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Department of Human Resources and Organizational
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**Employer Branding in Bane NOR: A Qualitative Study on
the Impact of Employer Branding on Talent Retention**

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A Master in Human Resource Management and
Organizational Consulting

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Acknowledgments

After several formative years as a student and two exciting years at ISCTE Business School in Lisbon, I am proud to present my final work, a master's thesis in Human Resource Management and Organizational Consulting. The writing began autumn of 2023 when I approached Bane NOR to discuss a potential collaboration. Employer Branding (EB) is a trending topic in HR right now, so I was happy to receive a positive response from Bane NOR who expressed an interest in exploring EB in their organization. As an HR student who enjoys innovative thinking, EB provides an opportunity to combine strategy and creativity. I am grateful for the opportunity to investigate something I am passionate about in a very important organization in Norway. I want to thank Rikke Marthinsen and Tine Wenner, my contacts at Bane NOR who have been a constant source of support and insight. Thanks to Rikke, I learned about the current state of employer branding in Bane NOR. She assisted me in gathering candidates for the interviews and connecting me with the right people. Also, Tine Wenner, thank you for letting me contribute to this important research in your section.

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Linn Mai Mielund

23rd of September

Resumo

Esta tese de mestrado investiga as elevadas intenções de rotatividade entre os funcionários baseados em projectos na Bane NOR, uma empresa estatal norueguesa criada na sequência da Reforma Ferroviária de 2017. A Bane NOR é responsável pela infraestrutura ferroviária do país, gerindo 4.200 km de vias, 335 estações e 4.300 propriedades (Bane NOR, n.d.-c). De acordo com o inquérito anual aos trabalhadores de 2023, os trabalhadores de projeto tinham 40% mais probabilidades de deixar a organização nos dois anos seguintes, o que realça a necessidade de avaliar a sua estratégia de employer branding.

O Employer Branding, reconhecida como um tópico importante em Recursos Humanos, é conhecida pelo seu papel na atração e retenção de talentos. Estudos sugerem que marcas de empregador bem estruturadas podem ser adaptadas a diferentes grupos de trabalhadores, promovendo um maior envolvimento e reduzindo a rotatividade. Com base nisto, a investigação visa identificar os factores subjacentes que influenciam as intenções de rotatividade e propõe estratégias para reter talentos e garantir a satisfação dos trabalhadores.

O estudo utiliza uma abordagem qualitativa, combinando a análise de documentos internos, avaliações do Glassdoor e entrevistas com trabalhadores e dirigentes. Os resultados revelaram que as intenções de rotatividade estão ligadas a factores como uma evolução salarial justa, oportunidades claras de crescimento profissional, equilíbrio entre a vida profissional e pessoal (incluindo flexibilidade e autonomia) e uma melhor comunicação interna. Um desafio recorrente identificado foi a falta de sensibilização e comunicação relativamente à marca do empregador existente.

Palavras-chave: Employer Branding, Motivação, Intenções de Rotatividade, Retenção, Organizações Orientadas a Projetos, Ferrovia, Estrutura Matricial

Abstract

This master thesis addresses the challenge of high turnover intentions among project-based employees in Bane NOR. Bane NOR is a state-owned enterprise (SOE) that was established after the Railway Reform in 2017 and is responsible for the Norwegian railway infrastructure. Bane NOR oversees development, maintenance, and management. In total, it includes 4200 km of tracks, 335 stations, and 4300 properties (Bane NOR, n.d.-c). According to the annual employee survey from September 2023, there is a 40 % higher turnover intention amongst projects-based workers in Bane NOR to leave the organization within the next two years. This result demonstrates a need to investigate the organization's employer brand to understand which factors contribute to this trend.

Employer branding, a trending topic within the HR field has been linked to several positive outcomes for attracting and retaining employees. Moreover, studies have shown how employer branding can be strategically tailored for different types of groups or employment. To understand which underlying factors are affecting turnover intentions, the research can provide a deeper understanding of which strategies are important to focus on to keep talent and maintain satisfied, motivated, and engaged workers. Existing literature has emphasized the important role of effective employer branding strategies beyond marketing aspects, demonstrating its importance in talent retention and minimizing turnover intentions (see e.g. Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004).

The master thesis is a qualitative study which means it is explorative in nature and has used several methods when gathering information and data to offer a comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics within the context of Bane NOR. Through the analysis of qualitative data gathered from internal documents, Glassdoor reviews, and interviews, this study adds to our understanding of how Bane NOR could utilize targeted EB approaches based on this specific employee group and hence lead to lower turnover and turnover intentions in this group. Employees in projects are often highly educated individuals who are difficult and expensive to substitute. Bane NOR is therefore motivated to keep these employees to keep knowledge within the organization and save costs with turnover.

The findings show that turnover intentions are influenced by several contributing factors. Through conducting interviews with employees and leaders in Bane NOR's project-based environment, it became apparent that the most important elements in employer branding were fair compensation and salary development, easily accessible and clear development opportunities, and a healthy work-life balance that includes flexibility and autonomy. Another important factor was the need for increased efficiency and communication. Quite often, it was not a lack of EB initiatives but rather a lack of communication and awareness of them. Furthermore, the unique context of working on projects is

having several leaders which presents some challenges and highlights the importance of developing leadership abilities in this context.

Keywords: Employer Branding, Motivation, Turnover intentions, Retention, Project-Oriented Organizations, Railway, Matrix structure

JEL Classification: J63, O15

Contents

Acknowledgments.....	iii
Resumo	v
Abstract	vi
Introduction	1
Research Context	3
Literature review	6
<i>Employer branding</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>The three-step Employer Branding Process</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Employer Branding Dimensions.....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>EB in the Public Sector.....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>EB and Turnover intentions among project-based employees.....</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Psychological contract and organizational commitment</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>Motivational theories</i>	<i>14</i>
Objectives and Research Questions	15
Methodology	17
<i>Research design.....</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>Data Collection</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>Interviews and interview scripts.....</i>	<i>18</i>
Pilot interviews.....	19
Focus group interviews	19
Individual interviews	19
Resignation Period Interviews	20
Leadership interviews.....	20
Data Collection Procedures	20
Description of Participants	21
Data Management	22
<i>Methodology Section: Development of the Coding System</i>	<i>24</i>

<i>Table 3 Sorting of Codes</i>	25
Data Analysis and Description of the Data	26
<i>What are the observed EB strategies in Bane NOR?</i>	26
<i>Matrix organization and leadership</i>	26
<i>Attraction and retention</i>	28
Work-life balance and Flexibility.....	28
Operational Efficiency and Decision-making processes	29
Motivational factors.....	30
<i>Compensation and benefits</i>	30
<i>Project-based employment</i>	31
Organizational unity and collaboration	31
<i>Organizational Changes and Innovation</i>	33
<i>Communication</i>	34
Turnover and turnover intentions.....	34
<i>Pride in employer brand and task significance</i>	35
<i>Development and career opportunities</i>	36
<i>Suggestions for improvement</i>	37
Discussion	38
<i>Research Question 1: What are the underlying reasons for the higher turnover intention among project-based employees at Bane NOR?</i>	38
Leadership and turnover intentions	38
Compensation and salary progression as a factor in turnover	39
Work-life balance and flexibility as retention factors.....	39
<i>Research question 2: What are the expectations and preferences of project-based employees at Bane NOR regarding EB?</i>	40
Expectations for development and career growth.....	40
Attraction factors: Job security and state-owned structure	40
<i>Research question 3: Compare the leader's and employee's perspectives on the importance of EB strategies</i>	41
Fairness in EB and leadership practices.....	41
<i>Research question 4: Identify critical factors for retaining project-based employees in Bane NOR</i>	42

Practical Implications.....	43
Improved leadership support and clarification of roles	43
Communication on career possibilities	43
Salary development and justice	43
Efficiency, decision-making and bureaucracy	44
Work-life balance	44
Limitations	45
Future research	45
Conclusion	46
References.....	47
Appendixes	53
<i>Appendix 1 Overview of Development/Construction Management</i>	<i>53</i>
<i>Appendix 2.....</i>	<i>54</i>
<i>Invitation to participate in a study regarding employees' experiences in Bane NOR.....</i>	<i>54</i>
<i>Appendix 3.....</i>	<i>55</i>
<i>Consent form for participation in research regarding employee experiences</i>	<i>55</i>
<i>Appendix 4.....</i>	<i>56</i>
<i>Demographic information</i>	<i>56</i>
<i>Appendix 5 Rights Agreement for master's thesis.....</i>	<i>57</i>
<i>Appendix 6.1 INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR FOCUS GROUPS AND INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS</i>	<i>59</i>
<i>NORWEGIAN.....</i>	<i>59</i>
<i>Appendix 6.2. INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR FOCUS GROUPS AND INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW</i>	<i>60</i>
<i>TRANSLATED.....</i>	<i>60</i>
<i>Appendix 6.3 INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR LEADERS IN BANE NOR</i>	<i>61</i>
<i>NORWEGIAN.....</i>	<i>61</i>
<i>Appendix 6.4 INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR LEADERS IN BANE NOR</i>	<i>62</i>
<i>TRANSLATED.....</i>	<i>62</i>
<i>Appendix 6.5 INTERVIEW GUIDE RESIGNATION.....</i>	<i>63</i>

<i>NORWEGIAN</i>	63
<i>Appendix 6.6 INTERVIEW GUIDE RESIGNATION</i>	64
<i>TRANSLATED</i>	64
<i>Appendix 7 Category Dictionary</i>	65

Introduction

In today's competitive job market, the "war for talent" forces organizations to actively compete for skilled individuals (Maurya et al., 2021). The job market's high mobility and frequent job changes pose challenges for attracting and retaining talent, making it a priority for organizations (Maurya et al., 2021). Recent data confirms this trend in employment mobility and turnover among highly skilled workers. The OECD Employment Outlook from 2023 illustrates a historically low unemployment rate among OECD countries with 4.8% as of May 2023 (OECD, 2023). This also indicates a competitive job market. The World Economic Forum's 2023 Future of Jobs Report anticipates that the mix of growing and declining jobs will result in a 23% structural labor market turnover (World Economic Forum, 2023). A survey done by CultureMap and Adecco reveals that approximately 33% of employees do not envision themselves in their current organization within the next two years, and approximately 45% actively seek opportunities at other companies, primarily motivated by salary levels and the current economic insecurity (World Economic Forum, 2023).

This study will focus on Bane NOR and its challenges with turnover in a competitive labor market. Bane NOR is a state-owned enterprise, owned by the Norwegian government "The Ministry of Transport", and has responsibility for the Norwegian railway infrastructure. State-owned institutions like Bane NOR function within the framework of governmental rules and regulations, which means the financing of the company's operations comes from the directorate, supplemented by fees and commercial property ventures. This context might present some challenges but also opportunities concerning employee retention and turnover. It is becoming more and more important to understand the underlying factors contributing to turnover to uphold competitiveness in the labor market.

Bane NOR has around 5500 employees, and the headquarters is in Oslo. The organization is divided into five divisions (Bane NOR, n.d.-a). Bane NOR has implemented a matrix organization for bigger resource units where it is beneficial to share competencies across the organization. The matrix organizational structure, in contrast to conventional organization structures, is a flexible way of organizing a company characterized by the coexistence of traditional departments and project teams (Živković et al., 2019). "A matrix structure typically consists of two chains of command: one along functional lines, and the other along project lines" (Gobeli & Larson, 1986). The dual-reporting system allows collaboration among specialists across many projects while keeping their primary department duties. This structure is designed to capitalize on the advantages of both functional and project-oriented methods (El-Najdawi & Liberatore, 1997; Gobeli & Larson, 1986). Dispersed geographical locations and the requirement for solid technical support are factors that can result in the use of the matrix organization (El-Najdawi & Liberatore, 1997).

According to the latest employee survey from September 2023, employees working in a matrix show 40% higher turnover intentions within the following two years compared to those in traditional settings. The objective of this study is to analyze and understand which factors influence employees' intentions to leave their jobs and potential strategies to retain them. Several studies have demonstrated the important impact of employee branding (EB) strategies on employee engagement, satisfaction, and commitment in an organization (Ronda et al., 2018). Furthermore, several studies investigate how EB strategies should be tailored to different groups such as different ages and generations (G. G. Reis & Braga, 2016), gender, current employment status (Alniaçık & Alniaçık, 2012), and different cultures (Alniaçık et al., 2014). Therefore, it is relevant to explore how project-based employees differ in desired intangible and tangible rewards from their organizations, and which factors motivate this group to stay or leave the organization.

In the current workforce landscape, with the upcoming shortage of workforce attracting and retaining talent should be a priority for organizations (Pyper, 2007). This study recognizes the importance of aligning EB strategies with employees' unique desires and seeks to understand this group's specific context. Research shows that by understanding the unique needs of different employee groups can help organizations to position themselves strategically in the competitive landscape (Berthon et al., 2005). Furthermore, and consistent with the literature, the study attempts to highlight the significance of effectively handling EB strategies to maintain a competitive edge (Tanwar & Prasad, 2016). Research by Berthon et al. (2005) underscores that aligning employer branding tactics with employee aspirations strengthens an organization's competitiveness. Hence, the study explores the specific preferences of project-based employees at Bane NOR to understand which EB factors that are important for this group. Given their important role in the organization, meeting their needs is important to maintain a competitive edge and ensure the successful completion of projects.

Research Context

Bane NOR manages Norway's railway infrastructure. This includes planning, development, management, operation, and maintenance of the railway system, as well as traffic control and administration of railway properties. Bane NOR oversees 4200 km of tracks, over 335 stations, and over 4300 properties (Bane NOR, n.d.-b). The company must ensure that infrastructure meets contemporary safety and efficiency standards, manage traffic control for smooth operations, and administer railway properties to optimize their use (Bane NOR, n.d.-e; International Railway Journal, 2022). Bane NOR has a significant portion of its workforce working in matrix. These employees are permanently hired employees, but they have the flexibility to work on different projects. The development unit in Bane NOR has the biggest degree of this organizational form, where they have at one side the matrix (the projects), who has the responsibility for delivery and results, and personnel responsibility for central management roles. On the other side the different stabs working in the functional organization or "line organization", and have various personnel responsibilities, focusing on strategic resource distribution and competency development to equip projects with necessary resources.

Role/Function	Description/Main Responsibilities	Expectations for the Role	
Employee	Employee work in matrix reports at least in two directions: to task manager and personnel manager	- Technical or project specific expertise - Reports regularly to relevant leaders	Responsibility for delivery
Task Management	- Responsibilities for deliveries and results in projects - Follow up employees in daily work, give tasks, set goals and deadlines including follow up on the deliveries - Responsibility to ensure right organization and staffing in projects	- To deliver defined projects goals - Plan staffing needs - Take responsibility for good work environment	Accountability for results
Personnel Management	- Responsible for work environment and personnel follow-up in their unit - Resource relocation: attain and prioritize capacity and competency - Contribute to professional development of employees - Responsibility for own employees has necessary competencies to do their tasks	- Leader competency - Project understanding - Support employees	Responsibility for delivery Responsibility for personnel
Professional Management	- Maintain the implementation of professional tasks within the department - Ensures routines and guidelines are followed up in the development of tasks - Provide professional support and guidance to resources with delivery responsibility - Ensure quality and follow up quality in deliveries	- Strong competency within the professional field - Good communication skills (share insights)	Responsibility for the field of expertise Responsibility for delivery

Is managed by the same position in parts of the organization today (development/construction)

BASE

Figure 1 Visual Representation of the Matrix System at Bane NOR

Currently, Bane NOR's resource base in the matrix organization includes over 570 employees organized into 129 projects. These projects and their corresponding employees are distributed across offices in Oslo, Bergen, and Trondheim, with also around 179 in-hired consultants. Some projects in Bane NOR are the construction of double tracks from Arna to Bergen with the building of a tunnel. At Eidsvoll, they are constructing a 13,5 km double-track railway. Another significant project is the Ringeriksbanen Line, which will connect Sandvika and Hønefoss with a new double-track railway with the expectation to cut travel time and enhance connection in the region. Another key project is the "Follobanen" project (The Follo Line), a high-speed railway designed to reduce travel time between Oslo and Ski, and significant upgrades to the signaling system across the network (Railway News, 2022). Projects at Bane NOR can be categorized into infrastructure upgrades and new developments. Infrastructure upgrades focus on maintaining and enhancing existing systems, requiring long-term coordination and management. These projects often involve routine maintenance tasks such as track repairs, signaling upgrades, and system overhauls. In contrast, new development like the Follo Line involves comprehensive planning, engineering, and construction efforts, highlighting the need for a flexible organizational structure to manage these complexities. The organization is organized into five divisions, each responsible for their respective disciplines: 1. Digitalization and technology, 2. Development, 3. Traffic, 4. Operations and Maintenance and 5. Property (Bane NOR, n.d.-c).

