

Dedicated leadership with multiple expectations.

How Asian Migrant Congregation Leaders Perceive their Role

Merete Hallen

VID Specialized University

Oslo

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Abstract

There is in general little knowledge about migrant congregation leaders in the Norwegian society, including as the field of research. This study seeks to fill a small part of this gap by looking at migrant pastors and how they understand their leadership. My overarching research question is “What perception do leaders of migrant congregations have of their own role as a leader?”. I also have three related sub questions which are: “How do they understand their leadership roles?”, “What do they regard as the greatest challenges?”, and “What strategies do they apply to solve them?”.

To answer these questions, I have chosen a qualitative methodological approach with a hermeneutical theory of science approach. I used open in-depth interviews of six Asian migrant congregation leaders to collect the empirical data. I chose an abductive approach for the analyses, going back and forth between my empirical data, Askeland’s model of leader roles (2015), and theoretical perspectives of intercultural leadership.

Topics that emerged from the data is presented as topical stories presenting the informants, and thematical presentations of four main findings under these titles: (1) Leaders with responsibility and authority, (2) Communication, community, and change, (3) Integration, and finally (4) Transnationality as leadership context. I found that the Asian migrant congregation leaders are inner motivated and dedicated leaders with multiple expectations. They cooperate with congregation members and are involved in various tasks, both spiritually and managerially, and they face challenges which they find strategies on how to solve. The responsibilities they have are very comprehensive.

I analyzed their leadership looking at the importance of communication and the challenges of language and cultural differences. I looked at different aspects of integration, and how the pastors regarded it as part of their role to lead integration processes. Finally, I looked at all the different aspects of their leadership which can be described as holistic including both spiritual, relational and managerial leader roles. The relational responsibilities are emphasized, while the spiritual aspect is regarded as the most important. Also, their leadership must be adapted to migrant congregations which are organizations in constant

change. Holding all these aspects together, the Asian migrant congregation leaders can best be described as overall responsible leaders.

Leader roles, intercultural leadership, intercultural creation, migrant congregations, Asian migrant congregations, communication, integration

Leder roller, interkulturell ledelse, interkulturell nyskaping, migrant menigheter, asiatiske migrantmenigheter, kommunikasjon, integrering

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1 Introduction

Migration has made the world become more and more intercultural and transnational. A manifestation of this is the emergence of migrant congregations. Also, in Norway the number of migrant congregations has increased the last decades. These congregations all have leaders, but there is little knowledge about migrant congregation leaders in the Norwegian society generally, including the field of research. I therefore want to devote my master thesis to learn more about these pastors and how they understand their role as a leader.

1.1 Context and motivation

Through my work in the Norwegian faith-based organisation KIA, Christian Intercultural Work, I learned about, and met some leaders of migrant congregations who all had interesting and touching stories to tell. This is a group of leaders I did not know much about on beforehand, but I learnt that they are leaders with a deep dedication to their work, and that have visions and heart for their congregations and members. I have previously experienced working with Asian leadership of congregations through my time as missionary in Thailand, so I have a special interest in the Asian migrant congregation leaders. Working as a leader in an intercultural setting myself, I am familiar with some of the complexity cultural differences may include.

There is quite limited knowledge about Christian migrants, Christian migrant congregations and their leaders in our society. This is also illustrated by few media coverings of Christian migrant congregations (Sødal, 2016). Also in research, more attention has been given to other religious groups. The attention migrant communities and leaders get in the public sphere is often connected to a concern for developing parallel societies, something that would have a negative effect on integration (Brottveit, 2020). On the other hand, there has been a focus on migrant communities and their leaders as important resources for spreading information during the corona pandemic (Johnsen, 2021; Northug, 2021). It seems that

migrant leadership is a field of research that need further attention in order for us to get more knowledge about this specific group.

About 3% of the world's population can be defined as migrants, and nearly half of them are Christians. According to Pew Research Forum's comprehensive mapping report called Faith on the Move: The Religious Affiliation of International Migrants (2012), about 49% of the world's migrants are Christians. In Norway there are now almost one million immigrants¹, which makes 18,5% of the total population (SSB, 2021). The number has been increasing the last 50 years starting from only around 59 000 persons in 1970 and is expected to keep on growing (Brunborg, 2013).

