency between colleagues and manager. Organizations can use technology, such as video conferencing and instant messaging, to facilitate communication and collaboration between employees and management (Buffer, 2019).

Another way to build trust in a remote work environment is to establish clear expectations and goals. One of our informants cited that: “*You don’t know if you are performing well and according to expectations by the management team*”. Based on this feedback we may argue that employees who have clear expectations from management team are likely to be more engaged and productive. This is because clear expectations and goals provide employees with a sense of purpose and direction, which can increase their trust in the organization (Julsrud, 2018). In addition, organizations can build trust by promoting transparency and openness (Julsrud, 2018).

This is because transparency creates a sense of fairness and honesty, which can increase employee trust in the organization. Organizations can promote transparency by sharing information about company goals, performance metrics, and decision-making processes (Buffer, 2019).

4.1.4 Team Culture and Communication

Team culture is a crucial aspect of any organization, but it may play an even bigger role in complex international non-governmental organizations (NGOs). From our analysis, this definitely seems to be the case. The culture of these organizations may often be defined by a shared commitment to a cause or mission, and a collaborative spirit that brings together people from diverse backgrounds and cultures. One informant state that *“I don't think anyone who works here is motivated by money. Otherwise, you would not work.”*, with others independently expressing similar thoughts regarding their motivation to work for the organization. A shared sense of selfless purpose seems to be a mutual factor in the employees' motivation to stay in the organization, and a strong team culture seems to aid to maintain this motivation.

However, as the nature of work changes due to the pandemic and remote work becomes increasingly prevalent, the team culture of such organizations may undergo significant shifts. From the beginning of the data collection process, it became apparent to us that especially the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in big changes in this aspect of the organization. One informant state that:

COVID-19 has changed people's perspectives of where they want to be based (...)
COVID-19 has made us realize that we don't always have to be at the same place to collaborate or be efficient.

As the employees now wish for further flexibility in their working locations and arrangements, this seems to have a clear impact on the team culture in the organization.

It appears that remote work may pose a challenge to maintaining a sense of teamwork and collaboration in a virtual environment. When team members are working remotely or in a hybrid work environment, communication becomes more difficult and may require different tools and approaches. Our conversations with the employees have shown perspectives on this

topic that diverge at certain points but converge in more central veins. An informant clearly stated her opinion in one of the initial interviews, claiming the introduction of hybrid work and remote work has been “*amazing*” and a “*fantastic development*” from their perspective. However, some express more concern with the lack of a team culture, going as far as to claim that certain employees “*(...) are not interested in being at the office at all*”. It is mainly these two perspectives that seem to be at odds with one another, developing and maintaining a strong team culture, yet leaving the employees the flexibility in their work arrangements.

As one employee expresses it: “*What you will never be able to reproduce is this having a laugh at the coffee machine*”. However, the insight provided by several informants, offers useful guidance for how managers and the organization can facilitate good working relations and meaningful links between colleagues. It seems that there is a strong feeling that at least some degree of “*physical presence at the office helps with motivation and well-being*”, as expressed by one informant and as expressed by another, even colleagues who are working remotely “*(...) should meet with the team at least once a year*”. It seems that creating a bond between team members and colleagues is key to maintaining a strong team culture and facilitating communication between the individuals. It seems that having established meaningful relationships, especially between managers and team members working remotely, helps not only the motivation and well-being of the employees, but also aids in general communication and helps create smoother working processes. Creating these links may be most easily managed through physical platforms, with several informants stressing how meeting simply once a year over the course of a very limited number of days has been a considerable advantage in regards to creating a positive, productive, and supportive team culture.

The data collected all-over suggests that in a remote working environment, it is often the task of the managers to find ways to create a sense of camaraderie and shared purpose, even when team members are not physically present in the same space. This may include regular team-building activities, virtual social events, or even a simple check-in at the start of each day. As a manager, this is important to facilitate this way of working and creating meaningful links between people who are working together. However, it may lead to strain for the managers, as “*There is a massive focus on how as a manager, you should make it work*”, as expressed by one informant in a managing position. This may increase the burden of the managers but may be

lessened by more concrete routines when it comes to remote work and team management, as advised by certain informants who express a keenly positive experience with exactly this type of routine, such as scheduled informal meetings to facilitate a better working environment. But our informants in managing positions also expressed a need for more guidance on this from the organization, and more standardized routines to facilitate better teamwork and managing relations. This backs up our academic understanding from the AFI report, that although working remotely offers plenty of positive opportunities for both the organization and the employees, it may also pose some challenges. For example, it may be easy for team members to feel disconnected from one another in a virtual environment.

The all-over message from the informants can be summed up in two especially relevant quotes. Many informants expressed a positive outlook on remote work, one claiming confidently that *“it is possible to work together in a digital world”*, and others expressed certain concerns of running the risk of *“not feeling like you are part of the organization”*, as one informant claimed. This goes to show that our findings, like the AFI report, underlines the importance of maintaining and furthering social connections and building a form of community, even in a remote work environment (2021, p. 37). In conclusion, team culture is an essential component of any international NGO organization, and remote work has the potential to significantly impact that culture. As organizations navigate the challenges of remote work, it's important to prioritize communication, collaboration, and connection among team members. By investing in technology and training and creating opportunities for virtual team-building and social events, organizations may maintain a strong team culture, no matter where their team members are located. Our data shows further support for the findings of the AFI report, as the informants in this study did miss a platform for informal interactions and a social sphere that often occurs in the physical workplace, as well as certain informants expressing their concern of the risk of certain employees or themselves feeling disconnected from their workplaces.