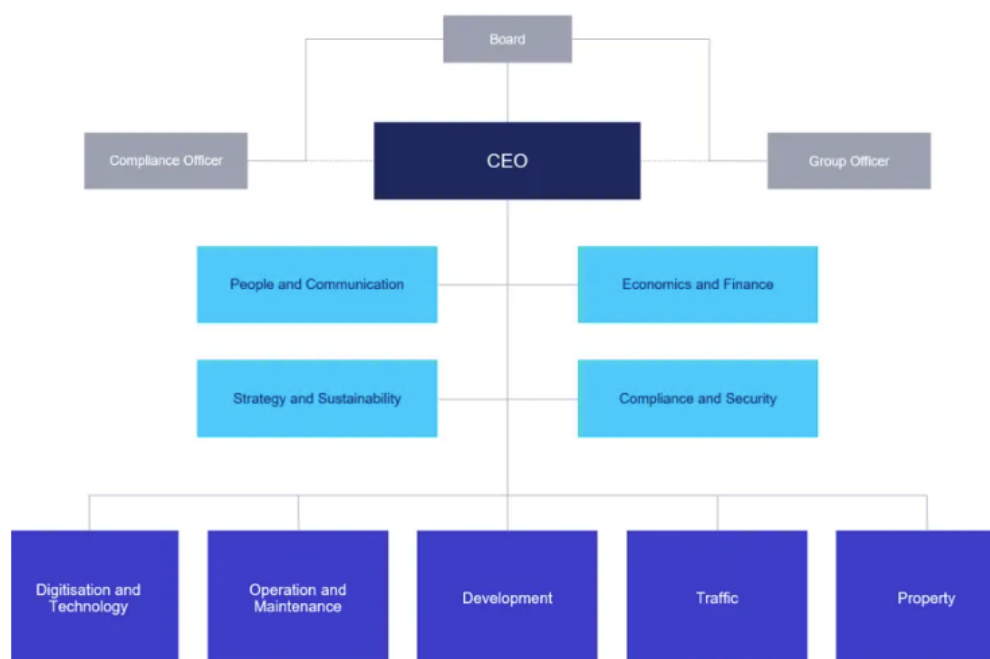


Figure 2 A diagram of the company hierarchy

After a recent reorganization in Bane NOR where Spordrift reintegrated into the company, the organization went from around 3800 to around 5500 employees this year¹. Spordrift has been covering the entire operation and maintenance apparatus in Bane NOR. It was established as a subsidiary in July 2019, decided by the Norwegian Railway Directorate with the past government to keep them competing on equal footing with other companies. Early this year 2024 they were reintegrated because the current government wanted to stop these competitions, keep competence, and have a better overview and control over the Norwegian railway infrastructure (Fri Fagbevegelse, 2022).

In recent years, Bane NOR has faced several significant challenges that have had an impact on project execution and employee satisfaction. Operational delays and budget overruns have raised questions about the effectiveness of project management. For instance, the ERTMS project faced delays caused by global supply chain challenges (Bane NOR News, 2024; International Railway Journal, 2022). ERTSM is a digital signaling system that is now a standard system across Europe and is important in the green transition and will for example contribute to easier transportation of goods in Europe (Bane NOR News, 2024; International Railway Journal, 2022). Moreover, a substantial maintenance backlog has led to the need for maintenance and an upgrade of 21% of the national railway network (International Railway Journal, 2023b). The Follo Line project has been subject to criticism due to technical and organizational shortcomings, which led to Gorm Frimannslund, the CEO of Bane NOR to step down (International Railway Journal, 2023a). Shortly after, Stine Ilebrekke Undrum the director of construction, also resigned (NTB, 2023). These challenges, covered by national news, have a potential impact on the public opinions and Bane NORs reputation. Furthermore, extreme weather has presented significant challenges. For example, in August 2023, the railway infrastructure suffered huge damages due to the severe weather caused by the storm “Hans”. This included the complete collapse of the Randklev Bridge on the Dovre line. Several landslides caused damage to the Røros line, and this incident requires repairs and temporary rerouting of the traffic to maintain operational continuity (The Guardian, 2023). Given these challenges, it is becoming clear that Bane NOR may need to focus on its employer branding efforts, both externally and internally. The perception of the organization, not only by the public but also by current and prospective employees is central to long-term success.

Bane NOR is working towards increasing awareness and building knowledge to enhance its employer branding initiatives. They want to position themselves as an attractive employer so they can recruit, develop, and retain the best candidates in the market. Within the organizational framework, the employer branding manager collaborates closely with managers to provide guidance on EB activities that contribute to both internal and external reputation-building. While the EB manager offers insights and recommendations, each department is encouraged and responsible for taking

¹ Information and numbers shared on meetings with Bane NOR

ownership of implementing and arranging activities specific to their areas. This decentralized approach allows the different departments to modify and implement the initiatives that resonate most with the needs and their unique workforce. This can be attending meetings, joining campaigns, or attending physical activities planned by the organization.

An internal analysis of turnover trends in Bane NOR reveals that in the Development department, the voluntary turnover rate has been one of the highest across the company. In 2021 there was a turnover of 11,5% in this department with a higher turnover pressure amongst the employees that have worked in the organization for 2-7 years. In 2022 the turnover was 14,3% with 16,2% turnover amongst employees who had worked less than three years. In 2023 the turnover rate was 10,4% and still highest in the group who had worked less than 3 years (11,6%).

Literature review

In the context of project-based employment at Bane NOR, where tasks and relationships often focus on specific projects, such as the Follobane project, it is necessary to investigate the unique challenges and preferences of these employees. This literature review will highlight relevant concepts and theories within the dynamics of Employer Branding (EB) strategies and their impact on talent retention and turnover intention in a project-centric environment. This section reviews and discusses the literature that is considered relevant to this research. It encompasses literature on EB, motivational theories, job characteristics, EB in state-owned entities (SOE), and project vs. non-project-based organizational structures.

Employer branding

Employer branding is a concept introduced by Ambler and Barrow in 1996 and has gained significant relevance as a strategic tool for talent attraction and retention (I. Reis et al., 2021). Ambler and Barrow defined the Employer Brand as “the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment and identified with the employing company” (Ambler & Barrow, 1996). Functional benefits include developmental and other useful activities. Economic rewards are material or monetary, whereas psychological rewards include feelings of belonging, direction, and purpose (Ambler & Barrow, 1996). The total package of benefits represents a company’s efforts to promote itself as a desirable employer, both internally and externally (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). The concept of “branding” is rooted in marketing and is about creating an identity that distinguishes the goods and services from their competitors (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). EB involves attracting and retaining current

and new employees, as well as addressing talent and retention difficulties in a competitive labor market. Ambler and Barrow addressed how EB has a personality and how EB equity refers to the intangible assets that have been built up in the minds of existing and potential employees via strong marketing and HR strategies (Ambler & Barrow, 1996).

Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) developed a framework that integrates a resource-based perspective with brand equity theory to examine EB. They described EB as the process of developing and communicating distinct organizational factors that are specific and enduring, for an organization to become an “employer of choice” (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). It involves a unique brand image that reflects the organization as an attractive and compelling place to work (G. G. Reis & Braga, 2016). Research on EB demonstrates several organizational theories that are closely linked to this concept and hence, contributing to becoming an employer of choice. The following chapters will further present research on EB.

The three-step Employer Branding Process

Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) describe the concept of Employer Branding (EB) or employer brand management as a three-step process. The first step involves developing a value proposition that captures the organization's culture, management style, employee qualities, employment image, and product or service quality (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). This value proposition serves as the critical message of the employer brand. Bane NOR's values are “openness, responsibility, and team players” which are reflected in their daily operations. Bane NOR strives to be open with their employees, and an example of this is their sharing the results from the employee survey. All departments get their own report and are provided with E-learning based on the results on their internal platform. For example, before publishing material, Bane NOR always consults with leadership groups to determine how much, how, and why. During these discussions, the company's values are frequently addressed. Moreover, Bane NOR offers leadership development programs that emphasize the company's values. Workshops with staff are also important tools to promote and reinforce these values. Recently, with the appointment of a new director, there has been a renewed focus on these procedures to ensure alignment with Bane NOR's strategic objectives. By effectively communicating these values internally and externally they can create an attractive employer brand that attracts and keeps talent.

The second step encompasses external marketing which means targeting potential employees to attract desired talent while aligning the organization's overall branding efforts (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). This includes using different channels for communicating the organization's employer value proposition, for example, through social media, career stands and the company website. For example,

on the Bane NORs website, they show the benefits of working there, to strengthen their EB. Some of their focus areas are dedication to diversity and inclusion, and they show some examples of their numerous leader development programs. Moreover, Bane NOR offers competitive employee benefits like flexible work hours and home office, attractive pension plans, bank and insurance schemes, plus employee tickets to the different train companies operating on their tracks. The work environment is promoted as interdisciplinary collaboration where work should be fun and developing, without exhausting employees (Bane NOR, n.d.-d).

The third step involves internal marketing, or internal employer branding to ensure the brand promise becomes an integrated part of the organization to promote commitment to the organization's values and goals (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Internal marketing focuses on strengthening organizational culture and engagement among existing employees (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). To integrate both external and internal marketing in their EB strategy, it is important to develop and communicate a clear employer value proposition (EVP) that conveys their values of "openness, responsibility, and teamwork". This is demonstrated by Bane NORs vision, which is "to deliver sustainable, effective and safe transportation which connects Norway and creates value in the society". Internal marketing and EB practices are important when contributing to employee retention, motivation, and commitment, while also enhancing organizational attractiveness (Alves et al., 2020; Bankins & Waterhouse, 2019; Bharadwaj et al., 2022; Caputo et al., 2023). Career progression, possibilities for trainee and internships, and education are some other internal values that Bane NOR promotes.

Employer Branding Dimensions

Authors have used several terms to address the concept of EB, i.e. Berthon et. al., 2005 used the term "employee attractiveness" (Ronda et al., 2018). This study uses the Employee Branding Attractiveness scale (EmpAt) developed by Berthon et. al (2005) to assess the dimensions of EB. The EmpAt scale is part of the extended research of Abler and Barrow's definition previously presented: "the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment and identified with the employing company" (Ambler & Barrow, 1996, s.187). According to Berthon et.al (2005), employee attractiveness is a component of internal marketing that is still underdeveloped in EB and is defined as the "envisioned benefits that potential employee sees in working for a specific organization" (Berthon et al., 2005, p. 151). For employers in knowledge-intensive contexts, it should be a priority to identify which benefits individuals value to gain a competitive advantage in attracting and retaining workers. The EmpAt scale allows organizations to measure their performance in the five dimensions of employer attractiveness identified by Berthon et. al (2005); social value, development value, application value, interest value, and economic value.

The social value assesses how appealing an employer is based on the fun, happy, and collegial work environment, to create high-quality, innovative products and services (Berthon et al., 2005). Companies that have high-quality relationships with employees are advantageous to both employees and the organization because employees feel supported, making them more committed to the organization (Caillier, 2017). Venkataramani et al. (2013) underscore the importance of good and supportive social networks in their study. Employees with strong social networks report higher levels of job satisfaction and overall well-being. Moreover, perceived organizational support, including support from peers and supervisors, is connected with higher work performance (Muse & Stamper, 2007).

Development value is about company strategies like offering employees opportunities to grow personally and professionally. This includes factors such as recognition, building self-worth, and career-enhancing experiences (Berthon et al., 2005). Research demonstrates that organizations that provide development opportunities will affect employee's perception of the organization and influence their decision to stay (Jain & Bhatt, 2015 as cited in Gilani & Cunningham, 2017). Therefore, companies should communicate possibilities for development and integrate these into the culture to improve retention rates (Gilani & Cunningham, 2017).

The application value evaluates how much an employer lets employees use their knowledge and experience in productive ways (Berthon et al., 2005). It also includes the opportunity for individuals to utilize their acquired knowledge, teach others, and operate within a customer-centric and humanitarian work environment (Berthon et al., 2005). Research indicates that an organization's capacity to effectively manage people while promoting employees' utilization of skills is essential for job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Christensen Hughes & Rog, 2008).

Interest value refers to the inherent attributes of a job, including interesting and exciting tasks, novelty, and opportunities for creativity (Berthon et al., 2005). Berthon et. al. (2005) show that this value would attract individuals motivated by the purpose of the work. Additionally, establishing new work practices and encouraging motivation may improve retention and influence the likelihood of employees recommending employment in their organizations to others (Styvén et al., 2022).

Economic value refers to the financial reward offered by an employer, including salary, compensation packages, and secure employment, and is an essential factor in EB (Berthon et al., 2005). Rynes et al. (2004) study revealed that salary can be more important than employees report in surveys, highlighting its complexity. Moreover, this finding is contrary to the beliefs of HR professionals often believes (Rynes et al., 2004). In another study by Rowland & Hall (2013), they examined how appraisal systems influence employees' perception of equity and found that appraisal systems generate both real and perceived inequities regarding procedures and rewards. According to their research,

commitment and performance are greatly affected by perceptions of equity (Rowland & Hall, 2013) highlighting the complexity of compensation and benefits in workplaces.

The scale offers organizations a clear framework for enhancing their EB effort to better adapt their practices based on the different dimensions. Organizations can use the EmpAt scale when for example working on internal employee engagement and commitment. The scale is associated with several favorable outcomes, such as well-being and loyalty (Benraiss-Noailles & Viot, 2021). Furthermore, the scale has been negatively correlated to turnover intentions, with social value and value being the strongest predictors (Kashyap & Verma, 2018). Although some research suggests that the scale may require further modifications to effectively integrate into more cultural contexts, it offers HR professionals valuable insights when assessing an organization's employer brand (Caputo et al., 2023). With rating scores greater than 0.70 across all dimensions, the EmpAt scale exhibits strong validity and reliability (Berthon et al., 2005). As the competition for talent intensifies tailoring branding strategies can be a key tool in the competition for employees. This study will use the EmpAt scale as a framework when developing the questionnaires for the interviews and include questions unique to this study. In this way, the research ensures that it covers all five dimensions and additionally adapts to the current research.

EB in the Public Sector

Employer Branding (EB) has become an important organizational tool to attract and retain talented employees. While the private sector often has the resources and flexibility to create a strong employer brand, public-owned organizations are facing more complex challenges, like reduced finances and increased competition for skilled workers (Sandberg & Karlsson Halde, 2009). Public organizations can be defined as “publicly financed, owned, and established to serve the public interest” (Rainey 2009; Wamsley and Zald 1973 in Leijerholt et al. 2019). In the context of Bane NOR, where project-based employees show a higher degree of turnover intentions, EB becomes important in this work to attract and retain these employees.

Traditionally the public sector has been associated with job security and stability, qualities that many employees find attractive (Bankins & Waterhouse, 2019). On the other hand, the public sector has a reputation for being bureaucratic and old-fashioned, especially among younger employees (Bankins & Waterhouse, 2019). This contributes to a negative reputation that affects the public sector in the competition for talent. Moreover, the public sector often struggles when competing with private companies which often can provide higher salaries and quicker development opportunities (Leider et al., 2019)

Bankins and Waterhouse (2019) highlight the importance of aligning the organization's internal identity with the external reputation to strengthen EB. Internal identity is about how employees view their organization, while reputation is about how external stakeholders, like potential candidates, perceive it (Bankins & Waterhouse, 2019). Public-owned organizations often struggle with a gap between these two factors. While employees look at the public sector as stable and having a societal impact, it also comes across as slow and bureaucratic (Bankins & Waterhouse, 2019). This gap can be a potential hindrance in recruitment, and as mentioned especially when attracting younger talents.

Wæraas (2008) highlights that publicly owned organizations often struggle with identity that is diverse and inconsistent which can make it challenging to build an employer brand. Instead of forcing one identity, Wæraas (2008) argues that it can be beneficial to embrace this diversity. For example, could an organization like Bane NOR present itself as a stable and safe employer, and dynamic and innovative at the same time? This flexibility could appeal to a broader audience of potential employees.

In a field experiment targeting future public employees, Keppeler & Papenfuß (2021) examined how signals related to societal impact, job security, and performance orientation in digital advertisements affected individual interest in job ads at public-owned companies. They found that these signals did not have an overall significant effect on individuals' interest in a job, but that gender had an effect (Keppeler & Papenfuß, 2021). Despite the lack of overall impact, the study highlights that the effectiveness of the signals sent out in job ads may vary on factors, such as gender. Tailoring messages in digital job ads to align with the target group should be investigated more to be better understood for the future for public-owned companies to stay competitive as employers. Another important lesson from this study is the impact social media has on EB. Keppeler & Papenfuß (2021) study emphasizes how social media offers an affordable approach when connecting with a wide audience and provides employers with an excessive platform to target specific groups in order to increase the visibility of the organization (Keppeler & Papenfuß, 2021). By showing off the exciting and important work that is being done in the public sector, social media can also help break down negative stereotypes about it.

An interesting finding in Weske et al. (2020) study is that persons with a high degree of public service motivation (PSM) and have a strong motivation to contribute to society are not necessarily more attracted to an organization that highlights public values in EB. This suggests that public-owned organizations cannot trust PSM alone to attract employees. However, their findings did show some higher degree of extrinsic motivation amongst individuals who are more attracted to private values in EB. (Weske et al., 2020). In this context a strong reputation is important and managing it well can lead

to several positive outcomes such as attracting high-quality job applicants and retaining and creating loyalty among existing employees (Bankins & Waterhouse, 2019).

EB and Turnover intentions among project-based employees

Project-based employees form a critical side of organizations who has project-based organizational structures. Turner and Keegan (2002), in line with Archibald (1993), characterized project-based organizations as units that engage in both Type 1 and Type 2 projects (Archibald, 1993 found in Keegan & Turner, 2002). In their distinction, Type 1 organizations serve external customers, while Type 2 organizations provide services to another business unit within the same organization (Keegan & Turner, 2002). Gareis & Huemann (2007) as cited in Miterev et al. (2017) further define project-oriented organizations as those which “defines management by projects as its organizational strategy”. These organizations manage their work through temporary structures such as projects and programs, with both internal and external activities (Miterev et al., 2017). The organizations have projects, programs, and portfolio management as specific business processes, reflecting a top-down decision to embrace project-oriented ways of working (Miterev et al., 2017).