The number of migrant congregations in Norway has also increased, though it is difficult to say how many they are in total. A major mapping of Christian migrant congregations in the Oslo area was conducted in 2010, followed by a national mapping². The mapping resulted in an interactive web page (migrantmenigheter.no) which was meant to be kept updated (Eriksen & Haug, 2021). The mapping counted about 250 migrant congregations and communities in Norway at the beginning of 2013 (Desta, 2019). As not all the migrant congregations are officially registered, it is not possible to find updated numbers from statistics. Nevertheless, as the number of migrants has increased, one may expect the same to be the case for migrant congregations. Due to my special interest, I have searched for particular information on Asian migrants and congregations. The number of Asian immigrants is now over 300 000 (SSB, 2021), and there are 27 Asian migrant congregations only in The Baptist Union of Norway (Baptist.no, 2021). There are also a number of Vietnamese and Filipino communities within the Catholic Church in Norway, as well as many other Asian migrant congregations of different denominations spread out all over the country.

As the number of migrants and migrant congregations in Norway can be expected to increase, it is important to gain more knowledge about how they understand themselves as

¹ Includes persons with both parents born outside of Norway.

² A major mapping of Christian migrant congregations in the Oslo area was conducted in 2010 (DAWN, 2010), followed by a national mapping (DAWN, 2012/2013). The mapping was done by DAWN Norge, which is today Sendt.no, in cooperation with Christian Council of Norway, Christian Intercultural Work (KIA), and The Baptist Union of Norway. The organisations' networks were used to reach out and get in contact with the communities.

leaders. Their role may be complex as the congregations they lead exist between the culture of origin and the culture in Norway. I therefore decided to conduct a study on leaders of migrant congregations applying theoretical perspectives which is commonly used in leadership research and suitable in the field of intercultural settings or congregations. As the research area of this master thesis lies in the intersection between research about leadership in congregations and research about migrant congregations, I will present both.

1.2 State of the Art

Over the last decades quite a few publications on leadership and managerial practices in Christian congregations in Norway have been published. Studies have been conducted on pastors and other Christian leaders, and some of them are looking into their roles as leaders. The number of research projects on migrant congregations are also increasing in our country. Some of them have focus on the leaders of the congregation, but so far, no leadership studies have been conducted on migrant congregations in Norway. I will therefore present the current state of knowledge about migrant congregations and of leadership of congregations in this overview.

1.2.1 Migrant congregations

Internationally, the research field of migrant congregation is quite large, so I will here mainly present Norwegian studies, with a few international examples that are particularly relevant for the Norwegian context and my research question. My main focus will be on studies of Asian migrant congregations, but not exclusively as it is a smaller field than studies done on African migrant congregations. However, the interest in research on migrant congregations, both Asian and in general, is growing in Norway. Especially during the last decade some major contributions as well as a number of smaller studies have been published. Most of them are studying migrant congregations in the Oslo area. An exception to this is Thomas Sundes Drønen and Stian Sørli Eriksen (2015) who studied the diversity in migrant congregations in the Stavanger region. Prior to this, Ronald Synnes (2012) conducted a study on five Christian migrant communities in Oslo. His focus was the

congregations' importance for the members, and he studied the congregations' profiles and structures, their members and activities, and their social involvement.

A major contribution to the field was published in 2016, a book on Christian migrants in the Nordic countries containing a multidisciplinary collection of eleven case studies. In the introduction chapter, the editors, Anders Aschim, Olav Hovdelien and Helje Kringlebotn Sødal (2016a), describes religion and religiosity to be rare in migration studies in Europe. They also found religion to be regarded more of a problem than a resource for the migrants and the society. This book is an attempt to correct this point of view, and to encourage studies on Christianity in the area of migration. Among the articles is Kringlebotn Sødal's (2016b) study on press coverage of Christian migrant congregations in Norwegian newspapers which is remarkably low. Kari Storstein Haug (2016) has studied migration and theology from the perspective of the Church of Norway, looking at how theology is formed, and theological reflection evolves in the encounter with migrants and migrant congregations. The majority are studies of catholic migrants, as Olav Hovdelien's study of the Catholic Church as a migrant church (2016). Stian Sørli Eriksen's (2016) article on Church of Pentecost International is therefore an interesting exception as he looks at the story of a migrant congregation in Oslo. This is a study of the development of the congregation, with great focus on the story of George Arthur, the founder and, for many years, the leader of the congregation. This focus on the leader is especially interesting for my study. Eriksen analyses the congregation using three perspectives: the founder's crucial importance in the early beginning, the transnational perspective of migrant congregations, and finally, the global Pentecostalism.