There are noticeable differences between working remotely and working in the office, mainly due to how employees spend their time and balance work-life. However, as we now will see, the majority of our informants appear to prefer working remotely as it allows for more flexibility and autonomy, opposed to the office which tends to be more distracting and time-consuming.

4.2 Flexibility

4.2.1 Working at the Office

Maintaining social connections and a sense of community is of high significance whether it being online or at the office (AFI, 2021, p. 37). Although the employees recognize the positive effects of physical presence at the office, the word “distraction” was frequently used when describing their experiences at the office. One of the employees recounted on how doing the “actual work” when at the office actually is somewhat *more* challenging than when working remotely, as it demands a lot of discipline to be able to focus when working in an open plan office. Distraction such as noise or being constantly dragged into unexpected and time-consuming conversations seems to be the main concern among the employees in regards of working at the office. This was evident in all but one interview, where the informant claimed the opposite, that working from home calls for more structure and discipline. Therefore, even though some may experience the lack of informal physical conversation as a loss, there seems to be a consensus among the majority of our informants that the flexibility comes with remote work, compensates for this disadvantage. While working remotely during the pandemic has been a challenge according to a couple of informants, working remotely post-pandemic has had a positive impact on the work-life balance.

Working at the office can also be time-consuming in addition to costly when considering commuting. Some employees from the Nairobi office report the time spent on commuting can be as much as 2-4 hours, which they consider a “wastage of time”. They would rather spend that time working remotely. One informant working for the Oslo Head Office who happens to live nearby the office, claimed they would spend less time at the office as soon as whenever they would move out of the city centre (where the Head Office is located), they will spend less time working at the office. However, another employee expresses how even though the office is only five minutes away from their children’ day care where they go to every day, they nevertheless prefer working remotely.

The time spent at the office is primarily about networking and strengthening partnership, as stated by one of our informants who is a team leader. This being both in the aspect of strengthening relations between co-workers, as well as with stakeholders and partners. Some

employees are given hybrid work contracts which include how many times a week they need to be at the office. However, many informants have pointed out that this is not consistently practiced as several employees spend far less days at the office than what the contract states. This is not necessarily mentioned as something purely negative; the informants are quite aware that certain physical meetings are more meaningful than others and that people have different needs for socializing. Not working physically together every day, can also generate excitement when they actually *do* see each other, which was expressed by one of our informants:

I think it's because on those occasions that we meet it's just usually very exciting for us to catch up in person and for people to update each other on what is happening ... It actually makes those days or those opportunities where we meet very special.

It's quite evident among all our respondents, both team leaders *and* team members, that there lies a huge importance in the intention behind the meetings.

4.2.2 Work-Life Balance

Most informants claim that working remotely gives a greater balance between work and life. Working remotely allows for more structure which caters to individual needs and preferences of how to prioritize different work-related *and* personal tasks. It also functions as their “own place to think” while being fully responsible for their own time and outputs. One informant explains it as:

(...) when you're going to the office, it used to be eight to five, and you know strictly eight to five. While at home you can decide. I'm working from say nine to six, to whatever for as long as the work you're supposed to do is done.

Almost all informants seem to agree with this statement, which is interesting as it seems that the employees are more willing to work overtime if they are working from home. However, as it never was emphasized why, it might be because of flexitime arrangement or for instance because of the free time spared from not having to commute. Nevertheless, autonomy and flexibility appear to have a massive value among the employees. This is especially the case when dealing with family responsibilities.

Many employees wish and choose to work remotely because of family matters. Working remotely leaves room to structure your days so you are able to spend time or take care of family

and relatives. This was a noticeable factor among some of the employees with children, especially those with younger children. One informant explained how they were grateful for working remotely while dealing with a terrible family situation, as being around family during that time gave the relief and support, they needed. Thinking back, they also said that they were unsure if they were capable to physically be at the office at that time, if they had to. Most of the remote workers are fairly content with not going into the office (unless special occasions), but one informant does mention how it is a sacrifice or a compromise to choose to be with family, as they had to let go of the option of going to an office where there is a stronger sense of team culture. Depending on which contract you have, some employees working remotely from another country than their Office also sacrifice benefits such as a higher parental leave (as they get a national contract for the country they are located at) which appears to have caused some dissatisfaction. The topic regarding the different contracts and policies will be elaborated in the following part of the analysis.

4.3 Policies, Procedures & Communication

Policies and procedures are, as explained in the theory section, an essential part of organizational life, and an important component for organizations' outcome. Consequently, many academics points to how proper policies and procedures are necessary to be in place to successfully promote and execute practices, such as remote work and internal mobility. These policies and procedures will enable and ensure, to name a few, smooth information streams between the relevant parties, accessible guidelines, and a coherent understanding of the practices, which in turn will make the organization operate more optimally towards the organization's goals.

The section to follow will comment on how policies and procedures Such procedures have been crafted by and exists in the NRC already, created to try and tackle the many implications that remote work and internal mobility present. Through conversations with various employees of the NRC, we were made aware of different challenges and areas where changes deem necessary. These will be presented in the following paragraphs, in light of the relevant theory presented previously.