Empirical research suggests that employees engaged in matrix structure within project-based organizations may have higher turnover intentions (Živković et al., 2019). The nature of project-based employment, where workers go from project to project, presents a degree of uncertainty and ambiguity that can influence their commitment to long-term engagement. In a literature review study by Živković et al. (2019), findings demonstrate several factors that might contribute to higher turnover intentions in matrix organizations. For example, in a study done by Maylor (2010) employees in matrix structures experienced increased stress due to factors such as the presence of two superiors, and the dual responsibility that can create ambiguity and confusion around priorities (Maylor 2010, cited in Živković et al., 2019). A study done by Chapman (1998) revealed that poor communication or lack of information due to ambiguity in employee roles, unreasonable expectations, and constant pressure led to dissatisfaction and turnover intentions (Živković et al., 2019). Katsikea et. al (2015) show that role ambiguity and role conflict, which are common in a matrix structure, have a negative impact on job satisfaction and increase turnover intentions (Živković et al., 2019). A study done by Puni et.al (2016) on leadership in matrix organizations revealed that a lack of autonomy in decision-making processes in a matrix structure is associated with higher turnover intentions (Živković et al., 2019)

In summary, several studies have linked matrix structure to several challenges, such as higher employee turnover intentions, which correspond with the recent evaluation of the employee surveys in Bane NOR. Understanding and addressing the factors that contribute to turnover intentions is important for organizations seeking to minimize employee turnover. Studying the motivations,

expectations, and concerns of employees working in a matrix structure can offer valuable insights into the challenges of project-based employment. This research wishes to explore the distinct challenges and preferences of this group, to establish a solid understanding to successfully adapt EB strategies and successfully inform decision-makers on how to improve the organization's capacity to retain and engage employees.

Psychological contract and organizational commitment

Research indicates that EB has a significant impact on employee's attitudes and organizational commitment (Alves et al., 2020). Employees attitudes are shaped by several factors, such as the psychological contract. The psychological contract can be defined as "an individual's belief regarding the terms and conditions of a reciprocal exchange agreement between that focal person and another party... believes that a promise of future return has been made, a contribution has been given and thus, an obligation has been created to provide future benefits" (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994, p. 24). In other words, psychological contracts are mutual obligations between an employee and an employer that are not formalized in a written document but are subjectively understood by each party. The obligations can be formed during a hiring process but sustained through daily interactions (Schalk & Rousseau, 2000). Psychological contracts are frequently violated, with more than half of employees reporting such violations (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994). Suppose an employee perceives a breach of the psychological contract. For example, an employee might feel that they lack support from their leader or are provided inadequate career opportunities upon what is expected. In such cases, it might result in several negative outcomes, including thoughts about leaving the organization. The relationship between the psychological contract breach and the intention to leave a job has been supported by empirical studies (Zhao et al., 2007) thus, it is important to manage the psychological contract. Robinson and Morrison (2000) underline this, stressing the importance of establishing realistic expectations for the job during recruitment and continuously monitoring changes in expectations. To sum up, the fulfillment of psychological contract is positively associated with job satisfaction, organizational commitment, organizational citizenship, and performance and negatively correlated with turnover intentions (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994; Schalk & Rousseau, 2000; Zhao et al., 2007).

Closely linked to psychological contracts is the construct of organizational commitment. Organizational commitment is a psychological state that refers to the employee's connection with their organization and how it affects their choice to either stay or leave the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991). It encompasses three components: Affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Research has shown that fulfillment of the

psychological contract is linked to organizational commitment and associated with behaviors at work including turnover (Sturges et al., 2005). Malaysia (2016) introduced the three-component model by Meyer and Allen. They demonstrated how organizational commitment can be used to predict important employee outcomes such as turnover, citizenship behaviors, work performance, absenteeism, and tardiness. Alves et al. (2020) found that EB strategies positively influence affective organizational commitment (AOC). The "mission, vision, and values" strategies had the greatest positive impact, while the "compensation and benefit" had the least impact (Alves et al., 2020). Furthermore, AOC improves the impression of EB strategies. As a result, concentrating on strengthening AOC and establishing strong psychological contracts between leaders and employees is critical for managing EB and reducing turnover intentions.

Motivational theories

Understanding which factors motivate current and potential employees is important for an effective EB. Research has explored the connections between the job characteristics model (JCM) and employee motivations (see e.g. Piccolo et al., 2010). The JCM was originally created by Hackman and Oldham (1976) and has received substantial empirical validation. The JCM model presents several core job characteristics that are important for employees. Based on the characteristics of a job the model provides a formula to compute the motivating potential score (MPS) for a given job (John B. Miner., 2005, p. 78). Moreover, the model explains how the fulfillment of the various job characteristics can lead to critical psychological states for the employees. Skill variety, task identity, and task significance are important characteristics for employees to experience meaningfulness of work. Autonomy gives a feeling of responsibility for work outcomes and feedback from the job gives knowledge of the results of own work. Finally, the outcomes of the fulfillment of the job characteristics will have an impact on internal work motivation, growth satisfaction, general work satisfaction, and work effectiveness (John B. Miner., 2005, p. 78). Wright (2001) states that work motivation has been largely ignored by public-sector scholars and highlights the importance of gaining insights into factors that affect productivity in public organizations. This lack of research is also highlighted in Papenfuß & Keppeler's (2023) literature review. They underline the importance of concepts such as performance-related pay (PRP) and public service motivation (PSM) for workers in the public sector, however, only 9% of relevant studies investigate this in state-owned organizations. Furthermore, they argue that organizational goals are important determinants of the performance effects of PRP and PRP (Papenfuß & Keppeler, 2023).

Project-based employees in Bane NOR have to make many independent decisions. From procurement and strategy to implementation and putting plans into action. This requires high skill variety and is linked to greater motivation, as it reduces monotony and challenges employees

(Hackman & Oldham, 1976). Additionally, working on diverse projects requires employees to engage in several tasks that will continuously challenge their abilities and promote learning. This not only reduces monotony but also enhances meaningfulness. Moreover, these employees have high levels of responsibility which gives them significant autonomy, previously emphasized as important in employee motivation. Also, Bane NOR tries to keep employees through all stages of projects which enhances task identity. Being involved in all phases allows employees to see the tangible results of their efforts and increases feelings of meaningfulness thereby boosting motivation. Considering Bane NOR mission to create sustainable infrastructure can further enhance feelings of task significance which is positive for employees' motivation. Feedback, another important factor influencing motivation in the JCM. Feedback provides workers with knowledge of results. In the project-based environment of Bane NOR where the base- and task leaders ensure feedback is regular is supposed to align employees with project goals and give clear evaluations of how their contributions are valued.

For Bane NOR's project-based workforce, where tasks are project-specific, understanding the relationship between job characteristics and motivation becomes important. Several studies have applied the Job Characteristics Model to explore its implications on turnover intentions and retention (Wan et al., 2018). For example, Wan et. al (2018) found that the work environment and job characteristics were associated with higher work engagement and lower turnover intentions among experienced nurses. In another study by DeVaro et al (2007) the positive association between autonomy and worker satisfaction was reinforced. The research indicated that autonomy, coupled with task variety, positively impacted productivity. This further suggests that empowering employees with autonomy in project-specific tasks can enhance both satisfaction and overall productivity (DeVaro et al., 2007). Autonomy, task variety, and a positive work environment emerge as central elements that not only influence turnover intentions, but also contribute to work engagement, satisfaction, and several tangible outcomes.

Objectives and Research Questions

This research will explore the underlying factors behind the numbers of the yearly employee survey. The analysis from the survey measures and identifies effective EB strategies, revealing e.g. that employees are 2,5 times more likely to stay with the company when they are provided with career and growth opportunities. Internal competencies mobility more than doubles this probability, and positive aspects such as good cooperation, trust in management, and pride over delivery – result in a higher probability for retention ranging from 40-46%.

However, despite these findings, the result also found a 40 % higher probability for turnover within the next two years if the employee works on projects. Bane NOR and the HR department of project-based workers have not yet explored the underlying reasons behind these survey results. This raises the question of whether project-based employees are offered these factors to the same extent as non-project-based employees, or if the nature of project work contributes to the observed trends. Potential factors, such as shorter duration of projects, lower level of trust, or personality traits of people working on projects may also play a role.

Lately, Bane NOR has received public media attention after various events. The most significant event was the closing down of the recently constructed “Follobanen”. Shortly after its opening, the project suffered major electrical malfunctions and overheating complications, which required significant modifications. Like mentioned earlier, a consequence of this incident was that CEO Gorm Frimannslund stepped down from his position in agreement with the board of Bane NOR. The leadership transition reflects the negative impact of technical failures on the organization's reputation and operations. For project-based employees, such media attention due to project failure and subsequent leadership changes can create an unstable work environment.

This qualitative study asks the following research questions:

1. What are the underlying reasons for the higher turnover intention amongst project-based employees at Bane NOR?
2. What are the expectations and preferences of project-based employees at Bane NOR regarding the factors in EB?
3. Compare leaders and employees’ perspectives on the importance of EB strategies.
4. Identify critical factors for retaining project-based employees in Bane NOR.

By doing so, the expected results will contribute to understanding the project-based employee’s perceptions of EB effectiveness as well as their challenges and preferences. Furthermore, the results will help provide recommendations for EB strategies for project-based employees in Bane NOR. A qualitative approach is central for this thesis to gain and provide a deeper understanding of the factors contributing to higher turnover intentions in an employee group that allegedly is given the same conditions as their non-project-based colleagues. By exploring the preferences of these employees, the study aims to go beyond what quantitative data can offer, providing a richer understanding of the dynamics in the organization.

Methodology

Research design

To gain insight into the contributing factors to the higher turnover intentions among project-based employees, this study takes a qualitative approach relying mainly on interviews as primary data collection. These interviews are semi-structured interviews with employees in these groups, to gather in-depth insights into their personal experiences and perspectives that might be overlooked in quantitative methods. In addition, the research includes comments from Glassdoor, an online platform where individuals can anonymously review companies. Examining these comments might provide additional insight into the turnover reasons in Bane NOR.

It is important to note that the trends observed at Bane NOR are not isolated but can reflect the nature of project-based work. Employees in project-based roles face unique challenges, such as reporting to several leaders, managing multiple projects, and more often having to shift work locations and close colleagues. Besides, project-based work in SOEs adds another level of complexity, where decision-making sometimes comes from distant locations and must go through bureaucratic processes. These circumstances might result in higher stress levels and uncertainty. Additionally, the current competitive work landscape makes it more difficult for employers as the employees have more options and higher expectations for the employer.

Despite many obstacles, Bane NOR focuses on several exciting projects such as modernizing operations and enhancing sustainability. Some projects going on in Bane NOR are enhancing digitalization, optimizing workflows, and embracing eco-friendly measures in accordance with the Norwegian environmental goals. Bane NOR's strategic efforts to promote digitalization and implement practices that demonstrate their commitment to environmentally friendly solutions are all part of establishing an appealing work environment for individuals who are attracted to innovation and want to contribute to sustainable and forward-thinking projects.

Data Collection

Interviews: Participants were recruited based on whether they were working in Bane NOR and were project-based employees or leaders who managed project-based employees. Due to challenges in recruiting enough participants, the recruitment strategy was based on convenient sampling.

1. HR contacts: My HR contacts in Bane NOR helped recruit participants by sharing the study in the internal data platforms. HR contacted leaders directly by email, who then shared the study with

their teams. They gathered emails from interested employees and forwarded them to me so I could contact them directly and schedule interviews.

2. Personal Network: A friend working at Bane NOR assisted recruit more participants by posting on internal platforms and spreading the word around the office.
3. Snowball sampling: Participants were encouraged to share the study with colleagues who could be interested in participating.
4. Glassdoor: In addition to interviews, I gathered 7 out of 7 Glassdoor reviews to see if reviews could match the data from the interviews.

Interviews and interview scripts

Structured interview scripts were developed for the different participant groups. One for project-based employees (using the same one for individual and focus groups) (appendix 6.2), one for employees in their resignation period (appendix 6.5), and one for leaders (appendix 6.4). The interview scripts for project-based employees intended to get insight into the overall experience, their perceptions of actual EB strategies, and potential factors influencing their turnover intentions. The interviews started with an introduction of the study, an explanation of the purpose as well as getting informed consent for recording. Participants were reassured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses to promote openness. After this, the participants were asked to briefly introduce themselves, including their name, role, and tenure at Bane NOR. The interview then shifted to EB strategies and awareness, with questions about what originally motivated them to apply for a position at Bane NOR, how their initial expectations matched their actual experiences, and what they valued most about working there. Participants were also asked to compare Bane NOR's reputation to other employees and share their perceptions of the work environment and organizational culture.

The interview then explored team dynamics to understand the composition and interaction within project-based teams, as well as the participant's perspectives on working on various projects. Furthermore, the questions explored the participant's views on development opportunities and thoughts on fairness and innovation. Moreover, they were asked about leadership and the organization's compensation system. Then, turnover intentions were indirectly discussed asking participants about why they would like to stay in Bane NOR and potential reasons for considering leaving. Finally, participants were encouraged to come up with some recommendations for strengthening EB strategies and increasing employee satisfaction. The interview concluded with a thank you to the participants and offered them to give final comments or questions.

Pilot interviews

To refine the interview questions and approach, two pilot interviews were conducted: one individual interview and one focus group interview with two participants. While no major changes were made after these two interviews, some questions were adjusted based on an evaluation of how it went. For example, the question “Can you describe the company culture” seemed to be a bit overwhelming and broad for the candidates. Therefore, questions that seemed a bit too broad such as the question on culture were changed to more specific questions on this topic. In this case, the questions were more specific on cultural factors in an organization such as cooperation, leadership, the work environment, etc. This encouraged more focused and detailed responses.

Focus group interviews

The initial design was to have focus groups with 6-8 participants. However, the study had to adapt to smaller focus groups of 3-4 participants due to logistic constraints. Nonetheless, these reduced group sizes allowed for a thorough investigation of shared experiences and perspectives. Research states that focus groups can be effective with as little as 3 participants making it easier to accommodate discussions and ensure that everyone is heard (Gill et al., 2008). In online settings this becomes important, where smaller groups can enhance interaction (Poynter, 2010).

The interviews were semi-structured, with open-ended and guided questions. The goal was to encourage participants to share detailed insights and personal experiences. Semi-structured interviews are recognized for providing in-depth and comprehensive data and allowing for flexibility during the interviews to explore topics that come up (Mashuri et al., 2022). The interviews were performed on Teams, which was convenient because workers are spread geographically in Norway. Participants signed a consent form before the interviews to ensure their privacy and confidentiality (see Appendix 3).

Individual interviews

Due to the logistical challenges of scheduling everyone in focus groups, three individual interviews were conducted. These interviews were also beneficial to get deeper conversations about experiences and viewpoints. Also, one of the participants requested an individual interview as the only option.

Resignation Period Interviews

Ten project-based employees in their resignation period were contacted by email. Only three responded and took part in the research. Out of these three, one participant was quitting because of age retirement. The purpose of interviewing this group was to learn their reason for leaving Bane NOR. The interview script for employees in their resignation period had a similar structure to the interview script for the other employees, but more questions were asked on factors that led them to the decision to leave Bane NOR. Participants were asked about their future career plans, including factors considered when seeking employment in future roles.

Leadership interviews

Three one-on-one interviews were performed with leaders to get leadership perspectives. The aim was to understand how it is to manage project-based employees and understand how managers are involved with EB initiatives. Moreover, the interviews wanted to explore leaders' opinions on strategies and their insights on potential improvements. The interview script for leaders was created to acquire insight into their perspectives regarding EB strategies and turnover intentions (See appendix 6). The interview included the same introduction as the other interview script. Leaders were asked about their understanding of EB and its importance in Bane NOR. They were also asked about their role in implementing EB strategies and their involvement in this. Moreover, they were asked to share their opinions on existing EB initiatives, some suggestions for improvement, and potential challenges encountered in implementing EB strategies. The interview also explored leaders' collaboration with HR to address employee retention. Finally, leaders were asked to provide their views on future EB initiatives and areas for improvement.

Data Collection Procedures

1. **Scheduling interviews:** Interviews were scheduled at convenient times for the participants. Since the participants are dispersed around Norway, it was practical to perform interviews via Teams. The interviews were kept confidential, but participants in focus groups were informed that they would be in a group.
2. **Conducting Interviews:** Interviews followed a semi-structured framework, with open-ended questions. The interview language was Norwegian because it is Bane NOR's corporate language. While one-on-one interviews allowed for a more in-depth analysis of individual experiences, focus

groups promoted discussion. The focus group was scheduled to last 1 hour and 15 minutes, and individual interviews were scheduled for 1 hour.

3. **Recording and Transcribing:** Interviews were recorded on Teams with the participant's consent to facilitate transcription. Microsoft Team transcription program was used to automate a draft of the transcription, which then was cleaned up by doing a manual transcription. Finally, the transcription was translated using AI and further checked manually by the researcher.