Eriksen has also contributed to the research field with his article-based PhD thesis (2019) studying migrant churches and mission. His focus on missiology is of limited interest to this study, but his findings within the field of migration and transnationality are relevant. He refers to Martha Fredrics who points to three levels for studying migration and religion: First, faith as a resource for the migrants, second, the importance of religious migrant communities, and third, the importance of transnational networks. Eriksen points to the interconnectedness of these levels. His findings give insight to the major influence the global networks have on the migrants and their churches. He argues that this might be a reason

why migrant congregations are not working harder to develop local networks and mutual relationships to Norwegian leaders and churches, as they already have networks.

Eriksen also points to the transcultural capital possessed by the migrant congregations, and how they attempt to bridge lingual, cultural and social gaps between migrants and society, migrant churches and national churches. The migrant churches did also fill the role of being “a home away from home” (p.85) making the migrants feel a little bit less lonely. On the other hand, he found that a number of his informants indicated a feeling of lacking cultural capital, such as language skills, relevant to the Norwegian context. In other words, he found culture to represent both a capital and a hinderance for the migrants. Language and culture will also be relevant aspects for my study.

One of the three articles that Eriksen’s thesis is based on is a narrative study of spiritual transformation in a Filipino migrant congregation in Oslo (2019). In addition to Synnes’ study (Synnes, 2012), which included the Filipino Christian Church in Oslo, this (Eriksen, 2019) is one of very few studies of eastern Asian migrant congregations. However, there are some master theses looking at Christian Chin groups (Thielsen, 2010; Kristoffersen, 2013; Thang, 2015) and a master study on a Chinese migrant church (Hansen, 2007). Espen Thielsen (2010) is looking at the growth of Chin migrant congregations within the Norwegian Baptist society. Helge Kristoffersen (2013) discusses the integration of youth in a Chin congregation, and Thawng Hlei Thang (2015) discusses conflict and the splitting of a migrant congregation. Eveline Hansen (2007) is conducting an empirical study of the Scandinavian Chinese Christian Church in Oslo, which is considered to be one of the first migrant congregations in Norway.

The most recent contribution to the field is a report mapping research on Christian migrants and migrant congregations (Haug & Eriksen, 2021). They present and comment available research on this field. The report includes a comprehensive list of literature. Also, a new book on migration and religion edited By Cecilia Nahnfeldt and Kaia S. Rønsdal (2021) has recently been published. The book called “Contemporary Christian-Cultural Values, Migration Encounters in the Nordic Region”, has a multidisciplinary approach and aims to reconstruct the connection between religion and migration, looking at how religion can contribute to migrant encounters through post-colonial perspectives. Finally, there is an

ongoing PhD project on Christian Karen migrants in The Baptist Union of Norway by Øyvind Hadland at VID specialised University.

There are few studies on leadership or management of migrant congregations conducted in Norway, so I have also searched international studies. An example of such is Claudia Währisc-Oblaus (2012) study of leaders of migrant congregations where she concludes that “to follow the call” is a typical expatriation narrative. The international studies on leadership of migrant congregations were mainly conducted from a theological point of view rather than in the field of leadership and management, which is also the case in the study of Choi Hee An (2020). Her recent book “A Postcolonial Leadership: Asian Immigrant Christian Leadership and Its Challenges” compares Christian leadership in the US with Christian immigrant leadership. Choi’s approach will be presented more detailed in the theory chapter as I will use Choi’s work to analyse my findings.

The field of research on migrant congregations is growing in Norway, though there are not many studies conducted on eastern Asian congregations, and no leadership studies on migrant congregations.

1.2.2 Leadership of congregations

The study of leadership of congregations has increased in recent years where many studies have been conducted within the context of the Church of Norway, which is in a transition from being a state-church to becoming independent. It is also the largest church in Norway. As the migrant congregations I study represent different denominations, I will in this thesis present three of the main contributors to studies of leadership in the Church of Norway, as well as one leadership study in a Pentecost church context.