4.3.1 Contracts

The topic and challenge that stood out as the most pressing in conversation about policies and procedures, was challenges related to being employed on a remote work contract. This was largely connected to our informant expressing an impression of the process of setting up the contracts as somewhat unclear and difficult. One informant commented for example saying that it takes a lot of time and work getting to know and understanding the contracts. This was both in regard for the relevant candidate/employee who received a contract to work remotely, as well as for the concerned leader/staff, who was to give these contracts and arrange them. The latter relates to how management have to consider how the contracts should appear both attractive for the candidate, as well as management having a curial task of being ensured that it is legally compliant in the country where the contract is to be operative. The same informant commented that the arrangement of a “third party” being responsible for this latter challenge of the legal concerns, was great in theory, but challenging in practise. Issues concerning the use of a third-party employer is well known for the NRC and due to it being more of a legal concern, it will not be analysed further in this rapport. Nonetheless, a lot of the issues concerning the third-party is closely linked to this and other parts of our analysis, and an important aspect for the NRC to develop. It is also apparent for current employees, as one of our informants expressed a worry that the NRC might have taken on a greater challenge than they were ready for, at least in terms of the contractual difficulties.

We need to make sure that the structures and the policies and the processes that are needed for these things to work up, is put in place so that we are setting ourselves up for success, eventually.

The challenges relating to the contractual side was also discussed with another informant, who explained that they were under the impression that the HR-team were under a lot of pressure to offer contracts of this kind. Firstly, it should be mentioned that several informants understand and see the offer of such contracts as absolutely necessary, to be appealing for the needed candidate pool. Nonetheless, the contract side of things still poses as having been executed prematurely, as an informant explains that the consequences of offering such contracts, haven't been thoroughly examined. This notion was supported by other informants, although in various degrees and knowledge to the topic. Tightly coupled with the data presented here over is how also *communication* seem to be an issue in relation to contracts. For the sake of the reader and for structure, this will be further elaborated in the following section concerning *communication*.

4.3.2. Indistinctions and Ambiguities

Another of challenge explained to us during several of our interviews, was linked to the process of being set up to work remotely. Here, questions and concerns ranging from smaller to bigger unclarities were explained. The more administrative or technical issues or challenges were related to getting employees the necessary equipment and resources to be able to do remote work.

If we're onboarding somebody in head office, well, that's quite easy, because we've got a laptop in the cupboard, (...) but if we're onboarding somebody in, I don't know, Canada, you know, it's a very different thing. The laptop and keyboard, we don't have that, so we can't ship it, and then we want to order it from our supplier, and then that will take a lot longer. And then, you know, so there's just all these other considerations.

(...) every single case is different. You never see it the same. And sometimes we're asked to provide equipment, sometimes the hosting offices are asked to provide equipment, but they don't have it, you know, so it's just a complete mess.

Another element brought to our attention from the interviews, was through an informant explaining how in some cases how neither management nor the candidate seems to have sufficient knowledge or information regarding how the NRC practices remote work and for whom it might be eligible for, and how this poses implications and risks for them. The informant explained how that on more than one occasion, team leaders would grant their employee a remote contract to countries where NRC did not have offices or agreements, therefore putting the NRC at risk for illegally having employees stationed there.

Another concern brought up in the same interview, is how costly it is to have people stationed outside their main office(s), related the usage of resources such as time and money. As one employee informed:

And then, of course, you can discuss who should pay for it, if this should be something NRC should pay for to facilitate mobility. If that's something we wish to offer or not, or a shared cost or whatever. That's a detail.

The aspect of cost appears to be a reoccurring element in the interviews, as mentioned in regard to that it is costly to arrange a third-party employer, but also in terms of how much resources should be allocated to the sole purpose of attracting a certain candidate pool. On another note, one informant spoke keenly about how it is necessary for the organization to be able to offer

money and other non-monetary resources to be able to attract “the best specialists” and stay competitive in the labour market. How NRC should spend their resources is therefore promotes a challenging trade off.

The forces of demand and supply are still at play so if you want the best specialists and you also need to be competitive in terms of your pay and other non-remunerative or non-monetary benefits like (...) women who come from maternity leave.

Informants also brought up how being contracted to work remotely offers an expectation and need for the employees themselves to be responsible to stay “connected” to their team and management. One informant commented that if the NRC is to keep offering remote contracts, there is need for better training for especially management, for instance for guaranteeing that labour laws are followed, that people are treated similarly in similar cases, and that employees are followed up adequately. An informant explains how for example sensitive personal cases can prove difficult to handle if to be handled digitally. Therefore, there could be a need for NRC to carefully train managers who manages employees on remote contracts, to be especially equipped to handle their staff digitally and the repercussions this might entail. Many of our informants have commented saying that getting to know one another as colleagues and creating a professional relationship usually work itself out over time, but that it’s more challenging having to on-board someone digitally compared to being physically in an office together.

4.3.3 Communication Flow of Policies and Procedures

Communication is a core topic for most organizations, and the NRC is no exception. Throughout the interviews, we experienced that the general communication in the NRC is understood as relatively good, but there are examples of critical areas where communication can and should be developed. Both for the NRC in general as an organization, but also to benefit all its’ employees individually. In regard to the information process of remote work, one employee expresses:

I think it would be good to somehow communicate, especially to line manager, and to develop some kind of Q&A's or do's and don'ts. To have at least a framework around like, OK, within EU, what's possible outside of EU? What are the key things that you need to confirm? Like you need to check with this country. Do I need a work permit? Do I need to report taxes in that country? Do I need to be an independent company? Or how do you actually comply? (...)