Description of Participants

The study sample consists of employees working in Bane NORs matrix structure. They are selected because they are project-based employees who can provide insights and perspectives on their experiences with current EB strategies in Bane NOR. To guarantee anonymity, the descriptions of participants will provide a general overview without revealing any specific identifying information. The study included project-based employees from various development departments. The sample included:

Gender: 12 male and 9 female participants

Age range: participants spanned a range of ages, categorized into the following groups:

Table 1

Age Range

20-30 years:	4 participants
31-40 years:	6 participants
41-50 years:	5 participants
51-60 years:	4 participants
Over 60 years:	2 participants

Table 2

Overview over demographics

Type of interview	Age	Gender	Tenure
Pilot interview	51-60 years	Male	5-10 years
Pilot interview	41-50 years	Female	5-10 years
	41-50 years	Male	0-5 years
Focus group	31-40 years	Male	0-5 years
	41-50 years	Female	5-10 years
	Unknown	Female	Unknown
	31-40 years	Male	0-5 years
Focus group	61-70 years	Male	25-30 years
	31-40 years	Male	0-5 years
	20-30 years	Male	0-5 years

Focus group	20-30 years	Male	0-5 years
	Unknown	Female	Unknown
	31-40 years	Male	0-5 years
	31-40 years	Male	5-10 years
Individual interview	31-40 years	Male	0-5 years
	41-50 years	Female	0-5 years
	61-70 years	Female	5-10 years
Resignation period	20-30 years	Male	0-5 years
	41-50 years	Female	5-10 years
Retirement	70 +	Male	5-10 years
Leadership interview	61-70 years	Female	5-10 years
Leadership interview	51-60 years	Female	25-30 years
Leadership interview	51-60 years	Female	10-15 years

Data Management

Anonymity, Ethical Considerations, and Informed Consent

Before the data collection, all participants received an information email with important information about the study (Appendix 2). These forms were then signed by the participants who voluntarily accepted the invitation. In this consent form, they were informed of the purpose of the study, their right to withdraw, and information about what the information will be used for. One participant withdrew from the study and all video, transcript, and information were deleted about this participant. When starting the interviews I repeated the information and how the video recordings would be handled. To protect the participants' privacy, any identifiable details were removed from the transcripts and analysis. For example, because some had highly defined work roles, I did not specify them in my research. Videos with audio recordings and transcripts were securely saved on a password-protected computer, and only I as the researcher had access to the video records and data transcription.

Timeline

The interviews and data collection were originally planned for February and March, but due to scheduling challenges, the interviews were performed until April 2024. Despite the delay, the data collection was completed in time to allow a thorough analysis.

Coding Process

After transcribing the interviews, I started the coding process. I coded the data using thematic analysis, a commonly used method for identifying and recognizing patterns in qualitative data. According to Cassell et al. (2017), thematic analysis is a form of qualitative data analysis that focuses on "identifying,

organizing, and interpreting themes in textual data" (p. 220). I chose the generic form of thematic analysis because of its flexibility, allowing me to study the data without being bound by a certain methodological or philosophical tradition. This was appropriate for my research because it allowed me to customize the approach based on what the study needed, allowing me to combine both inductive and deductive coding processes. (Cassell et al., 2017). I followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase process for thematic analysis because it is a flexible and systematic approach when identifying patterns in the data (see the steps below in the description of the data analysis). The method highlights the active role of the researcher in the analysis and encourages to reflect on the best steps to achieve a deep understanding of the data. This makes it possible to identify both superficial and underlying themes, which gives rich and nuanced analysis that is theoretical and theoretically grounded (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Cassell et al., 2017).

After transcription, videos were deleted, and the interviewed candidates were labeled with their respective numbers. MAXQDA a software for qualitative data analysis was used for the coding process. This program simplified the organization of the data, making it easier to identify patterns. The dimensions from the EmpAt scale were initial codes and each of these dimensions was placed into how the actual EB practices are, employees' emotional responses to these practices and behavioral outcomes.

Braun and Clarke's six-step process for thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006):

1. Familiarization with the Data: The first step involved reading and re-reading the transcripts to become familiar with the data. This step was important in finding patterns and get a deeper understanding of the content.
2. Generating initial codes: Initial codes were generated based on the research questions. These codes were categorized into themes such as EB, turnover, and retention. During this process, new codes merged.
3. Reviewing themes: the themes were reviewed and adjusted to ensure that they accurately represented the data. This included checking for consistency and coherence within and between themes.
4. Defining and naming themes: Each theme was clearly defined and named to capture the essence of the data.
5. Processing the report: Writing the report, which includes a description of the themes, with quotes from the interviews (Cassell et al., 2017, p. 228)

Limitations of data collection

Several limitations emerged during the data collection process. These limitations include challenges related to participants' availability, difficulty in scheduling focus groups with more participants, and the potential response bias in focus groups, where participants may provide socially desirable responses. For example, there was a limited representation of leaders in the study. Given that EB strategy often goes through leaders it would be interesting to have more of their perspectives.

Methodology Section: Development of the Coding System

This section will describe the development of the code system for interpreting the data from interviews. Initial codes were used based on the research questions of this study. The initial codes were based on the EmpAt scale developed by Berthon et al. (2005). These were used as a priori categories to code the data. Within each of these a priori categories, specific, new, and a posteriori, sub-categories were created to better describe the content of the data. The new, a posteriori, sub-categories as signaled with an "*" in the Category Dictionary (Appendix 7). Moreover, it combines ideas from Ambler and Barrow (1996), as well as Backhaus and Tikoo (2004).

Final codes were driven by the patterns that surfaced during the coding process. For example, "Job Security" was included under Economic Value, and "Task Significance" was included under "Application Value". The coding system was refined through multiple rounds of coding and discussions with my supervisors. Then, I categorized the different codes into four different angles of EB:

1. **EB Practices:** The observed EB strategies, for example, concrete procedures in Bane NOR regarding the economic aspects such as salaries and benefits, development value, such as training programs etc.
2. **Perception of EB Practices:** The personal opinions and perspectives of the employees regarding organizational practices related to EB. The goal is to identify any potential gaps between organizational goals and employee experiences.
3. **Emotional Responses:** This category assesses participants' feelings and emotional responses related to the EB practices.
4. **Behavioral Responses:** This category explores the actions and behaviors of the employees in the EB practices. It includes information about turnover intentions and the pursuit of new opportunities.

Table 3 Sorting of Codes

Below I will provide an example of how the coding emerged. I started with the code from Berthon et al. (2005) EmpAt Scale Economic Value. Further, I identified themes that were discussed around economic value in the Bane NOR's current EB strategies. From this, the new codes: "job security", "pay progression and salary structure" and "compensation and benefits" were created.

Table 3		
Sorting of Codes		
Theme	Sub-Category	Definition
Economic Value		Economic value refers to the financial rewards provided by an employer. It includes salary, compensation packages, and job security (Berthon et al., 2005).
	Job Security*	Assurance of ongoing employment and stability within the organization. <i>"Bane NOR guarantees employment, but you must be willing to work on other projects (...) Many who are phased out of projects will enter a very split position. You have your job, but in many places in the country" – (Individual interview, S16)</i>
	Pay progression and salary structure*	The way salaries are organized and classified within the company and the gradual reward development over time, determined by factors such as efficiency, or other relevant factors. <i>"Salary changes happens once a year (...). It is based on what an employee has done in the past year and it's based on the frameworks negotiated" – (Leadership interview, S23)</i>
	Compensation and Benefits*	All forms of compensation, both financial and non-financial, offered by the company <i>"State pensions provide lifelong payments. Pension in a regular company provides payment for the first 12 years. There is a big difference" (Individual interview, S17).</i>

Data Analysis and Description of the Data

This section will present the analysis of the key themes identified in the qualitative data. The data analysis is the results from the qualitative interviews and will also include the Glassdoor reviews. Each theme is analyzed across the groups. However, the analysis will be organized by the frequency of total mentions from the most cited to least cited. The objective is to answer the research questions: “What are the underlying reasons for the higher turnover intentions among project-based employees at Bane NOR?” and “Which of the dimensions within EB can explain the main factors contributing to a higher likelihood of leaving?”

What are the observed EB strategies in Bane NOR?

The first part of an employer brand is what “makes it an exciting place to work”. There are various aspects that employers consider when they evaluate their employees. Bane NOR continuously works on its brand image to attract and retain candidates. Although the initial meeting with the Employer Branding Manager in Bane NOR on Teams insinuated a lack of clear strategies, it is evident that there are structured efforts in place. The EB Manager who became my contact person in Bane NOR mentioned that each leader is responsible for implementing internal EB strategies, with guidance and support from the HR and the EB departments. It is also evident on their webpage that they have several external strategies, such as online marketing, while their internal efforts may currently be less structured.

Through the analysis of the different data, I have recognized several EB measures like competitive benefits, development opportunities, flexible working conditions, and focus on job security. The analysis focuses on tangible practices and policies captured in the interviews that are currently in place to gain insight into the strategies for recruiting and retaining people in the organization.

Matrix organization and leadership

Leadership emerged as the most frequently mentioned theme, with a total of 21 participants discussing it across all groups. Their perceptions of leadership effectiveness were mixed. While some employees appreciated the support, others expressed concerns about the availability of leadership. The sub-category “Base and personnel leaders” that emerged during the coding was discussed amongst 13 participants in focus groups. This base leader is the day-to-day leader, and the personnel leader is responsible for salary and training. The challenges mentioned around being matrix-organized were unclear roles, leadership support, and effectiveness of leadership. Employees describe different

experiences with leaders, from having leaders who were supportive and present to more distanced and inefficient leaders. For example, an employee explained:

“With a poor task leader or personnel manager, everything will feel unfair. So, it depends a bit on who you end up with, what you do, and whether you get the recognition you need for your work” (FG interview, S4).

Another employee shared

“The flexibility is important, but I think it depends on the leader ... if it is possible with home offices and such and as you work on different projects and have different leaders, then it can be quite individual” (FG interview, S12).

Another sub-category that emerged in the leadership category was “Leadership and employee ratio” which was mentioned 4 times, most frequently in the focus groups. Although it was not a problem for all employees, it seemed to be a challenge for some of the participants who said that their leaders oversaw too many employees and therefore couldn’t provide enough support.

When discussing leadership in project-based employment a frequently discussed topic was feedback and recognition. It became apparent that feedback and recognition were not coherent across the organization. This topic was discussed by 14 employees, amongst all 3 leaders, and in 1 Glassdoor review. This was exemplified in one focus group interview where one participant said:

“A big disadvantage (...) there’s no one who really takes responsibility for you as an employee. You can end up in a kind of vacuum situation (...) When you’re out of sight of your personnel manager, and you fall under a task leader who maybe doesn’t take the responsibility they should, there’s a higher risk of being sidelined” (FG interview S7).

The leaders also discussed the challenges of leading employees in large units and feeling sometimes a bit distant from their employees. One leader commented:

“In large units like ours, it can be challenging to build good relationships with employees because of time and capacity (...) It is challenging how much and how closely you manage to stay in contact with your employees” (Leadership interview, S23).

Another frequently discussed topic was fairness and justice with 9 individuals discussing it. One employee in an individual interview said:

“Fairness? Well, that’s a challenging question. We are very committed to it. (...) It’s complicated. With 4000 to 5000 employees, it’s tough to evaluate Bane NOR broadly because if you look at one aspect, it can be very positive in one place and not necessarily as positive elsewhere” (Individual interview, S5).

Table 4						
Matrix Organization and Leadership						
Category	Total	Focus Groups	Individual int.	Resignation	Leadership	Glassdoor
Matrix organization	20	10	5	2	3	
Leadership	21	11	5	2	3	
Sub-Categories						
Feedback and recognition*	18	9	3	2	3	1
Base-and personnel leaders*	13	8	2	2	1	
Fairness/Justice	9	4	2	1	2	
Leadership and employee ratio*	4	3	0	1	0	

Attraction and retention

Employees are attracted to Bane NOR for its stable work environment, opportunities for professional growth, and involvement in sustainable infrastructure. However, the company faces challenges in retaining talent due to competitive salaries in the private sector. The category included the factors employees considered important for attraction and retention in Bane NOR. For example, an employee in a focus group said, *“I find it very organized working hours and work time regulation. I perhaps experience a bit more cynicism with a private employer”* (FG interview S11). Moreover, another focus group participant said: *“Bane NOR’s trainee program has a quite good reputation in the market, which plays a role”* (FG interview S3).

Work-life balance and Flexibility

Bane NOR’s information online shows their different messages about their employer brand. For example, on their webpage in the section *“Why work for us?”* they highlight flexible working conditions as a key benefit. Flexible work conditions were also an important factor for many of the employees. Employees appreciate the possibility of adapting their work schedules and the location of work to their needs. Work-life-balance practices were mentioned by 17 participants across the different interviews and were discussed in 2 Glassdoor reviews. This demonstrates that flexibility is a central topic in Bane

NORs EB strategy. For example, employees appreciated the flexibility offered by the company, with one stating *“I continue to work here because I value the flexibility and feel secure in the company. I am heard and seen, and don’t work unnecessary overtime”* (FG Interview S12).

Operational Efficiency and Decision-making processes

Employees recognize the benefits of a state-owned enterprise, for example, the level of job security. On the other hand, several express frustrations with the bureaucratic processes and rigid systems. One employee said,

“I have the impression that it’s bureaucratic and there are many people who want to maintain control over issues they do not follow up on daily... that means there are many and lengthy reports then, and sometimes quite long decision-making paths” (FG interview S7).

Another employee said: *“I think we come across as somewhat cumbersome and inefficient in decision-making processes”* (Individual interviews, S15). The employees stated that this is partly because there are many people involved in the decision-making processes and approval of things. This was reflected by one participant stating: *“Everyone should have their say. And sometimes it can be a bit like, ‘Why? I mean, ‘is that necessary? (...) Yes, and things take unnecessarily long... We don’t always have so much time”* (Resignation interview, S21).

Another employee underscored this problem:

“In the phase we are in now with handover to owner and operator, it’s a real headache. Because new people keep coming in all the time with new opinions, and the people we had contact with during the project are now elsewhere. So, it complicates things a lot and contributes to a bit more of a poor climate of cooperation and more conflicts between different instances in Bane NOR” (individual interview, S18).

This is related to what another employee said:

“I find it a bit too bureaucratic at times, and I feel some processes can take a very long time. So, when you work on projects, you become very close to a project team, but as soon as you need support or functions outside of the project, it can be a bit tricky to navigate in such a large organization” (FG interview).

Also, employees recognize the challenges of synchronizing teamwork when working from different places, as one employee noted

“Things take a lot of time. When you’re on a rig with all your colleagues, decisions are made quickly ... When you’re in home office you’re very isolated and dependent on either scheduling meetings or that people are available on Teams or phone. It takes much longer to get things done” (Individual interview S18).

Motivational factors

Motivational factors such as interesting assignments, supportive colleagues, and flexible work arrangements were crucial for employee retention. An employee shared

“I have a strong focus on developing to become a project manager in the future. Bane NOR offers these opportunities rather conservatively throughout the year. They offer training and opportunities” (Individual interview, S18).

Table 5						
<i>Motivational factors</i>						
Category	Total	Focus Groups	Individual int.	Resignation	Leadership	Glassdoor
Attraction and retention	21	11	5	2	3	
Sub-Categories						
Work-Life Balance*	19	11	5	1		2
Efficiency and flexibility*	19	11	5	2	1	
State-Owned*	19	10	4	2	2	1
Decision-making processes*	9	4	3	1	1	
Motivational factors*	19	12	5	2		

Compensation and benefits

Bane NOR offers competitive benefits as part of its EB strategy. This includes attractive pension schemes, insurance, and flexible work working conditions which are highlighted on their “Why work for us” on their website. Through interviews with leaders, they mentioned that Bane NORs is not supposed to be leading in terms of salaries in marked. They should be competitive, but the focus should be more on the other benefits. Furthermore, the employees should have continued salary increases yearly which is discussed in a yearly conversation with their managers. One leader said

“Salary changes happen once a year (...). It is based on what an employee has done in the past year and it’s based on the frameworks negotiated” (Leadership interview, S23).

Compensation and benefits were mentioned by 18 of the participants, showing that this was one of the most discussed themes by employees and leaders. One sub-category that was discussed by some employees was the perceived fairness of compensation. It was in total mentioned by 6 participants where they expressed that there was a perceived lack of transparency in salary progression and that the salary system was seen as not very competitive when retaining talent. However, other benefits were viewed positively.

Table 6						
<i>Compensation and Benefits</i>						
Category	Total	Focus Groups	Individual int.	Resignation	Leadership	Glassdoor
Compensation and benefits	19	10	5	2	2	1
Sub-Categories						
Perceived fairness of compensation*	6	3	1	2		

Project-based employment

The goal of project-based employment is to increase flexibility in the distribution of resources; however, it creates challenges in stability and coordination. One employee mentioned:

“Bane NOR guarantees employment, but you must be willing to work on other projects... What's challenging is that some work 10% here, 20% there, 30% here, so you have a very split position... You have your job but in many places in the country. Generally, they try to accommodate where you are, but you may need to move, commute, or work remotely.” (Individual interview, S16).

Another person said, *“We work very project-based, so I do what the project needs, but I don’t get involved in much else” (FG interview S14).* Project-based employment was discussed by 14 employees, highlighting both the benefits and challenges of project-based employment.

Organizational unity and collaboration

One perception is that the two things contributing to organizational challenges concerning collaboration and unity are the physical division of teams and the challenges of matrix structure. The divisions have different priorities, and micro-conflicts can hinder effective collaboration. One worker

expressed worries about the priorities and feeling underprioritized. The employee expressed feeling that their group was not given enough credit for what they had accomplished. The worker stated:

"It feels very Eastern-heavy. I understand that's where the customer base is, but we had a project recently that has really broken many boundaries for what people thought was possible. Both in execution and quality and cost without it being particularly noticed by the leadership in Bane NOR, and many in the project have a somewhat bitter feeling about it." individual interview, S18).

The competitive environment across departments also has become visible in the culture. One employee said, *"We're supposed to stay within the budget, but we're also supposed to use the money that we have ... this can create some competition between the different disciplines"* (Individual interview, S19).