Harald Askeland has over the years since late 1990’s contributed with several publications on leadership in the Church of Norway. Among his publications is a study of the Deans’ reflections on their leadership (Askeland, 2015b) where he finds that they tend to make the division between “functional” and “theological” concepts of leadership. Most of his publications on the Church of Norway is in Norwegian, as is also a major new publication he has published together with Stephen Sirris (Askeland & Sirris, 2021). It is an anthology of 11

articles studying leadership and leader roles in the Church of Norway which is a Church in transition. In this book, Frank Grimstad has contributed with several articles focusing on topics such as; value-based and practice-oriented leadership, perspectives on the church as an organisation, and leadership in the church context. In addition to studies of leadership in a church context, Askeland has contributed with several studies on leadership of faith-based organisations. In one such study (Askeland 2015a) he developed a model of 5 leader roles which I will use to analyse my findings.

Stephen Sirris is also a major contributor on academic studies of leadership in the Church of Norway. In his article-based Ph.d. thesis (Sirris, 2019a) he analyses how managers negotiate identities by hybridizing professionalism, which for the deans means pastoral work, and managerialism. He studied middle managers in a faith-based hospital and deans who were leading priests in the church of Norway. The first article (Sirris, 2019b) shows how the managerial work rather than the professional work increases for these hybrid professional managers, which leads to a tension for the deans' self-understanding as they identify themselves as clergy. In the second article Sirris (2019c) analyses how the deans try to bridge professionalism and managerialism while they interpret a work hour agreement for clergy both as an administrative tool and as a means to improve the professional work. The third article (Sirris & Byrkjeflot, 2019) studies calling as identity work and finds that the established dichotomy between the classical and modern understanding of calling is blurred by hybridizations. Together the articles show how hybrid professional managers as the deans become less professionals, and more managers. In earlier studies (Sirris, 2014; Sirris 2016) he has interviewed and observed parish pastors in the Church of Norway, finding that they regard leadership as an integrated part of their pastoral work which includes integrating the co-workers, and concludes that they all prefer a "flat" leadership structure to a more hierarchical "top down" structure.

Fredrik Saxegaard has also conducted several leadership studies in the context of the Church of Norway. In his PhD theses, "Realizing church: Parish pastors as contributors to leadership in congregations" (Saxegaard, 2017), he argues for understanding pastoral leadership in the Church of Norway as leading through negotiating the congregation as an object. It is worth mentioning that Saxegaard in his discussions chapter warns against missing the complexities

and nuances of leadership when using theories of leader roles and functions. Still, he finds such theories well suited for developing theoretical constructs.

Truls Akerlund's book "A Phenomenology of Pentecostal Leadership" (2018) is an example of a Norwegian church leader study conducted in another context than the Church of Norway. Akerlund compares his findings with earlier studies on Pentecostal leadership and finds variations and similarities. One of them is that their leadership is coloured by Norwegian leadership culture as they build on trust and collaboration and promote shared decision-making. This corresponds with earlier theories of Pentecostalism's tendency to indigenize. Furthermore, he finds that the Norwegian leaders' motivation has turned from the classical Pentecostal focus on a specific calling to a commitment to God's purpose. In correspondence with earlier studies, he argues that Pentecostal spirituality, their worldview, and understanding of an active God, enable the leaders to combine human reasoning and pragmatic consideration with spiritual disciplines. Involving the leader's entire life, being a role model is also typical for the leaders, as is using narratives in verbal communication which Akerlund describes as an important aspect of Pentecostal leadership.

The studies of leaders of Christian congregations show a complex leadership which in the context of the Church of Norway tends to divide between functional and theological concepts of leadership, still there are hybridisations including both. Akerlund's study is focusing on the influences Norwegian culture has on Pentecostal leadership.

The volume of studies of leaders of congregations is growing, as is also the research field of migrant congregations. Some studies have a special focus on the leader of the congregation, but there are no leadership studies of migrant congregations and their leaders in Norway. I therefore want to contribute and start filling this gap with a study of migrant congregation leaders applying theory commonly used in leadership research.

1.3 Research question

As the research area of this master thesis is new in Norway, I chose an open approach. My aim for the study is to explore both advantages and challenges of leadership in migrant congregations seen from the leaders' own perspective.

The research question of my thesis is:

“What perception do leaders of migrant congregations have of their own role as a leader?”

The sub questions are:

- How do they understand their leadership roles?
- What do they regard as the greatest challenges?
- What strategies do they apply to solve them?