This feedback is related to the internal policies and procedures in the NRC. And if the employees do not have, or know how to retain such information, when they are considering being hosted by a foreign NRC office, it may result in miscommunication and in worst case illegal contracts. One informant exemplified this issue with paternal leave; if an employee was to get pregnant, it might come as a surprise that parental leave in the hosting country would differ largely compared to one's home office, if not told otherwise. Another informant told us that: "*some have e.g., been told that you can be in Spain before you know that you will receive Spanish wages*". Such a lack of communication between the organization and the employee may result in conflict. This aspect is a two-fold problem; the NRC as an organization should be able to communicate to the employee, but the information should also be made easily available for the employee to gather the necessary information by them self.

The challenges and implications of policies and processes regarding remote work closely intertwine with communication processes. One informant state that there is a: "*lack of fixed routines around communication*". On the other side, another informant states the process of remote work and internal mobility is too fast, and "*sometimes it happens that managers offer more than the NRC actually can offer*". A third informant expressed that information regarding remote work at the NRC was not given, where the informant had to ask for it even though it was available. This shows that there are different views on the communication process in regard to remote work. The common term for these informants seems to be caused by the lack of frameworks for both the communications process and procedures of remote work, which leaves the employees with different information.

Further and as previously addressed, one of the core challenges that was brought forward in the interviews was related to the contractual side of the employment. All the informants that were interviewed had more or less knowledge of the possibilities for remote work and internal mobility. Some of the informants had personal experience with remote work and internal mobility. An occurring statement from the informants though, was that the real possibilities for remote work and internal mobility happened more often based on relations between employees and line managers and managers. This type of informal communication can cause important

information to be lost in regard to where the employee can be hosted, what kind of contractual packages the employee will receive, among other implications. One informant expressed that:

We [the NRC] have operating licence there. So, we are allowed to have staff there. But you can't just, you know, line managers can't just, it's not at their discretion to allow people to go and work in a third country where we don't have registration.

When such informal communication is the main reason why one can move to another country and work there, it may not only result in the one employee maybe missing out on important information, but it can also be a source of injustice towards other employees. Many of the informants spoke about the lack of proper policies and procedures referring to remote work and internal mobility. They wanted more clarity on who has the opportunity to move and change their hosting country. Several expressed an unfairness in who got to take advantage of the privilege of remote work. Another remark from several informants was that even though there are some guidelines regarding the process for an employee to work remotely, there were often exceptions. One informant stated: “*when so many exceptions are made, what's the point?*”. Another informant expresses that:

It shouldn't just be that mobility is only for a certain class of staff you know a certain grade if we're encouraging mobility then anyone in NRC should be given an opportunity to experience NRC okay so it shouldn't just be top management and people with a very high ranking within NRC.

Furthermore, a third informant said that the NRC: “*lacks more clarity and predictability, also in the criteria for who gets the privileges*”. Poor clarity and predictability concerning who gets the privilege for internal mobility can lead to misunderstandings, disagreements, and conflicts. This can result in employees feeling treated unfairly. Therefore, the lack of formal consistent communication, creates space for informal communication and thus affecting the continuity of the organizational policies and procedures.

As mentioned earlier, having good communication helps to build trust and cooperation and also promotes commitment among the employees. It also helps to reduce conflicts, misunderstandings, and provides a clearer understanding of expectations and areas of responsibility. This becomes especially important when it comes to legality of the contracts of employment. Several informants talk about “Employer of Record” (EoR) as a third party more or less just giving a transactional service without any support system. This can result in employees missing out on important information both regarding the contract itself, as well as

other juridical questions. One informant expressed that the companies used to host EoR in different countries have not been sufficiently providing information and communicating with the employee on the EoR-contract. However, the informant expresses that it really is NRC's responsibility to be a communicator.

Another contract that was mentioned was the international contracts. These are also connected to remote work and internal mobility. Several of the informants view the international contract as more lucrative packages compared to many of the different types of national contracts. This was expressed by several as an injustice, because of the difference in experience between being on a national contract versus being on an international contract. This was especially an issue if two people were doing the same job, but the pay was unequal. An informant said that:

Because our international package is more enhanced because that is meant to compensate for people being deployed and based in countries where we've sent them to. And that's obviously the higher package. And I think the controversy was more about people being on the international package, yet being in their home location.

The general feedback from the informants is that there seems to be a lack of transparency in regard to the contracts and who gets them. And the lack of specific communications policies and procedures may be a reason why.

The following section will be regarding career development. When reading this part of the analysis, it is favourable to keep in mind what has just been presented, as career development is closely linked to policies, procedures, and communication. As supported and expressed by one of our informants:

As a global organization there are expectations as part of career development and growth, to move around in different roles whether it's secondment or a new role, in a new department but also in different countries.

4.4 Career Development

As we have previously outlined in the theory section, concepts such as “the war for talent” and “the borderless career” provide new opportunities and challenges regarding employees’ expectations and wants around their own career development. These views have only been accelerated with the onset of COVID-19. As several respondents pointed out: *“Not having hybrid/remote work would make it difficult to attract/recruit people”* and *“Many organizations lost many employees when they became rigid for example with the remote and flexible hours”*. As another respondent pointed out *“NRC will have to continue with remote based work to be competitive in recruiting and retaining people”*. These statements suggest and underscore the importance of horizontal career paths, in order to keep and recruit the right talent.