Table 7						
<i>Project-Based Employment and Collaboration</i>						
Category	Total	Focus Groups	Individual int.	Resignation	Leadership	Glassdoor
Project-based employment	14	4	5	3	2	
Sub-Categories						
Lack of Unity*	12	4	4	2	2	
Cross-functional collaboration*	16	9	4	1	2	

Leaders recognize these challenges across departments and say there is a need for better coordination. One leader said:

"Sometimes we hear things like: 'Oh, here comes the base with something again'... Instead of having respect for each other's tasks and that we're here to have successful projects... So, it has to do with culture... a matrix organization is said to be a demanding organizational model... This needs to be worked on. That's what I miss. And what I think has areas for improvement." (Leadership interview, S23).

Employees also expressed that the division within the organization makes it hard to make them feel like a coherent unit. One employee said

"And then this chapter with HR managers. There is a very long distance between me and them (...) I haven't had particularly close contact with any of them and they have little understanding of what I do in my and what my role in the projects really is" (Resignation interview S20).

In another interview, one said *“There are many leaders. I don't even know where to start ... The problem might be that there are too many leaders between the top and bottom. So yes, it's like a black hole”* (FG interview S14).

Organizational Changes and Innovation

Bane NOR focuses on innovation, but it is often met with some resistance from different parts of the organization. Some employees were positive about changes and innovation and others said that constant restructuring is tiresome. Across the interviews, 16 individuals talked about organizational changes, including all 3 leaders. Resistance does not only come from employees; employees mention that resistance from different parts of the organization slows down innovation and change processes. One employee said:

“Bane NOR is a large organization that has many different sub-organizations that need to collaborate to implement new technology ... It is often the case that you meet resistance across the organization if you try something new” (Resignation interview S20).

These challenges are also mentioned in Glassdoor-review and one reviewer wrote: *“The organization moves slowly, and it takes ages to implement things”* (Glassdoor review). One employee expressed dissatisfaction with the management concerning changes:

“A hot potato is the changes and reorganizations. Ever since I started here in 2018 there have been reorganizations all the time and it takes its toll. And now there is a new reorganization again with the new CEO” (Individual interview, S18).

A bureaucratic example that one employee shared created a lot of frustration and also cost the organization a lot of money,

“they've changed the track switch numbers on our facility twice during the project (...) and it has affected everything we do. We have tons of documentation, both from the contractor and the consultant that we have to hand over to operations afterward, and there has been a lot of chaos because of it. We're talking tens of millions in extra costs” (Individual interview, S18).

Table 8						
Organizational Changes and Innovation						
Category	Total	Focus Groups	Individual int.	Resignation	Leadership	Glassdoor
Organizational changes*	16	6	5	2	3	

Sub-Categories						
Innovation*	10	4	2	2	1	1

Communication

Communication issues were a recurrent theme, with 15 employees highlighting its impact on job satisfaction and project efficiency. Employees said they often struggled to understand the changes made in the organization and said it was a lack of or unclear communication. Employees reported feeling overwhelmed by the volume of communication, while at the same time saying that there is a lack of efficient and clear communication. One participant mentioned *“We have a lot of meetings which can be challenging in terms of not having enough time between the meetings ... the previous meeting can already be forgotten by the end of the day”* (FG interview S8).

Internal communication is further complicated by technical jargon and a lack of shared understanding. This problem was brought to light by one of the leaders: *“Sometimes during all-staff meetings, slides with three-letter abbreviations are presented, and then the question always comes up in the chat: ‘What does it mean?’”* (Leadership interview S24).

Table 9						
Communication						
Category	Total	Focus Groups	Individual int.	Resignation	Leadership	Glassdoor
Communication*	15	7	5	2	1	

Turnover and turnover intentions

Economic rewards have a central role in determining whether individuals choose to remain with or depart from an organization. In the interviews, 14 employees mentioned salary as a frequently mentioned reason for employees considering leaving the company. One focus group participant said: *“In my department, over the past six months people have left due to salary. They weren’t heard when asking for higher pay”* (FG interview, S13). Another employee described how better salaries led to the decision to leave: *“So I got an offer that was... Yes, much better in terms of salary and which Bane NOR cannot match”* (Resignation interview, S20).

Table 10						
Turnover and Turnover Intentions						
Category	Total	Focus Groups	Individual int.	Resignation	Leadership	Glassdoor
Turnover intentions (Economic Value) *	14	7	3	2	2	

The frustration with salary development was furthermore highlighted by a participant in a focus group: *“Those who have worked for a long time tend to shout the loudest. They don’t receive what they believe they deserve because newcomers are offered much higher salaries”* (FG interview, S5). This also is reflected by employees who work as consultants who mention that they must cut their salary if they go from consultant to permanent employee in Bane NOR. Others mentioned the strategy of leaving the organization for some time and reapplying for their old position some months or years later to be able to negotiate their salaries.

The satisfaction levels among employees regarding compensation and benefits varied. While only a few employees said they were satisfied with their compensation, most said that they felt their salaries were either low compared to other companies, or that the salary progression felt unfair. One employee shared, *“It’s hard to get a salary progression because my contributions aren’t always visible”* (Individual interview, S15).

Pride in employer brand and task significance

Many employees highlight their pride in working with national infrastructure and sustainable transport development. This was discussed by 13 employees, underscoring its importance. One employee noted how being part of a big project provided feelings of purpose and joy:

“What I find exciting by being in a project and a project with the size we’re working on now is that it is something happening all the time. And you’re contributing to building the country. I find that enjoyable, and it’s fun to be part of an organization that works relatively well together to make it happen” (Individual interview S19).

Some employees also said that they feel their work is important and contribute to organizational goals and success. One employee said their work is interesting and fun: *“I have always found my tasks interesting. And more than enough fun things to work with”* (Individual interview, S15). Leaders also talked about the complexity and significance of projects: *“Our projects are complex and have complex issues... you learn a lot from colleagues and solving issues. That’s our everyday”* (Leadership interview, S23).

Table 11

Pride in Employer Brand

Category	Total	Focus Groups	Individual int.	Resignation	Leadership	Glassdoor
Pride in Employer Brand*	13	8	4	1		

Development and career opportunities

Another central strategy in Bane NOR is its availability of training programs, education opportunities, and career development. For example, their program “Jernbaneskolen” (The railway school) describes Bane NORs own course center and training within the railway. This involves technical courses and training programs designed for employees in the areas of development, operation, and maintenance (Jernbaneskolen, n.d.). Another EB measure found on their webpage was a recently established network in Bane NOR called “Women in Tech” which will focus on developing women in technical roles through specific programs and networks (Jobb og karriere i Bane NOR, n.d.). This reflects their focus on inclusion in the workplace, which also highlights the importance of balancing work-life. This was also important for the employees interviewed. Several mentioned that they were attracted to Bane NOR because of the important focus on development possibilities, and one employee mentioned that the trainee program offered by Bane NOR is viewed as an attractive possibility.

The significance of development opportunities in Bane NOR's EB strategies was emphasized by employees, with a total of 13 employees underscoring its importance. Most employees discussing career and development opportunities are content with the possibilities provided by their employer. Through the interviews, it became evident that career and development opportunities greatly contribute to employee engagement and 9 employees discussed career opportunities. One employee described that the possibility of mobility has allowed them to grow in the company:

“I already saw this with mobility and the opportunity to seek new challenges. That has definitely been something that has been very good at Bane NOR. The opportunity to move to the role or project that I have wanted” (Resignation interview, S20).

A manager shared similar emotions and highlighted how education support has been an important factor for staying in the organization for many years:

“That is probably one of the reasons why I’ve been here for so many years. I have been fortunate enough to get the courses I’ve asked for” (Leadership interview, S23).

However, not all experiences were positive. Some employees expressed concerns about the uneven distribution of development opportunities, because of different budgets in departments. Also, one employee mentioned the lack of clear communication about opportunities stating:

“It would have helped to have a clearer picture of the opportunities available in the organization. I’ve had good opportunities to choose where I want to go but that’s because I’ve figured out these places myself. There has been a lack of a clear picture of where these opportunities exist” (Resignation interview, S20).

Table 12						
<i>Development and Career Opportunities</i>						
Category	Total	Focus Groups	Individual int.	Resignation	Leadership	Glassdoor
Training and Development*	13	7	2	1	3	
Career opportunities*	9	3	2	2	2	

Suggestions for improvement

At the end of the interviews, employees were asked to give suggestions for improvement along with some recommendations to make things better in Bane NOR. The most common suggestions for improving the EB at Bane NOR were to improve communication, increase pay transparency and provide clearer professional growth opportunities. One employee said: *“The project I am working on is coming to an end, so I would have appreciated more communication with the personnel or task leader about new opportunities”* (FG interview, S11). In total, there were over 24 feedback and suggestions, especially discussed in the focus group with 12 codes.

Discussion

This study aimed to understand the factors contributing to higher turnover intentions amongst project-based employees in Bane NOR. Additionally, it sought to identify which EB dimensions were critical in retention, or minimizing the risk of turnover intention in this group. This qualitative study used focus group interviews, individual interviews, resignation interviews, and leadership interviews with additional data from the employee reviews on Glassdoor. A thematic coding approach was used when analyzing the data, using pre-defined codes based on dimensions of the EmpAt Scale (Berthon et al., 2005) and other relevant pre-defined codes linked to the research questions (See appendix 7). During the coding process, new codes emerged to describe patterns in the qualitative data. In the following chapter, the discussion of the research will be presented. This part will discuss the previously presented analysis and connect the findings with the existing literature.

Research Question 1: What are the underlying reasons for the higher turnover intention among project-based employees at Bane NOR?

The data suggest that leadership, attraction and retention, and the matrix organizational structures are central themes influencing the perception of the employer brand and potentially affecting turnover intentions among project-based employees. Leadership recurred as an important topic and employees share both positive and negative experiences with the leadership. Additionally, compensation and benefits, especially pay progression and salary frameworks play a role in affecting turnover intentions.

Leadership and turnover intentions

Leadership emerged as a noteworthy theme in this study with the employees expressing different experiences. While some employees perceived their leaders as supportive, others mentioned challenges with inaccessibility and inconsistency in leadership support. As previously discussed, employees have at least two leaders: a base leader (task-oriented) and a personnel leader (focused on training and salary). This system, while intended to give good support, often resulted in role ambiguity and confusion. Employees reported ambiguity about which leader to approach for specific issues and that sometimes they felt a huge distance from the leader who was supposed to direct them in for example career advancement. This finding aligns with Živković et al. (2019) literature review who propose that matrix structures may promote stress and confusion due to unclear division of responsibility among various leaders and impact employees' decision to stay long-term (Živković et al., 2019). This study underscores these challenges where employees are reporting that they are feeling

conflicted between several leaders, and some feel unsupported in for example development or salary progression.

Compensation and salary progression as a factor in turnover

The results further demonstrate that a factor influencing turnover is discontent with salary progression. A considerable number of the interviewed employees expressed concerns regarding the fairness of the compensation framework and the advancement of salaries and compared this to the private sector. Berthon et al. (2005) state that economic value is important in EB, and more importantly, as emphasized in Rowland & Hall's (2013) study, appraisal often creates perceived injustice in terms of procedures and rewards. This finding highlights the importance of creating salary structures and feedback systems that not only give the employees what they think they deserve but also a system that is perceived as fair across the organization.

The problem appears to be intensified by Bane NOR being state-owned, resulting in more inflexible compensation structures and less ability for negotiation increases or bonuses. Leider et al. (2019) looked at challenges faced by the public sector when competing with private companies regarding compensation packages. This becomes apparent in this study where employees are frequently approached by companies who can offer higher salaries. Many of the interviewed employees have been approached by external headhunters offering jobs and salaries much higher than what they are receiving in the public sector.

Another relevant theory is the research on the psychological contract (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994). Employees may feel unmet by their salary expectations or expectations for a fair salary progression, resulting in dissatisfaction and potential intentions to leave the organization. However, the employees taking a job in the public sector understand that the salary might be lower. So, while they might accept a lower salary than they could receive in the private sector, it seems like the important factor is to be met by their personnel leaders and feel like they get a fair evaluation of their performance and not that salary progression will be dependent on which leader you get or how much resources the project has.

Work-life balance and flexibility as retention factors

Despite the concerns about compensation, many employees noted work-life balance and flexibility as major reasons to stay in Bane NOR. The organization's capacity to provide flexible working circumstances and maintain a healthy balance between professional life and family life were significant advantages. Bane NOR has successfully implemented flexible work policies in the aftermath of Covid-

19, which are well-received by the employees. Employees said they prefer having flexibility in their work schedules and the ability to work remotely sometimes over having higher salaries. This demonstrates that non-monetary benefits are important for retention, especially in industries where salary competition with the private sector may be difficult.

Research question 2: What are the expectations and preferences of project-based employees at Bane NOR regarding EB?

Expectations for development and career growth

The EmpAt Development Value, which encompasses opportunities for personal growth and having regular feedback and recognition is very important when evaluating leadership performance at Bane NOR. One of the important factors for the EB was having development opportunities. However, employees reported a lack of clear communication and clarity regarding career progression, with several expressing confusion about how to find these opportunities within the organization. The development value in the EmpAt scale (Berthon et al., 2005) emphasizes the relevance of personal and professional development when molding employees' impressions of an organization. Employees highlighted a desire for clearer communication around career and training possibilities. While Bane NOR has numerous possibilities for development, they are not always visible to the employees. This disparity between offering and communication shows that internal EB procedures should be improved (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Considering that Bane NORs promote development opportunities and were frequently discussed in the interviews if employees do not feel they are provided with promised opportunities, it might lead to a violation of the psychological contract. Research supports this notion, a breach of the psychological contract often leads to employees pursuing work elsewhere (Zhao et al., 2007).

Attraction factors: Job security and state-owned structure

Bane NOR, as a state-owned enterprise provides employees with job stability which was identified as an important aspect of EB. The public sector has historically been associated with stability, a crucial factor in attracting and retaining employees. But doing so comes at the expense of bureaucratic procedures, which staff members said frustrated them, particularly in decision-making. Wæraas (2008) study stresses that state-owned enterprises struggle with complex organizational identities, hindering their ability to establish themselves as attractive employers. Like other public sector organizations, Bane NOR must strike a balance between employment security and finding ways to make decision-making more efficient. This was emphasized in this study where employees talked about how

challenging it was to continuously wait for approval, and that approvals and information sometimes came from “unknown” places.

Research question 3: Compare the leader’s and employee’s perspectives on the importance of EB strategies

Fairness in EB and leadership practices

Another important theme in the broader discussion of leadership was the question of fairness and justice. Employees expressed concerns about the inconsistent application of procedures, particularly regarding recognition, career development, and salary progression. The research on economic value demonstrates the importance of fairness in compensation that enhances employee satisfaction and retention (Rowland & Hall, 2013). When employees realize that they are offered different opportunities depending upon which leader they have, it can lead to feelings of injustice. Fairness is also mentioned by Ambler & Barrow (1996) as an important part of EB. One of the study’s intentions was to compare the leader’s and employees’ perspectives on EB. Some leaders recognized the challenges of a matrix organizational model and the need for improvement and better coordination. However, the overall perception was that they efficiently supported their employees, but as discussed, the employees described a lack of recognition and advancement both linked to development value and economic value.

Leaders in matrix organizations often juggle many duties across various teams which can result in inconsistent support levels. Feedback from leaders and employees confirmed this reality, indicating that excessive demands on leadership are having a negative effect on the development value. This has been supported by research that indicates that leadership style significantly influences employee turnover intentions and actual turnover. For example, Maylor’s (2010) study showed that the presence of two superiors, and dual responsibility can create ambiguity and confusion (G. G. Reis & Braga, 2016; Živković et al., 2019). This can also be linked to the psychological contract. If employees feel disconnected from their leaders, they are less likely to see development prospects which can have an impact on their commitment to the organization and overall job satisfaction.

However, it is important to note the limited sample of leadership interviews (only three participated). This limits the generalizability of these findings and makes it difficult to draw any conclusions regarding leaders’ perspectives. This limitation underscores an important aspect of future studies, which should aim for a more thorough portrayal of leadership perspectives.

Bane NOR should reassess fairness in their yearly surveys and find ways to guarantee that policies are implemented consistently across all departments. This might include establishing more

transparent promotion processes and evaluation of employees. Additionally, Bane NOR could integrate fairness and justice training in leadership courses. From a practical standpoint, Bane NOR could benefit from examining its leader-to-employee ratios and making sure leaders have enough resources to interact with their teams. In conclusion, implementing a consistent and organized feedback procedure could strengthen the sense of acknowledgment that staff members want and thereby reinforce organizational commitment.

Research question 4: Identify critical factors for retaining project-based employees in Bane NOR

The outcomes of this study indicate that a number of benefits are well-received by employees; for instance, flexibility and a work-life balance were significant factors in these workers' retention. An appreciation for the company's training programs and opportunities was also apparent in the results. Nevertheless, there was a lack of information and communication about these development opportunities. Moreover, due to its state ownership, the personnel recognized that the decision-making processes can at times be quite bureaucratic and are perceived as slow and lacking clarity. Hence, the results signal that Bane NOR could improve development value by providing more defined career paths. Besides, Bane NOR could address and investigate typical challenges of matrix organizations like role uncertainty, dual leadership, and the distance between personnel leaders and the employees are important factors to investigate.

Another important factor in retention is resolving concerns about the fairness of compensation policies. The study identified that employee turnover intentions might be affected by employee's perception of compensation and benefits, especially pay progression and salary frameworks. For example, the discussion regarding the current pay systems and comparing them to competitors. Although Bane NOR does not have an EB strategy of being leading in terms of salary, they should make sure their compensation packages are transparent, and that wage advancement standards are perceived as fair. Finally, improving leadership techniques and decision-making procedures is critical in retention. Ensuring that leaders are available to give support will help employees feel more connected to the organization. Optimizing decision-making processes inside the matrix framework might address some of the stereotypes of the organization being bureaucratic and slow.