To answer these questions, I have chosen to interview six leaders of eastern Asian migrant congregations.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

The thesis has six chapters including the introduction. The second chapter presents the theoretical perspectives for the analyses. Chapter three discusses the choice of method and analytical approach including research ethical considerations. In the fourth chapter, my empirical findings from six in depth interviews are presented. Chapter five analyzes the findings in light of the theoretical perspectives from chapter two. Finally, chapter six are the concluding discussions, recommendations for further studies, and practical implications

2 Theoretical Approaches

As Norwegian research about leadership in the Church of Norway show, leadership of congregations is regarded as a complex phenomenon, and I expect leadership in migrant congregations to be even more complex. Against this background, I have chosen to analyse my findings with the help of four theoretical perspectives. Firstly, I will use Askeland's model of leadership roles (2015a) when analysing how the leaders perceive themselves as leaders. Secondly, I will use Choi's research (2020) to understand the implications of a minority community of Asian migrants as a leadership context. And finally, I will use Hofstede's model of cultural dimensions (2021) and Mahadevan, Weissert and Müller's concept of intercultural creation (2011) as complementary theoretical perspectives to analyse how the context of cultural differences influence on leadership in migrant congregations.

2.1 Leadership and leader roles

Askeland developed his typology of organizational functions and managerial roles (2015) based on a study of managers practice in faith-based welfare organizations. His main objective was to understand the manager's job and through that develop an empirically based and more relevant understanding of management. Askeland was influenced by Henry Mintzberg who focused on the daily practice of managers as base for developing models for their work and roles. Furthermore, he used Hillel Schmid's model combining the dimension of internal- and external-orientation with the dimension of task- and relations-orientation (Schmid, 2010). Deriving from this, Schmid formed his model of four quadrants he named Task oriented-Internal, Task oriented-External, People oriented-Internal and People oriented-External.

Olav Helge Angell (2011) conceptualised a similar model of leader roles calling them Administrator, Supplier, Integrator and Bridge-builder, arguing that faith-based welfare organisations face demands on legitimacy as well as on efficiency. Askeland (2015) found this argumentation highly relevant to his study. Looking back to Philip Selznick (1957) who argues for the institutional responsibility of leaders promoting and protecting values,

Askeland added a fifth dimension to Schmid's model, and described it as "the perception of a core overarching responsibility of managers" (Askeland, 2015 p. 51). Askeland called the model he developed, which is presented below, an "alternative typology of organizational functions and managerial roles" (p. 52).