While there are practical reasons and considerations for why an organization would allow more remote work and shift towards a culture of more internal mobility, our analysis suggests that structuring guidelines and policies around an employee's career trajectory within the organization is one way to get clarity around the use of remote work and internal mobility.

4.4.1 Internal Mobility and Career Development

We found that several respondents define or associate internal mobility as the ability to try out new opportunities. One respondent told us that they are able to see a vision for themselves within the organization this way, and *“You know that you have an ambition to stay in the organization and you know that that ambition is captured somewhere in the system”*. However, our data suggests there seems to be a lack of any system or procedure that can capture this “ambition”. One respondent told us about the key driver for their own internal mobility in the organization, has been their manager, who has supported, facilitated, and made them aware of different opportunities within the NRC.

With greater competition for acquiring talent and a wider option pool for an employee to choose from, organizations can differentiate themselves by having a culture and managers who facilitate these transitions within the organization.

Internal mobility (...) that anyone can apply for a job anywhere else and be easily facilitated to move to that location to work. And that it would be sort of approved of by

the organization that it would be sort of encouraged, I guess internal mobility implies that maybe NRC would even help you somehow to do that.

(...), foster a culture that allows for more borrowing. (...) be braver at that, you know, it's not snatching staff, because that's what it seems like now I'm stealing that person.

But to maybe foster a culture that allows for more of that, I think is important.

These two quotes from one informant point out the key role an attentive leader can have in capturing an employee's ambition to develop and stay in the organization. These statements may suggest that it is risky to base an employee's development opportunities only on their individual leader. Leaders come and go, which can cause an employee's career ambition to disappear if changes in management occurs. As another respondent pointed out:

Yeah, because we don't have a progression plan. Like as a recruiter, I don't know what the next step would be. As someone who's managing contracts, I don't know what the next step would be. Like, you know, unless you apply for a job outside of your department.

As the theory on commitment-based HR suggest, fostering internal career paths not only increases the results output of the organization but also increases organizational commitment.

Followingly, in order for *current* employees of the NRC to excel and develop, several of our informants calls for (clearer) processes and routines to make this available and as an opportunity for eligible candidates.

So, what we don't have in this organization is there's no process or platform where managers will come and say, this staff member of mine has a really good capacity or potential, but what they're lacking is international exposure, which I need them to get for their career growth. (...) We don't have something like that where people are just recommended. There has to be a recruitment process of some form. And because of that, then we don't have clear career paths because you don't know where your career is leading to in the next few years.

Informants explained how investing in one's current employees is necessary on several grounds. One of them is offering a possible career path, through for example a promotion policy, and how this can motivate employees to exceed and work towards set goals within the company, offering an employee to develop, and this way likely becoming a greater resource for

the company. The informants express how without this, there will be a lesser motivation or engagement to try and exceed one's managers expectations, because this will most likely not be recognized. One informant described it followingly:

There's no clear motivation for me exceeding my goals because whether I exceed or not, there's no difference between somebody who's occasionally exceeding expectations, those who are just average and those who are just maybe even exceptionally exceeding our expectations. (...) I don't think you can effectively have internal mobility without proper performance appraisals and without like a proper development plan.

Nonetheless, it is important to highlight that employees also recognise that the NRC do use their human resources, to for example built new offices outside Norway, and this way value the people who have stayed on for many years and who have specialized experience and knowledge. Still, informants describe that internal mobility usually only is available if there are vacant positions, and that instead of using current staff, NRC choses to recruit externally. Therefore, one informant explains, the NRC should get the foundation for a policy for performance and promotion first, and then offer practices for internal mobility, as this informant understand this practise to work the other way around at the moment. This notion is also acknowledged by another informant, who explain that though it is an ambition and a part of NRC's strategy to further develop the internal mobility policies and procedures, greater resources must be spent on this as an issue, by for example committing one person or position to solely develop this practise.

If you don't put in place the structures and what is needed for such things to work, there'll just be a concept or something you have in your strategy. But in reality it will not happen as fast as you'd want it to be, (...) if you remained behind and you're rigid and you're not flexible and you're not changing in a fast-paced changing work environment, you'll just be a case of what sometimes is called these big organizations where you're just relevant because of your past gloried life. Generally, even the workplace is changing very fast.

This concludes our analysis, which brings us to the last segment of our project: our conclusion.

5.0 Conclusion

The aim for this project has been to address and provide input on how the NRC can review and develop their policies and practices regarding remote work and internal mobility. Through the sections provided here over, we've presented a relevant theoretical framework that has highlighted and supported our data from the interviews, which has accumulated into the analysis. Hereunder, we will summarize what we consider to be our key findings and express our recommendations for the NRC to consider implementing and/or reviewing. The conclusions will mirror our analysis, so every category brought forward there will be acknowledged.

Firstly, it appears to us that the culture of the organization is a central motivation for employees in the NRC. However, we have uncovered both challenges and opportunities of maintaining a strong culture, as well as ones relating to remote leadership and remote management in the NRC. This section highlights the importance of effective communication and transparency to maintain good leadership, to create a sense of community and to build trust among employees. It further examines NRC's experience in managing a development aid organization remotely. The findings suggest that regular check-ins and feedback sessions are essential to building trust and establishing clear expectations. However, managers must find a balance between check-ups and the need for sustainable workflow. Managing teams remotely can pose a challenge, but our informants contributed with useful information on how these practices can be improved. We hope that through this input, the NRC can implement practices that benefit employees at all levels. Remote leadership also requires proactive support and encouragement for employees to prioritize self-care. To ensure successful remote leadership, trust is also crucial, as it impacts the success of remote work and remote leadership. Building trust in a remote work environment requires clear communication, collaboration, and the establishment of clear expectations, goals as well as a sense of belonging and well-being socially within the organization.