Practical Implications

This study gives an in-depth insight into how EB can affect turnover intentions amongst project-based employees in a large, state-owned organization like Bane NOR. By focusing on its unique challenges in such context, the study intends to give a theoretical and practical contribution when understanding EB in a project-based environment within public-owned organizations. Based on the results this chapter recommends some practical implications to improve the organization EB in this group. Through the improvement of leadership practices, salary development practices, and communication on career possibilities could Bane NOR have a chance to strengthen their position as an attractive employer and potentially reduce the risk for turnover.

Improved leadership support and clarification of roles

As it emerged in the study, a challenge linked to project-based employees is the presence of several leaders. With one personnel leader and one to several task leaders, it became apparent that there was some uncertainty and confusion concerning who was responsible for different tasks and decisions. Therefore, Bane NOR could benefit from informing employees better about leadership responsibilities and minimizing the distance between employees and personnel leaders. Bane NOR could establish a more cohesive leadership framework, clearly define guidelines for leaders' responsibility areas, and clarify their roles. Bane NOR could also benefit from strengthening the communication between leaders and employees with more regular contact, so employees know who to contact for support, especially when looking for career opportunities, development opportunities, and feedback.

Communication on career possibilities

It is important to address the expressed frustrations from employees on the lack of information on career paths and development opportunities. As previously discussed, poor communication, lack of information or a breach of the psychological contract can lead to turnover intentions. Therefore, Bane NOR should create well-defined career paths and strengthen communication regarding open roles, training programs, and growth opportunities. Although Bane NOR offers lots of opportunities, visibility and accessibility should be improved. This can be done via internal platforms or regular meetings.

Salary development and justice

It became apparent that there are problems linked to salary progression, transparency, and justice in the dimension of economic value. Firstly, the results on salary demonstrate a need to implement a

more transparent salary structure with clear criteria for justice. While discussing the findings of this study with Bane NOR's EB leader, she informed me of recent changes (spring 2024) that have been implemented to try to resolve the salary concern among trainees. Based on feedback from trainees, there has been a focus on establishing salary policies to ensure that all trainees would receive the same salary when they begin, and throughout the program. When completing the trainee program, the trainees will receive an individual evaluation for salary based on their next role. This shows that Bane NOR is committed to the development of fair salary systems. However, since this was frequently discussed amongst the study participants, Bane NOR should reassess the compensation strategies for project-based workers as well and openly communicate about pay progression in order to manage expectations and prevent turnover.

Efficiency, decision-making and bureaucracy

Decision-making processes in Bane NOR were described as time-demanding and bureaucratic. While being a state-owned organization there are laws and regulations Bane NOR must comply with which are impossible to fully remove. However, Bane NOR should address this and find solutions to how to provide more flexible decision-making processes within the different projects. This could include training project leaders in laws and regulations and decentralizing some decisions to project leaders. In this way, decisions can be made more efficiently and with less bureaucracy and time delays.

Work-life balance

While project-based employees expressed satisfaction with flexibility and work-life balance, it was mentioned that the flexibility could be dependent on which leader you had and the type of project. Bane NOR could improve consistency across the organization so all employees experience the same benefits regardless of the leader.

Limitations

This study has some limitations that should be taken into consideration when interpreting the results. The use of a qualitative approach through semi-structured interviews provides us with rich and detailed data. However, the results are based on the participant's subjective experiences and the researcher's interpretation of them, which can introduce biases. Anderson (2010) highlights this limitation and states that qualitative research is heavily dependent on the researcher's skills and can be influenced by the researcher's personal biases and idiosyncrasies. Also, there is a risk that the participants answered with what they believe is socially desirable or acceptable instead of what reflects their true feelings (Grimm, 2010). This phenomenon, known as social desirability, can affect the quality of the data.

Another limitation is the number of participants, especially leaders. Just a few leaders participated in this study which is a limitation to the research goal of comparing leaders' and employees' perspectives. Furthermore, since the study only included participants working on projects, it does not give data for comparing them to their non-project-based counterparts which could be an interesting perspective. Therefore, this hinders the possibility of drawing definitive conclusions about the main differences between these groups. Moreover, although the study provides insight into this group, it does provide some challenges in generalizing it to other project-based workers since their situation is unique. These factors limit the possibility of generalization of the results.

The study was also done over a limited time period which means it does not capture changes. Also, Bane NOR is currently undergoing a major shift with the integration of Spordrift and the employment of a new director. It became clear that these changes made employees curious about the future of the company and based on these changes new perceptions of EB practices might evolve. Potential organizational changes and external factors are hard to control but can imply the results.

Future research

The findings of this study have led to several recommendations for further research, which can be carried out either within Bane NOR or outside of the organization. Future research at Bane NOR could for example assess how EB is perceived across different departments in Bane NOR. For instance, comparing non-project-based with project-based workers to identify the differences between these two types of employment. This would give a more comprehensive picture of the potential need to tailor EB strategies for these two groups. It would also be interesting to compare employees from different age groups or hierarchy levels in light of the current HR challenges. Finally, longitudinal

studies can provide insights into how the EB is affecting employees over time. This can help explain how EB influences loyalty, motivation, and commitment over time, particularly during periods of organizational change.

Moreover, it could be interesting to do this research outside Bane NOR and try to generalize the results to other organizations, industries, or cultural contexts. For example, future research could compare private organizations with public-owned companies. This could contribute to a broader perspective of the unique challenges based on the different types of organizations. Considering the mentioned research regarding generational differences in expectations and values, it could be interesting to understand how these differences manifest themselves. Finally, based on the finding of the importance of leadership and their role in communicating and implementing EB, it would be interesting to explore leadership styles and connect it to EB and retention of employees.

Conclusion

This master thesis has investigated the influence of EB strategies within a project-based environment in a state-owned company in Norway. Through qualitative methods, the study has identified important areas for improvement of Bane NOR's EB strategies. With a focus on their perceptions of the EB, their emotional reactions, and behavioral responses the study has identified some central factors that affect their satisfaction, loyalty, and intentions to stay or leave the organization. The findings show that unclear leadership, lack of structural feedback and follow-up from leaders regarding career and development opportunities, experienced injustice in salary systems, inefficiency in decision-making, and the importance of work-life balance are important aspects of the EB in the retention and turnover of these employees.

The study contributes theoretically by expanding the understanding of EB in the context of project-based workers and public-owned organizations. It highlights the importance of adapting EB strategies to the organization's unique structures and culture. Practically it provides some concrete suggestions for Bane NOR on how to improve their internal EB.

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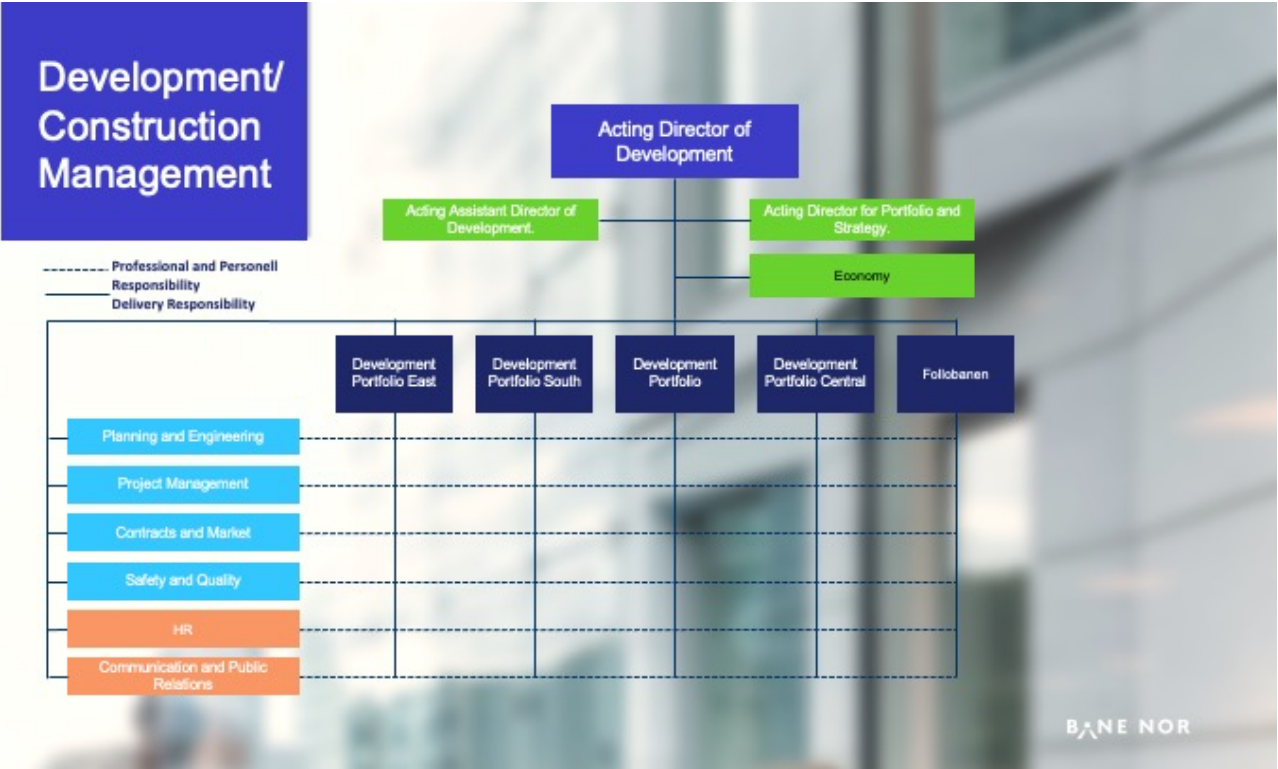
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Appendixes

Appendix 1 Overview of Development/Construction Management



Appendix 2

Invitation to participate in a study regarding employees' experiences in Bane NOR

Dear employee at Bane NOR,

I would like to invite you to participate in an exciting research project regarding employee experiences at Bane NOR. The research is part of my master's study in: «Human Resource Management and Organizational Consultancy» at ISCTE Business School in Lisboa».

Purpose: This research aims to gain deeper insights regarding employee experiences and how it is to work at Bane NOR. I want to understand your point of view, experiences, and opinions regarding Bane NORs initiatives for employers.

Responsible for the project: ISCTE Business School has the responsibility, with Patricia Costa (Email: Patricia.Costa@iscte-iul.pt) and Sandra Costa (E-mail: Sandra.Costa@iscte-iul.pt) as supervisors.

Participants: This letter will be sent out in a limited period to employees in Bane NOR. I am searching for participants for individual interviews and participants for group interviews. In total, I search between 12-24 employees in projects and 12-24 employees who are not employed in projects. In addition, I search 4-6 managers for individual interviews.

Your contribution: I want to interview you either individually or as part of a focus group. Each interview will have a duration between 60-90 minutes. You will have the possibility to share your experiences, viewpoints, and opinions. Everything you share will be confidential and anonymized before being used in the master thesis. No readers will be able to identify you through the text.

Voluntary participation: Participation is completely voluntary, and you can withdraw your consent anytime without naming any reason. It will not have any negative consequences for you or your employment at Bane NOR.

Time and location: interviews will be held in February on Teams. Please inform me if you want to participate, or if you have any questions. I appreciate your participation.

Best regards,

Linn Mari Misund

Questions regarding this: lmmdi@iscte-iul.pt

Appendix 3

Consent form for participation in research regarding employee experiences

Dear employee at Bane NOR,

Thank you for participating in my research project regarding employee experiences in Bane NOR. The research project is part of my master's study in: «Human Resource Management and Organizational Consultancy» at ISCTE Business School in Lisboa».

Background and purpose: The research aims to gain insights and understanding of how it is to be working at Bane NOR.

What does participation involve? The questions asked will be about your experiences as an employee at Bane NOR. Interviews will be recorded with sound only, and further transcribed. Some direct quotes will be used in the thesis, without identifying the source.

Handling your information: All personal information will be treated as confidential. Only my supervisors and I will have access to the interviews. This research will be concluded within September 2024, and all recordings will be deleted when delivered. All personal information will be anonymized. Participation is entirely voluntary, and you may withdraw your consent at any time without naming a reason. If you choose to withdraw, all information related to you will be deleted.

Questions regarding the study?

Please contact Linn Mari Misund by email: lmmdi@iscte-iul.pt, or by WhatsApp: +47 40105414.

Responsible for the project: ISCTE Business School has the responsibility, with Patricia Costa (Email: Patricia_Costa@iscte-iul.pt) and Sandra Costa (E-mail: Sandra.Costa@iscte-iul.pt) as supervisors.

Consent to participate in the study: I have received the information about the study, and I am willing to participate:

Name and Signature:

Date:

Appendix 4

Demographic information

Please fill out the following information and return it to me by email: lmmdi@iscte-iul.pt

Age: _____ years

Gender: ☐ Male

☐ Female

☐ Other (Please specify: _____)

☐ Prefer not to say

Department:

Role:

Tenure in the organization:

I work in a project t

eam: ☐ Yes ☐ No



RETTIGHETSAVTALE FOR BACHELOR- OG MASTEROPPGAVER

Avtale om partenes rettigheter og plikter, samt bruk og utnyttelse av oppgaven.

Utdanningsinstitusjon	Navn: ISCTE Business School
	Studieretning: Human Resource Management and Organizational Consulting
	Navn på veileder Patricia Costa Sandra Costa
	Kontaktinfo Tlf.: - E-post: Patricia_Costa@iscte-iul.pt Sandra.Costa@iscte-iul.pt
Studenten(e) Ved flere enn én student på studentgruppen skal like rader legges til i samme dokument.	Navn Linn Mari Misund
	Adresse R. de Macau 10, 1170-203 Lisboa
	Skattekommune
	Kontaktinfo Tlf.: + 47 40105414 E-post: lmmdi@iscte-iul.pt og linnmisund@gmail.com
	Person nr. 18119237064
	Konto nr. (For utbetaling av evt. kostnader) 12063398029
Bane NOR Ved flere enn én intern veileder for studentgruppen, legg inn navn på veileder 2 (evt. 3) under informasjonen om veileder 1	Navn på veileder(e) Rikke Marthinsen Tine Wenner Kontaktinformasjon Tlf.: +47 95913377 +47 92082441 E-post: marrik@banenor.no tine.wenner@banenor.no Koststed 13520
Saksnr. 202101591 Avtalen skal arkiveres i Saksrom umiddelbart etter signering.	
Oppgavetittel	
	Oppgavetittel/tematikk Exploring how Employer Branding Strategies impact turnover intentions: A qualitative study in Bane NOR
	Gjennomføring (semester og år) Våren 2024

Studenten

- 1.1. Studenten har eiendomsrett og opphavsrett til prosjektoppgaven når det gjelder besvarelsen med tegninger, modeller og apparatur så vel som programlisting, taper m.v. som inngår som del eller vedlegg til besvarelsen. Dette gjelder dersom ikke annet er spesielt avtalt.
- 1.2. Oppgaven skal leveres utdanningsinstitusjonen og Bane NOR i elektronisk format.
- 1.3. Ved behov sørger studenten selv for kopiering og innbinding av oppgaven.
- 1.4. Studenten forplikter seg til å holde presentasjon av oppgaven for Bane NORs medarbeidere, dersom Bane NOR ønsker dette.

2. Bane NOR

- 2.1. Bane NOR kan nyttiggjøre seg resultatene i besvarelsen i sin daglige virksomhet, men ikke utnytte resultatene økonomisk uten etter avtale med studenten. Studenten beholder alle sine rettigheter etter lov om opphavsrett, patentloven, mønsterloven og lignende.
- 2.2. Utdanningsinstitusjonen eller veileder kan ikke stilles ansvarlig for feil eller mangler ved løsningen av oppgaven. De kan heller ikke gjøres ansvarlig for at arbeidet med oppgaven eventuelt må avsluttes før fullføring.
- 2.3. Bane NOR v/veileders divisjon/enhet, dekker etter forhåndsgodkjenning i hvert enkelt tilfelle, kostnader til komponenter/materialer, befaringer og evt. reise- og oppholdsutgifter ved nødvendig reise for studenten mellom utdanningsinstitusjonen og oppdragsgiver. Dersom hele eller deler av oppgaven utføres ved bedriften, kan bedriften stille med tilfredsstillende arbeidsplass.

3. Utdanningsinstitusjonen

- 3.1. I forbindelse med oppgaven skal utdanningsinstitusjonen stille veileder til disposisjon for studenten.
- 3.2. Utdanningsinstitusjonen har rett til å bruke oppgaven i undervisnings- og forskningsformål, så fremt at dette er utdypet i individuell standardavtale for utførelse av oppgave i samarbeid med bedrift. Denne standardavtalen kommer fra utdanningsinstitusjonen.
- 3.3. Utdanningsinstitusjonen dekker utgiftene forbundet med rapportkopiering til sensureringsarbeidet, bruk av telefon og data i tilknytning til oppgaven.

4. Generelt

- 4.1. Om utdanningsinstitusjonen ønsker å benytte egen standardavtale vedr. oppgavesamarbeid kommer denne avtalen i tillegg til dette avtaledokumentet.
- 4.2. Eventuell uenighet mellom partene skal søkes løst gjennom forhandlinger. Dersom det ikke fører frem godtar partene _____ (lokalt avhengig) som vernetting. Avtalen undertegnes i tre -3- eksemplarer hvor samtlige tre -3- avtaleparter beholder hvert sitt eksemplar.