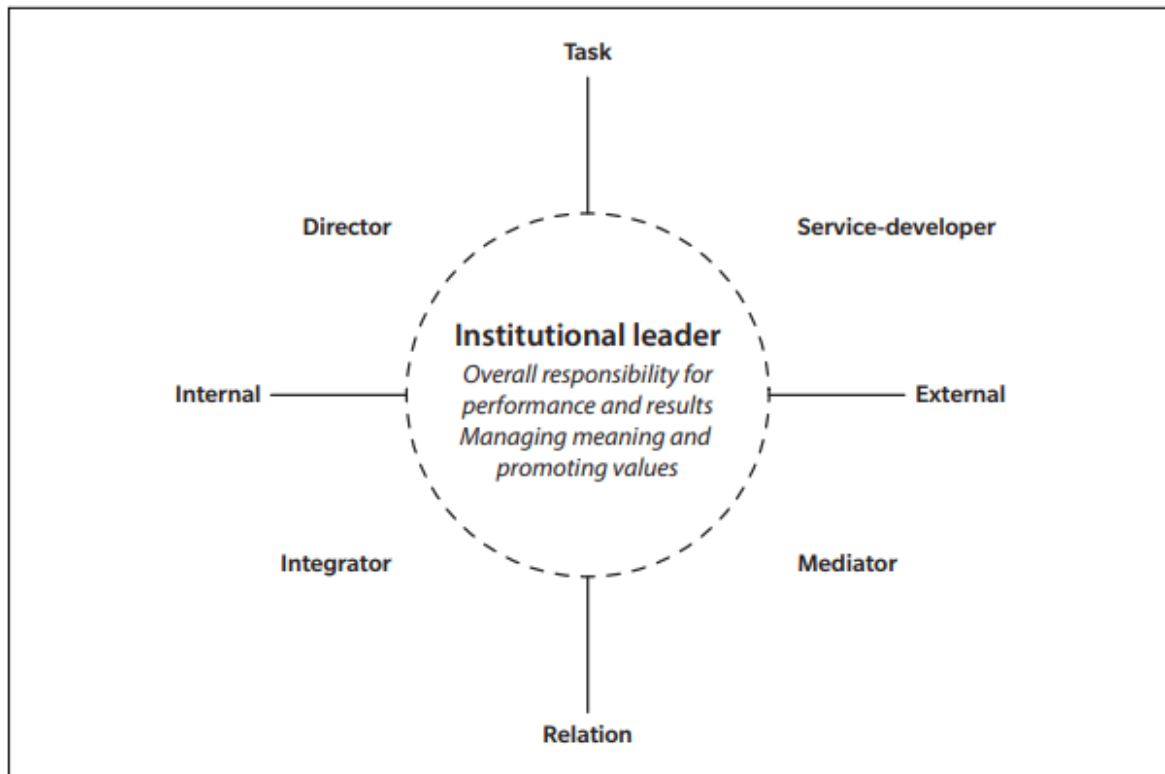


Figure 1: Alternative typology of organizational functions and managerial roles (Askeland, 2015 p. 52).

In this model which was based on Schmid's dimensions, Askeland labelled the four leader roles, namely the *Director*, the *Service-developer*, the *Integrator* and the *Mediator*. The fifth leader role he named the *Institutional leader*. It represents the overall responsibility of the management of the organisation, for the functionality and in relation to values, purpose and meaning. He placed this institutional leader in the middle of the model as a circle with a broken line to indicate that manifestations of this dimension are dispersed into the other roles rather than seen separately.

Askeland describes the *Director* and the *Service-developer* as task oriented. The *Director* has an internal focus which involves building structures and procedures, coordinating and planning work processes to achieve goals efficiently. The *Service-developer* is also task-focused, but with an external orientation, responsible for developing strategic goals and services adjusted to the environment outside of the organisation.

According to Askeland's model, the *Integrator* and the *Mediator* are relation oriented. The Integrator has an internal focus on motivating, developing, and empowering the employees, consulting with them, and integrating them into a team. The last leader role is the *Mediator* which has a combination of relational and external focus. The *Mediator* builds, maintains and develops external relations, forms alliances and balances and buffers for pressure from the outside. The instrumental aspect is downplayed as the provision of legitimacy is prioritised.

These leadership roles identified by Askeland through studying faith-based organisation leaders can be helpful to identify leadership understandings also in other empirical research projects, as this study of Asian migrant congregation leaders.

2.2 Asian migrant congregations as leadership context

Last year, Choi Hee An, professor in Practical Theology, published a book on Asian immigrant Christian leadership and its challenges in an American context (Choi, 2020). This is one of the few recent publications about leadership of Asian minority congregations and is therefore particularly important as theoretical approach for my study. She looks at Asian immigrant Christian leadership in comparison to American Christian leadership.

Amongst the differences she points to are the various images of Jesus as a leader in an Asian context. One example of this is while western traditions would emphasise Jesus as the saviour who conquers death, Asians would relate more to the image of Jesus as co-sufferer. This is seen in connection with Asians' expectations and appreciation of their leader being together with them, the concept of togetherness. Another Asian image of Jesus that differs from an individualistic western perception is "imaging Jesus as community" (p.145), in other

words, regarding Jesus, and then also Christian leaders, not as an individual leader, but as part of the community and head of the community.

Choi points to images of Jesus hybridised in the encounter with Asian cultural concepts. She refers to Kwok Pui-lan who warns that also the western images of Jesus are hybridisations formed by colonial and postcolonial power groups, and that the images of Jesus will continue to hybridise in the encounter with different cultures. As the image of Jesus is hybridised, Choi claims hybridity to be “one of the most prominent and distinctive characteristics of Asian immigrant leadership” (p.146). Instead of striving for assimilation, understood as adopting western values and culture, hybridity is to understand different cultures and adapt them into their own immigrant context.

Choi also explains how Kosuke Koyama is rerooting Jesus’ incarnation to “in-culturation and in-localization”, describing Jesus as a communicator not only between God and man, but also between people, between immigrants and others. Choi then claims that as the images of Jesus change in the Asian immigrant context, from a vertical saviour to a horizontal co-sufferer, the Asian Christian leadership models also needs to change as “The images of Jesus are the reflection of people’s needs and wants from their Christian leaders” (p.155).