From our analysis, we have found that the different concerns relating to establishing trust, managing teams, and working remotely can be remedied in several ways. In addition to regular check-ins and feedback sessions, we believe that it is important to (1) facilitate communication. As remote work becomes more prevalent, communication becomes more challenging, and it is essential to use different tools and approaches to facilitate communication between team members. Regular team-building activities, virtual social events, and scheduled informal

meetings are some ways to create a sense of camaraderie and shared purpose. Creating intentional platforms and opportunities to informally connect with colleagues in remote or hybrid teams will benefit the cultural aspect of the organization, making remote workers feel more supported and integrated.

Additionally, we observed a need to (2) create a sense of community. Remote work poses a challenge to maintaining a sense of teamwork and collaboration in a virtual environment. Therefore, it is crucial to create a bond between team members and colleagues to maintain a strong team culture. This can be achieved by organizing physical meetups at least once a year and having more standardized routines to facilitate better teamwork and managing relations. (3) Point out and provide staff clear expectations and objectives from management team for a more engaged and productive workday remotely. The employees in the NRC appear to be motivated by a shared sense of selfless purpose and clear expectations, and these tools may aid in their motivation to stay in the organization. Therefore, it is essential to foster this sense of purpose and ensure that employees feel connected to the organization's mission. (4) Leaders must be adept at using digital technologies to communicate and collaborate with remote team members, as well as managing remote work arrangements and ensuring that employees have the necessary emotional resources and support to be successful in their work at NRC.

Interestingly, we found that although teamwork and community are essential for the employees' well-being, the majority of our informants expressed that they actually prefer working remotely. Remote work offers the flexibility and autonomy to structure your own days, whether that being having more time to take care of family, saving hours on commuting, or just being able to work without the disturbance of background noise at the office or unpredicted and time-consuming conversations. These are some of the key reasons as to why many employees working hybrid are rarely at the office as much as their contract in theory demands. However, the informants do recognize the benefits of physical meetings, even those working purely remotely. Our recommendation is to shift the attention away from "How many days are the employees at the office?" to instead try to map out "At which *occasions* should the employees be at the office, and why?". Bear in mind that some have a much longer commute than others, these specific meetings or circumstances should not happen too often nor less than once a year. We advise that this should be done in collaboration with the team leaders, which based on our interviews,

appear to have a good overview of how their colleagues prefer to work and socialize. In this way, we emphasize the intention and significance behind the particular gathering which might generate more excitement and meaning, rather than going to the office just to fill the quota of office days.

This latter recommendation is tightly coupled with our findings on how an important aspect for the NRC to consider, to both stay and become more attractive for current and future specialists, is to further develop the policies and procedures concerning remote work and internal mobility. The findings presented in our analysis suggests that neither the policies or procedures practiced today are satisfactory, and that more time and resources should be spent on making a clearer and more in-depth framework to explain the contents and practise of remote work and internal mobility. This concerns both how information is given to the employees as well as management.

Some of the current issues and challenges experienced the NRC, seems to have been caused by the organization being pressured from outside circumstances to meet new demands in the labour market, such as being offered the chance to work remotely. Some of our findings point to that said practise(s) might have been implemented too hastily. Our recommendation is therefore that the NRC thoroughly examines their current policies and procedures, and especially (1) managers' understanding, training and information given related to remote work and internal mobility, which is closely linked to that (2) the NRC should strive to have a more general framework that applies to every case of the practices, and not just from case to case, and (3) that in order for internal mobility to become a success, there should be a greater focus on offering specific career paths and recruitment within the organization.

Continuingly, it is also important to develop general policies and procedures when it comes to communication and the flow of information within the organization.

Communications is vital to transfer adequate information, coordinate activities, build relationships, and create a community. Good communication helps to build trust and cooperation, and also promotes commitment among the employees. Our data collection shows two key areas of communication where the NRC can improve: transfer of information and routines and procedures for communication. The findings presented in our analysis show that

the current communication is not seen as satisfactory by the employees. The transfer of information is not consistent, resulting in employees receiving different information or not adequate information in regard to their situation, which can lead to injustice. This is probably due to the lack of a framework for communicational routines and procedures resulting in injustice in regard to contracts, remote work, and internal mobility.

Our findings show that the issues of communication may be a result of rapid expansion and a strong will to embrace the external environment created due to for example the COVID-19 pandemic and the new way of hybrid work life. Based on the results in our data collection, we have four recommendations to improve communication: (1) The NRC should establish clear communication channels: The NRC should establish clear communication channels to ensure that the information reaches all employees, creating transparency and consistency. (2) The NRC should clarify communication responsibilities: The NRC should clarify who is responsible for communication and ensure that all employees understand their role in the communication process. (3) The NRC should offer training in communication: The NRC can offer training and courses in communication to help employees develop better communication skills.

Followingly, how the policies, procedures, and communication are presented and practiced within the organization, is closely linked to how career development in the NRC is practiced.