Sted/dato: _____

Linn Mai Misund

Studenten(e)

Utdanningsinstitusjonen

Bane NOR SF

Appendix 6.1 INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR FOCUS GROUPS AND INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

NORWEGIAN

THEMES	QUESTIONS	PURPOSE
Introduksjon	• Velkommen og takk for deltakelse • Jeg heter Linn og jeg skriver master i Human Resource Management ved ISCTE Business School i Lisboa • Målet er å forstå erfaringer som ansatt i Bane NOR. • Intervjuet er konfidensielt og vil bli anonymisert.	The purpose is to repeat what will happen to the participant's answers and prepare the informant for the topic of the interview
Om deltakerne	• Be om en kort introduksjon for hver deltaker: navn, rolle, og ansettelsestid • Oppfordring til å bruke mikrofonetikette og håndsopprekning for ordnet diskusjon	Ask the group to quickly introduce themselves by name, including their role in Bane NOR and how long they have worked here.
1 EB faktorer	• Faktorer for å søke jobb i Bane NOR • Sammenligning av forventninger med faktisk jobberfaring • Hva ansatte setter mest pris på med Bane NOR • Bane NORs særegenheter sammenlignet med lignende arbeidsgivere • Tanker om arbeidsmiljøet og muligheter til å jobbe med forskjellige prosjekter	Explore participants' perspectives on Bane NORs EB strategies without explicitly mentioning the term EB.
2 Oppfatninger om kulturen	• Beskrivelse av arbeidsmiljøet • Utfordrende aspekter ved kulturen	Explore participants' perceptions of Bane NOR company culture and values
3 Ansattes tilfredshet og stolthet	• Hva som verdsettes mest med å være ansatt i Bane NOR • Potensielle endringer av oppfatningen av organisasjonen over tid • Opplevelser av kommunikasjon om verdier og kultur	Understand participants' level of satisfaction and pride in being associated with Bane NOR
4 Intern EB	• Oppfatninger av kompensasjonssystemet • Lederstilens innflytelse på jobbtildfredshet • Eksempler på forhold mellom ansatte • Karriereutviklingsmuligheter og oppfatninger av rettferdighet og innovasjon	Understand the compensation system, trust, development, autonomy, mobilization, and career opportunities perceived by the two groups.
5 Prosjektbasert vs. Ikke prosjektbasert	• Prosjekt: Hvordan opplever dere å ha muligheten til å jobbe med forskjellige prosjekter?	
6 Intensjon om turnover	• Faktorer som bidrar til beslutningen om å bli i organisasjonen • Potensielle grunner til å vurdere å forlate Bane NOR • Reaksjoner på å bli kontaktet av en headhunter	Indirectly discuss turnover intentions to understand the group's motivation to stay or leave Bane NOR
7 Forslag for forbedringer	• Ønskede endringer eller forbedringer • Anbefalinger for å øke tilfredsheten • Forslag til initiativer for å fremme angstopplevelsen	Ask for suggestions and recommendations for improving employee experience.
Konklusjon	• Takk for deltagelse og innsikt • Invitasjon til videre tilbakemeldinger og påminnelse om konfidensialitet	End the interview and give the possibility to add on to what I did not ask.

Appendix 6.2. INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR FOCUS GROUPS AND INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW

TRANSLATED

THEMES	QUESTIONS	PURPOSE
Introduction	- Welcome and thank you for joining - Introduce myself and my role - Explain the purpose of the focus group: "I want to understand employees' experiences and perceptions of working in Bane NOR". Emphasize the value of their contribution. - Remind participants that the interview will be confidential and anonymized - Inform about the questions I am going to ask	The purpose is to repeat what will happen to the participant's answers and prepare the informant for the topic of the interview
About participants	Please introduce yourself with your name, tell me about your role in Bane NOR and how long you have worked here.	Ask the group to quickly introduce themselves by name, including their role in Bane NOR and how long they have worked here.
1 EB factors	- What were the factors that made you choose to work in this company? - How does the reality of working here align with those expectations? - Can you share some insights on the company culture? - What do you appreciate the most about working here? - How do you compare the company's reputation in the industry?	Explore participants' perspectives on Bane NORs EB strategies without explicitly mentioning the term EB.
2 Company perceptions and culture	- How would you describe the work environment? - Are there any aspects of the culture you find more challenging?	Explore participants' perceptions of Bane NOR company culture and values
3 Employee satisfaction and pride	- What makes Bane NOR different from other companies? - What would be one recommendation you would give Bane NOR to increase your overall satisfaction?	Understand participants' level of satisfaction and pride in being associated with Bane NOR
4 Internal EB	- How do you perceive the economic compensation system in the company? - How does the management style contribute to your overall job satisfaction? - Can you describe a real situation that represents the relationship between employees in the company? - In terms of career growth, are there specific areas within Bane NOR where you feel there could be more opportunities? - How do you evaluate fairness in this company? - How do you evaluate innovation in this company?	Understand the compensation system, trust, development, autonomy, mobilization, and career opportunities perceived by the two groups.
5 Project-based vs non-project-based employees	- Project: How do you find having the opportunity to work on different projects? - Explore differences between project-based and non-project-based employees' experiences.	Indirectly discuss turnover intentions to understand the group's motivation to stay or leave Bane NOR

6 Turnover intentions	• What contributes to your decision to stay in Bane NOR? • What would be the main reason for considering leaving? • What do you think your reaction would be if you were contacted by a headhunter?	Indirectly discuss turnover intentions to understand the group's motivation to stay or leave Bane NOR
Suggestions for improvements	• What changes or improvements would you like to see? • Are there any specific initiatives you think could enhance your employee experience? •	Ask for suggestions and recommendations for improving employee experience.
Conclusion	• Encourage them to reach out for additional thoughts and feedback • Remind participants of the confidentiality • Close the session and express appreciation for their time	End the interview and give the possibility to add on to what I did not ask.

Appendix 6.3 INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR LEADERS IN BANE NOR

NORWEGIAN

Introduksjon	Velkommen og takk for at du ønsker å delta i intervjuet mitt. Jeg heter Linn og jeg skriver masteroppgave i Human Resource Management ved ISCTE Business School i Lisboa. • Formålet med dette intervjuet er å få innsikt i lederes oppfatninger og handlinger knyttet til Employer Branding (EB) i Bane NOR, spesielt med tanke på å forebygge turnover intensjoner. • Jeg setter stor pris på din deltakelse, og dine svar vil være avgjørende for min forskning og for Bane NOR. • Jeg ønsker å forsikre deg om at intervjuet vil være konfidensielt og anonymisert. Informasjonen vil kun bli brukt til masteroppgaven, og dine svar vil ikke kunne spores tilbake til deg personlig.
Om lederen	• Kan du gi en kort introduksjon om din rolle i Bane NOR, • hvor lenge du har vært en del av organisasjonen, og din nåværende ledererfaring?
1 Ledelsesrolle og Employer Branding	• Hva er din forståelse av EB og hvordan ser du på EBs betydning i Bane NOR? • Hvordan ser du på din rolle når det gjelder å implementere EB strategier i organisasjonen? • Hvordan involverer ledere i utformingen og implementeringen av EB strategier? • Hvem i organisasjonen er ansvarlig for utforming og gjennomføring av EB-strategier, og hvordan samarbeider du med dem?
2 Lederes oppfatning av Employer Branding tiltak	• Hva tenker du om eksisterende EB-tiltakene i organisasjonen? • Har du selv foreslått eller implementert noen endringer i EB-tiltakene basert på tilbakemeldinger fra teamet ditt? • Hvilke utfordringer har du møtt ved implementering av EB-strategier i organisasjonen?
3 Forholdet mellom lederstil og ansattes tilfredshet	• Hvordan tror du din lederstil påvirker de ansatte? • Kan du dele noen strageier du bruker i din ledersstil for å skape et positivt arbeidsmiljø?
4 Forebygging av turnover intensjoner	• Hvilke tiltak har du for å identifisere og håndtere tegn på turnover? • Hvilke tiltak gjør du for å redusere turnover i din avdeling eller team?

	• Ser du en sammenheng mellom organisasjonens EB-strategier og turnover? I så fall, hvordan prøver du å påvirke dette? • Hvordan samarbeider du med HR for å adressere eventuelle bekymringer knyttet til trivsel og engasjement?
5 Fremtidige EB-initiativer	• Ser du noen områder hvor organisasjonen kan forbedre sine EB-strategier? • Hva tror du vil være viktige fokusområder for å styrke EB i fremtiden? • Har dere samtaler med ansatte som har sluttet?

Appendix 6.4 INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR LEADERS IN BANE NOR

TRANSLATED

Introduction	Welcome and thank you for agreeing to participate in my interview. My name is Linn, and I am writing my master's thesis in Human Resource Management at ISCTE Business School in Lisbon. • The purpose of this interview is to gain insight into leaders' perceptions and actions related to Employer Branding (EB) in Bane NOR, especially regarding preventing turnover intentions. I greatly appreciate your participation, and your responses will be crucial for my research and for Bane NOR. • I want to assure you that the interview will be confidential and anonymized. The information will only be used for the master's thesis, and your responses will not be traceable back to you personally
About the Leader	• Can you provide a brief introduction to your role in Bane NOR, how long you have been with the organization, and your current leadership experience?
1 Leadership Role and Employer Branding	• What is your understanding of EB and how do you view its significance in Bane NOR? • How do you see your role in implementing EB strategies in the organization? • How do leaders get involved in shaping and implementing EB strategies? • Who in the organization is responsible for designing and implementing EB strategies, and how do you collaborate with them
2 Leaders' Perceptions of Employer Branding Initiatives	• What are your thoughts on the existing EB initiatives in the organization? • Have you suggested or implemented any changes to the EB initiatives based on feedback from your team? • What challenges have you encountered in implementing EB strategies in the organization?
3 Relationship Between Leadership Style and Employee Satisfaction	• How do you think your leadership style affects the employees? • Can you share some strategies you use in your leadership style to create a positive work environment?
4 Preventing Turnover Intentions	• What measures do you take to identify and address turnover trends? • What measures do you take to reduce turnover in your department or team? • Do you see a correlation between the organization's EB strategies and turnover? If so, how do you try to influence this? • How do you collaborate with HR to address any concerns related to well-being and engagement?
5 Future EB Initiatives	• Do you see any areas where the organization can improve its EB strategies? • What do you think will be important focus areas to strengthen EB in the future?

Appendix 6.5 INTERVIEW GUIDE RESIGNATION

NORWEGIAN

	Spørsmål
Introduksjon	• Velkommen og takk for at du ønsker å delta i studien min • Jeg heter Linn og jeg skriver master i Human Resource Management ved ISCTE Business School i Lisboa • Målet med intervjuet i dag er å få en bedre forståelse for ansattes erfaringer i Bane NOR. Jeg ønsker også å forstå aspekter som bidro til din oppsigelse. Jeg ønsker å takke for deltagelsen! • Spør om opptak for samtalen. • Jeg ønsker å minne om at intervjuet vil være konfidensielt og anonymisert. Svarene deres vil bli brukt til masteroppgaven, men det vil ikke være mulig å spore svarene tilbake til dere personlig.
Om deltakerne	• Vennligst gi en rask introduksjon: Navn, stilling i Bane NOR, og hvor lenge har du jobbet her?
EB faktorer	• Hva var faktorer som fikk dere til å søke jobb i dette selskapet? • Hvordan samsvarer forventningene dine med hvordan det har vært å jobbe her? • Hvilke faktorer har du satt mest pris på med å jobbe her? • Har du noen tanker om hvordan Bane NOR skiller seg fra andre lignende arbeidsgivere? • Vil du dele litt om hva som ledet deg til beslutningen om å si opp stillingen din? • Hva har vært noen av de utfordrende aspektene ved å jobbe her? • (Hvordan opplever du organisasjonens omdømme blant kollegaer og i bransjen?) • Hvordan har du opplevd arbeidsmiljøet i Bane NOR?
Ansattes tilfredshet og stolthet	• Hva har du verdsatt mest med å være ansatt i Bane NOR? • Hvordan har din opplevelse av å være ansatt i organisasjonen endret seg over tid? • Hvordan har du opplevd kommunikasjonen om organisasjonens verdier og kultur?
Intern EB	• Hvordan oppfatter du det økonomiske kompensasjonssystemet i selskapet? • Har du følt deg oppmuntret til å utvikle deg i organisasjonen? • Når det gjelder karriere og utvikling, er det spesifikke områder i Bane NOR der dere føler det kunne vært flere muligheter? • Hvordan vurderer du rettferdighet i selskapet? • Hvordan vurderer du innovasjon i Bane NOR?
Støtte og ledelse	• Hvordan vil du beskrive dine ledere? • Kan du dele noen eksempel på situasjoner der ledelsen har påvirket din trivsel og motivasjon? • Hadde du et avsluttende intervju når du sluttet? • Hvis ja, hvordan var samtalen og hadde du kontakt med HR?
Prosjektbaserte vs. ikke-prosjektbaserte ansatte	• Hvordan har din deltakelse i prosjektarbeid påvirket din opplevelse av å være ansatt i organisasjonen?
Planer for fremtiden	• Hva så du etter når du søkte deg videre til en annen jobb? • Har du noen tanker om hva slags arbeidsmiljø du håper å finne? • Hva ville være en ideell situasjon for deg i ditt neste karrieresteg?
Anbefaling for forbedringer	• Hvilke endringer eller forbedringer vil dere gjerne se? • Hva ville vært en anbefaling dere ville gitt Bane NOR for å øke tilfredsheten? • Er det spesifikke initiativer du tror kan forbedre din ansattopplevelse?

Appendix 6.6 INTERVIEW GUIDE RESIGNATION

TRANSLATED

	Questions
Introduction	• Welcome and thank you for agreeing to participate in my study • My name is Linn, and I am doing a Master's degree in Human Resource Management at ISCTE Business School in Lisbon. • The aim of today's interview is to gain a better understanding of employees' experiences at Bane NOR. I also want to understand the factors that contributed to your resignation. • I would like to remind you that the interview will be confidential and anonymized. Your answers will be used for my master's thesis, but they will not be traceable back to you personally.
About the Participants	• Please provide a brief introduction: Name, position at Bane NOR, and how long you have been working here.
Employer Branding Factors	• What were the factors that attracted you to apply for a job in this company? • How do your expectations align with your experience of working here? • What factors have you valued the most about working here? • Do you have any thoughts on how Bane NOR differs from other similar employers? • Would you like to share what led you to the decision to resign from your position? • What have been some of the challenging aspects of working here? • How have you experienced the organization's reputation among colleagues and in the industry? • How have you perceived the work environment at Bane NOR?
Employee Satisfaction and Pride	• What have you valued the most about being employed at Bane NOR? • How has your experience of being an employee in the organization changed over time? • How have you experienced communication about the organization's values and culture?
Internal Employer Branding (EB)	• How do you perceive the company's economic compensation system? • Have you felt encouraged to develop yourself within the organization? • Are there specific areas in Bane NOR where you feel there could be more opportunities for career growth and development? • How do you assess fairness within the company? • How do you evaluate innovation at Bane NOR?
Support and Leadership	• How would you describe your leaders? • Can you provide examples of your relationship with your leaders? • Did you have an exit interview when you quit? • If so, how was these conversations? • Have you had contact with HR?
Project-Based vs. Non-Project-Based Employees	• How has your participation in project work influenced your experience of being employed in the organization?
Future Plans	• What were you looking for when you applied for another job? – • Do you have any thoughts on what kind of work environment you hope to find?
Recommendations for Improvements	• What changes or improvements would you like to see? • What recommendations would you give Bane NOR? • Are there any specific initiatives you think could enhance your employee experience?