Following this, Choi present different challenges Asian immigrant Christian leadership faces. She is sceptic to a clergy-centred leadership which is common in an American Asian church context. She says this leader style is not only inherited from a western church structure, as a paternalistic, bureaucratic, authoritarian leader style is also common in many Asian countries. Choi welcomes more ordained women clergy, as she finds female leadership to be more communal, and claims the *lack of ordained clergy woman’s leadership* to be the first challenge. She also would like to see more lay leadership and remarks that many migrant lay members demonstrate deep commitment and strong ownership to their congregations as they have participated in building them up from the start.

The second challenge she points out is the *difficulties of developing social services*. The leaders strive to meet the members needs which on the one hand is a longing to preserve their culture and values. This demands the leaders to provide different programs like Asian-language teaching or cultural programs. On the other hand, the leaders have to introduce

the American culture and values to the members for their survival in the society, so they provide a range of services like English-teaching or legal advice. Choi concludes that being an Asian Christian migrant leader goes beyond spiritual leadership, and providing services for the members is not easy.

The third challenge is for the leaders to handle *dis-communication between the first- and second-generation* migrants due to cultural differences. The first generation brings cultural values from Asia and expects to bring these into their own families also in the new country, while the second-generation are influenced by the American culture. This chasm between the generations begins in the families and deepens in the congregations. According to Choi, the major problem for dis-communication is the parents lack of confidence in English. Both first- and second-generation leaders face this challenge, but they have different strategies in finding solutions, as there are also different leadership styles and control issues among pastors of the two different generations.

The fourth challenge is described as the leaders need to find solutions for *fighting with the power of American individualism*. As communalism by the first generation is used to protect ethnic values and identity, it is regarded as their parents' tool of control by the second generation, and the migrant church is understood as a ghetto to protect an ethnic communal identity. The society teaches immigrants to separate from their ethnic communities to be fully Americans, but when first generation Asian migrants try to assimilate into the society, they end up isolated and marginalized. To be able to fight individualism, Asian migrant church leaders need to first uncover the injuries it has brought to families, congregations and society, then they must create a space for healing.

To handle these challenges, Choi calls for what she defines as an *Asian immigrant Christian leadership* and calls a *Postcolonial Leadership*. This leadership "recognize equal difference and honour it with respect and care" (p.189). Under colonialization Asian's otherness was regarded as deviant, while in a postcolonial context, many Asian leaders fight as, for, and with others, for their otherness to be regarded as an equal difference.

Choi presents two pairs of concepts in her leadership theory. The first is hybridity and authenticity, the second is communality and individuality. As the goal of assimilation is to

adopt the new country's norms and culture, the process of hybridity requires for the immigrants to first understand the foreign culture, then it is possible to adjust it to their own context. Hybridity exists in immigrants' daily life as they hybridise their own culture with the surrounding culture. It also exists as an essential part of Asian immigrant Christian leaders' leadership practice as they adapt, challenge, and transform communities and individuals. They resist both individualism and communalism as they hybridise them in their current context.

This hybridity includes authenticity as it recognises each position's authenticity. It should not be defined as essential ethnic or cultural purity, but as openness to local and temporal similarities and differences in an ongoing individual and communal identity formation process. The leaders try to solve the dilemma of individual freedom and communal harmony by listening to members individually and finding communal needs through consensus. Choi claims that in this way hybridity and authenticity are complementary concepts in Asian immigrant postcolonial leadership, which may be a normative description rather than descriptive.

The next two concepts Choi presents are individuality and communality. A common understanding of leadership is that one leads, and others follow. A western understanding of communal leadership is also based on individuality, as it encourages individual leaders to develop and use communal leadership characteristics. Choi's understanding of Asian immigrant communal leadership surpasses this understanding with three differences. Firstly, the communal leadership does not only demand communal characteristics in an individual leader, but also demands leadership by the community itself and multiple communal leaders. This creates the need for the second important factor which is communal consensus, strongly encouraged as the multiple leaders' legitimacy is constantly questioned. The third difference is collaborative leadership which she describes as inviting others in as co-leaders of the group, building trust and committing themselves to mutual recognition, opening up for reciprocal gain.