One thing we found exceptional about the NRC, is the good reputation it has within the non-profit world. Most of our respondents highlighted the NRC's brand and reputation as a motivator for wanting to apply and work at the NRC. We see this as a strength the NRC has to leverage in the initial attraction of new candidates. But our analysis from the interviews with our respondents suggests what is lacking is a clear career pathway for the employees and a lack of any formal structures for how one can develop into a new role at NRC.

Research shows that investing in an employee's career development greatly increases an employee's commitment to the organization (see for example Kuvaas & Dysvik, 2020). Combining this aspect with NRC's already strong brand recognition is one pathway NRC can take in order to fulfil its wish in recruiting and retaining the talent they need. Our analysis

suggests that the way to ensure this development of the employees is to capture the employee's career ambition and to offer a clear path for how to reach this state.

Our recommendations are then to create a system or procedure that captures an employee's career ambition beyond that of the individual leader (1). As leaders may change due to a number of reasons, having another system in place can mitigate the risk of the NRC losing track of an employee's ambition to stay in the organization. Lastly, we recommend the NRC to outline and portraying what potential pathways or possibilities exist regarding their own career development within the NRC (2).

6.0 Recommendations

Drawing on our findings and the conclusion presented over, these are our recommendations for how the NRC can develop their policies and practices regarding remote work and internal mobility:

Remote management and team dynamics:

- ◆ Facilitate communication between virtual team members: E.g., through team-building activities, virtual social events, and scheduled informal meetings.
- ◆ Create a sense of community: E.g., through organizing physical meetups.
- ◆ Point out and provide staff clear expectations and objectives from management team for a more engaged and productive workday remotely.
- ◆ Leaders must be adept at using digital technologies to communicate and collaborate with remote team members, as well as managing remote work arrangements and ensuring that employees have the necessary emotional resources and support to be successful in their work at NRC.

Flexibility

- ◆ Clarify which occasions the employees should be at the office, instead of focusing on certain days.

Policies, Procedures and Communication:

- ◆ Examine current policies and procedures: specifically, the manager's understanding, training and information.
- ◆ Clearer framework for remote work and internal mobility
- ◆ Offering specific career paths and more focus on recruitment within the organization: E.g., creating a succession plan for different positions and career paths
- ◆ Establish clearer communication channels.
- ◆ Clarify communication responsibilities.
- ◆ Develop and offer training in communication.

Career Development:

- ◆ Create a system or procedure that captures an employee's career goals within NRC.
- ◆ Outline possible career trajectory an employee can have within NRC and how to reach it.

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Attachments

Appendix 1 – Consent form sent to participants

Are you interested in taking part in the research project: *“Remote work at the Norwegian Refugee Council!?”*

Purpose of the project

You are invited to participate in a research project where the main purpose is to assess and (re)evaluate the current guidelines for employees and the organization regarding remote work and internal mobility. We are interested in finding out:

- The organization’s principles for remote work
- How the employees experience remote work
- If physical presence at work affects motivation and wellbeing

We are six master students from the University of Oslo (UiO), studying Organization, Management and Work, who have gotten the mandate of Norwegian Refugee Council through a work-field project arranged by the University of Oslo.

Which institution is responsible for the research project?

Beate Karlsen, Associate Professor at the Department of Sociology and Social Geography (ISS) at the University of Oslo is responsible for the project.

Why are you being asked to participate?

As a part of our project, we wish to interview employees who have “desk jobs” (e.g., recruitment, project managers, administration workers, IT, etc.) and who has experience with remote work either by working remotely themselves, or by having colleagues in their teams who are working remotely.

What does participation involve for you?

Participation in this study is voluntary, and you can withdraw at any point if you so wish. The information you share today will only be available for the project group from UiO, and the data will be deleted as soon as our report is completed.

Participation is voluntary

Participation in the project is voluntary. If you chose to participate, you can withdraw your consent at any time without giving a reason. All information about you will then be made anonymous. There will be no negative consequences for you if you chose not to participate or later decide to withdraw.

Your personal privacy – how we will store and use your personal data

We will only use your personal data for the purpose specified here and we will process your personal data in accordance with data protection legislation (the GDPR).

- The collected data will only be accessible to the students of the research group. The transcriber has duty of confidentiality.
- When transcribing the data, all names will be coded. The list of names and contact details will be stored separately from the rest of the collected data
- The data will be saved in a SharePoint only accessible to the research group.
- All participants will be given pseudonyms in our research paper.

What will happen to your personal data at the end of the research project?

The planned end date of the project is the 24th of May. All digital recordings and personal data will be deleted by the end of this project.

Your rights

So long as you can be identified in the collected data, you have the right to:

- access the personal data that is being processed about you
- request that your personal data is deleted
- request that incorrect personal data about you is corrected/rectified

- receive a copy of your personal data (data portability), and
- send a complaint to the Norwegian Data Protection Authority regarding the processing of your personal data

What gives us the right to process your personal data?

We will process your personal data based on your consent.

Based on an agreement with the Department of Sociology and Social Geography at UiO, The Data Protection Services of Sikt – Norwegian Agency for Shared Services in Education and Research has assessed that the processing of personal data in this project meets requirements in data protection legislation.

Where can I find out more?