Appendix 7 Category Dictionary

Category	Sub-Category	Definition	Example
Economic Value	Job Security*	Assurance of ongoing employment and stability within the organization.	<i>"Bane NOR guarantees employment, but you must be willing to work on other projects (...) Many who are phased out of projects will enter a very split position. You have your job, but in many places in the country" (Individual interview, S16)</i>
	Pay progression and salary structure*	The way salaries are organized and classified within the company and the gradual reward development over time, determined by factors such as efficiency, or other relevant factors.	<i>"Salary changes happens once a year (...) It is based on what an employee has done in the past year and it's based on the frameworks negotiated" (Leadership interview, S23)</i> <i>"You have the opportunity to have a salary conversation every year and present your argument for how much you should be compensated within the framework provided in the wage settlements (...) there will be individual differences based on the arguments you put forward" (Resignation interview, S20)</i>
	Compensation and Benefits*	All forms of compensation, both financial and non-financial, offered by the company. Benefits such as health insurance, retirement programs, bonuses, and family leave policies	<i>"State pensions provides lifelong payments. Pension in a regular company provides payment for the first 12 years. There is a big difference" (Individual interview, S17).</i> <i>"you know that salary is kind of a thing that comes up at this time of year. And that, I know, creates a lot of discussions in the hallways. You say equal pay for equal work, but it's not always like that, right, and there are big differences in Bane NOR" (Individual interview, S16)</i>
Development Value		Includes answers to questions about learning culture, training, and development. opportunities, career growth and autonomy	
	Learning Culture*	Organizational emphasis on continuous learning and professional growth. The availability and arrangement of training courses and workshops	<i>"It is a culture where you have to seek out the knowledge you want to acquire. I don't feel that things are necessarily handed to you. You have to take the initiative and ask" (Focus group interview, S7)</i>

Social Value	Training and Development*	Opportunities for employees to gain additional qualifications and enhance their skills.	<i>"I see many of my colleagues get to school. They take courses and such, so it is a very good arrangement in Bane NOR. That you can develop and apply for new roles and such" – (Focus group, S16)</i>
	Opportunities and Career Growth*	Opportunities for professional advancement and development within the company.	<i>"It would have helped to have a clearer picture of the opportunities available within the organization. I've mentioned that I've had good opportunities to choose where I want to go, but that's because I've figured out this myself. There has been a lack of clear picture of where these opportunities exist" (Resignation period – S20)</i>
	Autonomy*	Degree of independence employees have in their work tasks	<i>"You get a lot of responsibility and the freedom to manage your own time" (Focus group, S6). "I feel that I have the freedom to control what I work with myself" (FG interview S2)</i>
	Employee Support System*	Availability of support, including mentoring and resources	<i>"I had a personnel leader who was also responsible for the project, and he just didn't have the chance to follow up on any HR policies. Then I moved project. There, our group isn't very large, maybe about 20 people. There was really fantastic follow-up" (Focus group, S5)</i>
	Work-life Balance*	Balance between work responsibilities and personal life	<i>"It is quite easy to plan several years ahead. You have the opportunity to take family leave. I had a child, then I got 2 weeks of paid family leave" (Resignation period, S20) "It definitely provides greater flexibility when you're a permanent employee. You can demand a bit more regarding workplace and working hours" (Individual interview, S18)</i>
Interest Value	Attraction and Retention*	Factors that employee consider important for the attraction and retention in this sector in Bane NOR	<i>"I got an offer that gave me a boost in terms of salary. And of course there are a lot better benefits, pension plans, insurances, leave arrangements. Those kinds of things that made it better for me to be permanent at that time" (Resignation period, S20) "I find it very organized in terms of working hours and work time regulation. I perhaps experience a bit more cynicism with a private employer" (FG interview, S11) "Bane NOR's trainee program has quite good reputation in the market, which plays a role" (Focus group, S3)</i>

	State-owned Factors*	Unique characteristics of the organization due to its state-owned status, such as bureaucratic processes. Employees mentioning the various aspects of working in a state-owned company	<i>"It can be bureaucratic, but I don't always experience it as controlling-bureaucratic, but just as much about making sure everyone agrees, because we are not quite sure who is responsible"</i> (Pilot interview, S15) <i>"I find it a bit too bureaucratic sometimes, and I feel some processes can take a very long time. Say when you work on projects you become very close to a project team, but as soon as you need support or function outside of a project, it can be a bit tricky to navigate in such a large organization"</i> (FC interview, S11) <i>"It's very organized but that's both good and bad because the downside of it is that it's very bureaucratic. There are many steps up if you need to make certain decisions, so it's difficult to reach decision-makers"</i> (Individual interview S18)
	Innovation*	Employees answers regarding innovation processes in the company	<i>"No room of innovation or new thinking. Very rigid systems"</i> (Glassdoor review) <i>"Where I worked before Bane NOR started to downsize on innovation and technology. And that was one of the major factors that actually made me decide to move on. I also know that we invest a lot of time in innovation and technology"</i> (FG interview, S8) <i>"Well, it's a bit of a double-edged sword. There's a lot of freedom. Opportunities to suggest a lot, to start things and take the initiative. But implementing things in the company can sometimes be a bit heavy, so it's kind of double-edged"</i> (Pilot interview, S15)
Economic Value	Non-monetary benefits*	Benefits provided by the organization that are not monetary	<i>"It's that package, excluding the salary, that you have summertime and flextime and a high degree of freedom with hybrid solutions for home office, and you can work from several different places. I really appreciate that"</i> (FG interview, S5)
	Dissatisfaction with benefits*	Employees dissatisfaction with the provided benefits. Complaints about the rigidity of the compensation package or lack of career growth opportunities	<i>"The transition from consultant to permanent employee is hardly noticeable, except for the salary decrease"</i> (Individual interview, S18)

	Perceived fairness of compensation*	Employees perceptions of fairness of the distribution of salaries and benefits. Concerns about pay equity and fairness in salary progression.	<i>"What's unfair is that you have an unfair competition with those who start in a new position in Bane NOR. If I go back to a position in Bane NOR in... let's say 5 years, for example, then I would expect a salary jump that is different from if I had stayed in Bane NOR during these five years"</i> (Resignation interview, S20) <i>"I deal with two leaders. On one side my day-to-day leader which is the project manager. Then there's the one I negotiate my salary with, which I see maybe once or twice a year at most. When you already have a challenging salary development policy, I find it a bit difficult to demonstrate that I deserve a certain salary progression based on my contributions because my personnel leader isn't seeing my deliveries"</i> (FG interview, S3)
	Job Security and uncertainty*	The level of confidence of the stability of their employment.	<i>"Bane NOR has a mobility agreement. So if you're sent a project or another stationing, you get compensation for that with a mobility agreement. Over the 3 years that I've been with Bane NOR, the employer has tried to facilitate. They don't send us to Northern Norway when we are East. But there can be some travel time per hour here and there"</i> (FG interview, S13)
	Talent mobility*	The perceived opportunities for move within the organization to different roles or projects. Including the perceptions on the quality and accessibility of training and development opportunities. For example, the perception of job postings and career development programs.	<i>"I feel that there are definitely opportunities. I'm not familiar with all the systems and such. But there are always a lot of positions available, and they are advertised internally"</i> (Pilot interview S15) <i>"There are many opportunities for development here. It mostly depends on the will and ability if you want, and you manage to do a good job, then there are many opportunities"</i> (FG interview, S14)
Development Value			
Social Value	Role conflict and role clarity*	Conflict arising from unclear roles and responsibilities	
	Feedback and Recognition*	The process and frequency of providing feedback and	<i>"In large units like ours it can be challenging to build good relationships with employees because of time and capacity"</i>

		recognizing employees' contributions	(...) <i>It is challenging how much and how closely you manage to stay in contact with your employees</i>" (Leadership interview, S23) <i>"We had a project recently that really broke many boundaries of what people thought was possible, both in execution and quality and cost. Without it being particularly noticed by the leadership in Bane NOR and many in the project have a somewhat bitter feeling about it. That we worked very hard over a long time and feel a lack in recognition"</i>. (individual interview, S18)
Interest Value	Innovation*	The organizations approach to implementing new ideas and technologies	<i>"No room for innovation or new thinking. Very rigid systems"</i> (Glassdoor review) <i>"There it's often the case that you meet resistance across the organization if you try something new. It's often the case that we, in development get suggestions from contractors and consultants, which could save time and money for Bane NOR. But which we have to avoid because other parts of the organization are not prepared to accept those changes. So it's definitely a challenge"</i>. (Resignation interview S20)
Project-based employment*		The participants' perception of how it is to work project-based, including decision-making processes, lack of unity, cross-functional collaboration, and uncertainty	<i>"Projects come and go. But they should always have the assurance that there are new tasks when they finish one."</i> (Leadership interview, S22) <i>"The benefits of working from one project to another are building the network. We can use learnings from previous projects, and then we can use them in the next project. So gaining experience and building a network"</i>. (FG interview, S12)
	Decision Making Processes*	The approach to making decisions within project-based employment and the feeling of involvement.	<i>"I have to say that there's one more thing that I think is perhaps a little important to mention. It's that I feel there's decision-making reluctance in Bane NOR"</i> (individual interview, S19) <i>"Everyone should have their say. And sometimes it can be a bit like, "why?" I mean, "is that necessary?" Or yes, and things take unnecessarily long... We don't always have so much time"</i> (Resignation interview, S21)

		<i>"My impression is that there are many people who want to maintain control over issues they do not follow up on daily (...) And that means there are many and lengthy reports then, and sometimes quite long decision-making paths" (FG interview, S7)</i>
Communication*	Communication within the project-based environment	<i>"Communication and initiatives often come from odd places, not always where you expect" (Individual interview, S15)</i>
Lack of Unity*	The degree to which employees feel disconnected or uncoordinated within the organization	<i>"And then this chapter with HR managers. There is a very long distance between me and them (...) I haven't had particularly close contact with any of them and they have little understanding of what I do in my and what my role in the projects really is" (Resignation interview, S20)</i> <i>"There are many leaders. I don't even know where to start (...) The problem might be that there are too many leaders between the top and bottom. So yes, it's like a black hole" (FG interview, S14)</i>
Cross-functional Collaboration*	The level of collaboration across different functions and departments	<i>"We're supposed to stay within the budget, but we're also supposed to use the money that we have (...) this can create some competition between the different disciplines" (Individual interview, S19)</i> <i>"The advantages are that you get expertise that is available to all projects. You have many different fields from which you can draw expertise. So that's very, very positive. And usually, in a matrix-organized company, there is knowledge sharing and learning transfer. And then you can also see that there can be efficient utilization of resources" (FG interview, S8)</i> <i>"In the phase we are in now with handover to owner and operator, it's a real headache. Because new people keep coming in all the time with new opinions, and the people we had contact with during the project are now elsewhere. So it complicates things a lot and contributes to a bit more of a poor climate of cooperation and more conflicts between different instances in Bane NOR" (individual interview, S18)</i>
Leadership*	The effectiveness and clarity of leadership within the	<i>"I've had several project leaders at Bane NOR, and I think that with almost all of them, I've had close contact and</i>

		matrix organization and their effectiveness in providing direction and support to their teams.	<i>good follow-up. Decent people who want and are able to give me the training and tools I need to do my job"</i> (Resignation interview, S20) <i>"The flexibility is important, but I think it depends on the leader. Some leaders aren't so flexible. So if we for example as if it is possible with home offices and such and as you sit on different projects and have different leaders, then it will be quite individual"</i> (FG interview, S12)
	Base and Personnel Leaders*	The relationship between base and personnel leaders and their impact on employees. Employees having to report to multiple leaders with different priorities.	<i>"I think it depends on how you relate to the people who see what you do. Because with a poor task leader or personnel manager, everything will feel unfair. So, it is a bit dependent on who you end up with, what you do, and whether you get the recognition you need for your work"</i> (FG interview, S4) <i>"I have actually had a very good relationship with my personnel managers. I have had a couple them (...) But I probably wish I only had one boss to deal with. And not two"</i> (Resignation interview, S21)
	Leadership and Employee Ratio*	The ratio of leaders to employees and its impact on management effectiveness	<i>"I don't get the follow-up I would have liked (...) there's a middleman between you and your personnel leader, which can be perceived as difficult and demanding. Not because it's a bad system, but because, as mentioned, because there are so many others to manage (...) So then we ask, is it right that one person should have responsibility for, or have personnel responsibility for 40 people? Or 30 for that matter"</i> (FG interview S3) <i>"I think my leader's leader is very good, and her leader is probably good, but I have no idea what they're doing"</i> (FG interview S14)
Organizational changes*		Changes in the organizational structure. Restructuring initiatives and their effects on employee's morale and job security	<i>"A hot topic is all the changes and reorganizations. Ever since I started here in 2018, there have been reorganizations all the time. And it takes its toll. And now there's a new reorganization again with the new CEO"</i> (Individual interview, S18)
Development Value	Sense of Fulfillment from Career Opportunities*	Employees' feelings of satisfaction and achievement from career development opportunities	<i>"I already saw this with mobility and the opportunity to seek new challenges. That has definitely been something that has been very good at Bane NOR. The opportunity to move to</i>

			<i>the role or project that I have wanted” (Resignation interview S20)</i>
Social Value	Pride in employer brand*	Employees pride and sense of belonging to the organization	<i>“That is probably one of the reasons why I’ve been here for so many years. I have been fortunate enough to get the courses I’ve asked for” (Leadership interview, S23)</i>
	Trust in Management*	The level of trust employees has in their managers and leaders	<i>“What I find exciting by being in a project and a project with the size we're working on now is that it is something happening all the time. And you're contributing to building the country. I find that enjoyable, and it's fun to be part of an organization that works relatively well together to make it happen” (individual interview, S19)</i> <i>Yes, it has been a bit turbulent, one could say (...) I think I'm on my third task leader now since I started. So it has been a bit challenging. Still, I have been lucky because the assistant leader has been here. So I've just used him beyond the regular job description. So the thing with task leader is that it works fine in principle, but maybe it's a bit too distant to the base leader. I don't feel like I have much to do with that person, actually”. (FG interview, S7)</i> <i>“When they are not loyal to the decisions made themselves. And that means that when you work with these professions here, you're in doubt about whether you'll get support in the organization or not. If I push hard now. Will I get support? Or will I get fired? I'm just kidding, because you won't. But sometimes you hesitate because you're unsure if you'll get the support you need to pursue a case within that profession, they say is the most important”. (Individual interview, S19)</i>
	Mutual trust*	The degree of trust between employees and their colleagues.	<i>“In Bane NOR, it has to be approved all the way up the system. So you're kind of have the feeling that they don't completely trust their people and that. I think the workplace surveys have improved, but they still bear some traces of it” (individual interview, S19)</i>
Application Value	Task Significance*	The importance and impact of employees' tasks within the organization.	<i>“I have always found my tasks interesting. And more than enough fun things to work with” (Individual interview, S15)</i> <i>“Our projects are complex projects and have complex issues. And you work with many people. And that's what you do in</i>

			<i>large projects compared to small projects. So you learn a lot from colleagues and solving issues. That's our everyday"</i> (Leadership interview, S23)
Interest Value	Excitement and Innovation*	The extent to which the work environment is exciting and innovative	
	Motivational factors	Factors that drive employees to perform and stay committed to their work.	
Organizational Changes*		Changes in organizational structure or leadership	
	Resistance to Change*	Reluctance to adapt to new methods or practices	
Economic Value	Turnover and turnover intentions*	Economic factors influencing employees' decisions to stay or leave. Higher salary offers from other companies leading to turnover	<i>"In my department over the past six months people have left due to salary. They weren't heard when asking for higher pay"</i> (FG interview, S13) <i>"The main reasons are either family-related or a desire for higher pay. And when people have tried over time without being heard, they leave. But I notice many come back again (...) So, it's quite common for people to return after a break of 3 to 12 months. It almost seems like they either just step out to wait to apply for their old job when it's advertised again"</i> (FG interview, S14) <i>"Those who have worked for a long time tend to shout the loudest. They don't receive what they believe they deserve, because newcomers are offered much higher salaries. If they had gone elsewhere, they would have received more. So, it's a poor policy not to look after those who are already there, leading to high turnover, which I believe is primarily due to salary, not because people are unhappy or lack benefits. (FG interview, S5)</i>
	External Offers*	Job offers from other companies that might influence	<i>"So, I got an offer that was... Yes, much better in terms of salary and which Bane NOR cannot match"</i> (Resignation interview, S20) <i>"Just recently someone left the project I'm on. The decision was driven by salary — the contractor was offering a much</i>

			<i>better package, so it's understandable why he made the move” (Individual interview, S16)</i> <i>“I have a resource meeting every Monday to go through what resources we have, what orders for resources we've received from projects, and the last one: "Has anyone resigned?" That's the question. Especially toward the end of the month. Because it's usually like that... And the fact that people consider quitting or have received other offers. It's almost every Monday” (Leadership interview, S22)</i>
Social Value	Team Dynamics*	The interaction and relationship dynamics within teams	<i>“That's a bit of the challenge. Since we are matrix organized I don't see my colleagues every day. I see them on Teams and such (...) And so me and my colleagues who are also line managers for three different groups, we can't be there every day” (Leadership interview, S22)</i>
	Collaboration*	The extent and effectiveness of working together across different teams and departments	<i>“Advantages are that you get expertise that is available to all projects. You have many different fields from which you can draw expertise. So that's very positive. And usually, in a matrix-organized company, there is knowledge sharing and learning transfer. And then you can also see that there can be efficient utilization of resources” (FG interview, S8)</i>
	Negative Experiences*	Adverse experiences affecting employees' job satisfaction and performance	
Interest value*	Motivation*	Factors driving employees to perform and stay committed to their work	<i>“I quickly got used to the system at Bane NOR. Everything is organized and follows labor laws, so it's very attractive to be here. I'm unsure about what I'll do in the fall. Probably, I'll continue at Bane NOR if there are projects I want to work on” (Individual interview, S18)</i> <i>“I aimed for a state pension. I have to be honest, that was my motivation” (individual interview, S17)</i>
	Seeking Opportunities*	Employees' efforts to find new challenges and advance their careers	<i>“It's all the challenges I get, since I am quite new here. I seize all the opportunities I can and am constantly challenged which satisfies my need for development. My colleagues have also been very supportive, and no matter whom I ask for help, I get it” (Individual interview, S16)</i> <i>“So for me, I want to gain some experience in my first job. Develop myself up within the field and the environment. So I</i>

Employee Experience	Feedback and Suggestions*	Insights and recommendations provided by participants to enhance organizational practices	<i>need to have a project under my belt at Bane NOR before I start looking at anything else” (FG interview, S7)</i> <i>“Everyone should receive the salary they actually work for and are qualified for. There should be more internal equality. It shouldn't be that someone fresh from a master's degree comes in and gets a comparable salary to someone who also has a master's but maybe has 30 years of work experience. If we're talking about fairness, the primary issue lies in salary” (FG interview, S5)</i> <i>“The project I am in is coming to an end, so I would have appreciated more communication with the personnel- or task leader about new opportunities. I think that could have been valuable” (FG interview, S11)</i>
	Strains*	The challenges and difficulties encountered in their daily work	<i>“What’s challenging with the matrix is that people have been employed in a project for several years, having a calm and quiet time. But when it's matrix, you are rented out to everyone who needs you. Then the workload can start to become very intense. Especially for those in specialized fields” (FG interview, S9)</i>
	Work Environment*	The general environment and working conditions for employees	<i>“The work environment is open and inclusive. An example is that we have the office in Sveigårdsgate (...) There is lunch from about 10:30 to 12 or something like that and people are very good at gathering together. Some people who go to lunch together” (FG interview, S6)</i>