If you have questions about the project, or want to exercise your rights, contact:

- Beate Karlsen, Associate Professor at the Department of Sociology and Social Geography (ISS) and project leader, at beate.karlsen@sosgeo.uio.no
- Our Data Protection Officer: personvernombud@uio.no
- Elisabeth Sundkvist, Group leader: iesundkv@uio.no

If you have questions about how data protection has been assessed in this project by Sikt, contact:

- email: (personverntjenester@sikt.no) or by telephone: +47 73 98 40 40.

Yours sincerely,

Group leader,
Elisabeth Sundkvist

Project Leader,
Beate Karlsen, Associate Professor at ISS and project leader

Consent form

I have received and understood information about the project “Remote Work at the Norwegian Refugee council” and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give consent:

to participate in recorded interviews

I give consent for my personal data to be processed until the end of the project.

(Signed by participant, date)

Appendix 2 – Interview Guide for Individual Interview

Interview Guide for Individual Interviews

Introduction

- Welcome the participant
- Introduce the interviewers
- Introduce the topic of the interview (remote work and internal mobility)

The results of this project will be used to assess and (re)evaluate the current guidelines for employees and the organization regarding remote work and internal mobility. The purpose will be to gain new insight in the matter and to uncover the wishes, needs and experiences of employees and the organization.

You have been chosen because we are interested in your **unique experience** regarding this topic, and will help us better understand the employees' experiences with the matter. There are no wrong or right answers; we just want to know your experiences and thoughts.

Participation in this study is voluntary, and you can withdraw at any point if you so wish. The information you share today will only be available for the project group from UiO, and the data will be deleted as soon as our report is completed.

Warm-up Question

Can you tell me where you are from, and how long you have been working for the NRC?

Main Questions

The NRC

1. What drew you to the NRC as an employer?
2. What would make the NRC an even more attractive employer to international staff?
3. Did COVID-19 have an impact on your expectations in terms of remote work and internal mobility? How?
4. If you have not always been working remotely at NRC, how would you describe working at the office?

Remote Work

1. What does “remote work” mean to you?
2. What is your experience with remote work in the NRC?
3. Do you believe it is necessary to reevaluate the NRCs remote work guidelines? I.e to what degree employees should be able to work remotely, or other things that should be included.
4. Would more possibilities for remote work in the NRC increase or decrease your motivation to work there?
5. How could cooperation through digital means be improved? Through Teams, Zoom, etc.
6. What is your experience working in a virtual team?
7. What are your experiences with remote leadership, either as an employee or a leader yourself?
8. How much does the physical presence at work, being physically at your place of work, mean to you in terms of motivation and wellbeing?

Internal Mobility

1. What does “internal mobility” mean to you? What are your associations?
2. What is your experience with internal mobility in the NRC?
3. Are you aware of the differences that the terms “national employees” and “international employees” entail?
4. What are your experiences with mobility within the organization?
5. How could the NRC manage mobility issues better?
6. What are your experiences with transnational communication within the NRC?

Final Questions

- Out of what we have talked about today, what do you find to be the most important topic or question?
- What are your thoughts on the future of work?
- Any last thoughts you would like to share?

Appendix 3 – Interview Guide for Focus Groups

Interview Guide for Focus Groups

Introduction

- Welcome the participants
- Introduce the moderators
- Introduce the topic of the interview (remote work and internal mobility)

The results of this project will be used to assess and (re)evaluate the current guidelines for employees and the organization regarding remote work and internal mobility. The purpose will be to gain new insight in the matter and to uncover the wishes, needs and experiences of employees and the organization.

You have been chosen because you belong to a group that may give us a **unique insight** regarding this topic, and will help us better understand the employees' experiences with the matter.

Participation in this study is voluntary, and you can withdraw at any point if you so wish. The information you share today will only be available for the project group from UiO, and the data will be deleted as soon as our report is completed.

Instructions for the Participants

- You will be talking to each other
- The conversation will be recorded, so please speak only one at a time
- There are no wrong or right answers; we just want to know your experiences and thoughts
- Address each other with first names only, and no names will be written down
- Listen respectfully to the others' experiences
- Please turn off your phones
- The moderator will be guiding the conversation

Main Topics

It is possible that certain themes will overlap or be covered at an earlier point of the conversation. If this should happen, the moderator does not need to repeat them.

The NRC

1. What drew you to the NRC as an employer?
2. What would make the NRC an even more attractive employer to international staff?
3. What are your thoughts on the future of work and internal mobility in general?

Remote Work

1. What does “remote work” mean to you? What are your associations?
2. What is your experience with remote work in the NRC?
3. Do you believe it is necessary to reevaluate the NRCs remote work guidelines? I.e to what degree employees should be able to work remotely, or other things that should be included.
4. Would more possibilities for remote work in the NRC increase or decrease your motivation to work there?
5. How could cooperation through digital means be improved? Through Teams, Zoom, etc.
6. What are your experiences with remote leadership, either as an employee or a leader yourself?
7. How much does the physical presence at work, being physically at your place of work, mean to you in terms of motivation and wellbeing?

Internal Mobility

1. What does “internal mobility” mean to you? What are your associations?
2. What is your experience with internal mobility in the NRC?
3. Are you aware of the differences the terms “national employees” and “international employees” entail?
4. What are your experiences with mobility within the organization?

5. How could the NRC manage mobility issues better?
6. What are your experiences with transnational communication?

Final Questions

- Out of what has been discussed today, what do you find to be the most important topic or question?
- What are your thoughts on the future of work and internal mobility in general?
- Any last thoughts you would like to share?

Thank You for Participating!