Choi claims Postcolonial Leadership to be an ever-changing leadership as the leaders need to constantly create and recreate it according to their own abilities, and the needs of the internal and external environments. They need to lead the hybridization processes in the

congregations, recognizing the authenticity of all cultures. To do this they need to work with people as community and as individuals. These theoretical perspectives of Choi can be helpful for discovering and understanding contexts, challenges and other aspects of the leadership of Asian migrant congregation leaders.

2.3 Cross-cultural and intercultural management

To analyse how the context of cultural differences influence the leaders of the migrant congregations I will use Hofstede's theory of cultural differences (Hofstede, 2007). He presents a model measuring 6 cultural dimensions: power distance, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, long term orientation and indulgence. This model has been developed through a broad research work but is made accessible in a popularised version (Hofstede Insights, 2021). It is a comprehensive model, but I will only use some of the major categories in this thesis.

In an article discussing Asian management in the 21st century, Hofstede explains values to be the core element of culture (Hofstede, 2007). He describes cultural values to be stable within societies, but to differ between different societies. Then he claims management, as a part of the culture, to do the same. In the article he defends his viewpoint, which is that management problems basically remain the same over time, and that their solutions do not change much with time, but differ in different parts of the world, even from country to country.

The goal of Hofstede's model, and other models of cultural differences, is to map differences and equalities in the culture of different societies. And then use this to identify how it influences organisations, management, and leadership. It gives a possibility to see what works in the different cultures, and what aspects leaders need to consider. But these models have been criticized for being too static and categoric and not suitable for understanding the cultural changes the globalised society faces (Nathan, 2015). Ganesh Nathan argues that scholars as well as practitioners need to get out of the essentialist paradigm and understand culture as "dynamic intersecting 'cultural systems' and interacting social institutions/organizations in which persons individually or collectively interact with others,

directly or indirectly to pursue their complex of purposes” (p. 113). Mahadevan, Weissert and Müller (2011) contributes to the field of non-essentialist cultural studies by presenting their theoretical perspective of integrative intercultural management. I have chosen to use their contribution as a complementary theoretical perspective to Hofstede’s model as I find that they work well together. Hofstede’s model is helpful to understand cultural differences, while Mahadevan et al. shed light on what may happen as these cultures meet.

2.3.1 Dimensions of cultural differences

Hofstede Insights is a digitalized presentation of Hofstede’s model of the 6 cultural dimensions that offers tools, trainings and certifications on organisational culture, intercultural management, and consumer culture (Hofstede Insights, 2021). The country comparison tool gives open access to a diagram showing the countries scores on the six dimensions of the Hofstede study and a brief presentation of the different dimensions in each of the countries. Comparing Norway and the Asian countries my informants come from, the Norwegian culture differs clearly from the Asian countries on the two first dimensions, and also Norway scores especially low on the third dimension.

The first dimension, Power Distance, is defined as “the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organisations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally” (Hofstede Insights, 2021). The Asian countries score high on this dimension which means that people expect and accept hierarchical differences based on inherent inequalities without a need of further justification. A benevolent autocrat is the image of an ideal leader, and subordinates expect to be given orders while challenges to the leadership will not be received well. In contrast to this, Norway scores low on power distance. According to Hofstede, Norwegians cherish independence and equal rights and favours accessible and coaching leaders who facilitate and empower. Employees expect to be consulted and for power to be decentralized. Communication is informal and direct, including and consensus orientated.

The second dimension is called Individualism and addresses “the degree of interdependence a society maintains among its members” (Hofstede Insights, 2021) and has to do with whether people identify themselves as “I” or “we”. Norway scores relatively high on this dimension

and is considered an individualist society where people look after themselves. The right to privacy is important and there are clear lines between private life and work. Leaders need to focus on leading individuals and job mobility is high as Norwegians think in terms of individual careers. Communication is explicit, feedback direct, and personal opinions are expressed and valued. The Asian countries score quite low on this dimension and are all collectivistic societies where people belong to and are loyal to in-groups that take care of them. This loyalty is paramount and overrides most other social arrangements. These societies create strong long-term relationships where everyone takes care of each other like an extended family and leaders need to focus on management of groups. The relation between leader and employee within an in-group is understood in moral terms and can be described as a family link.

For the third dimension, called Masculinity, Norway scores very low, so I include this dimension to my analysis even though the Asian countries differ from each other with some countries being considered feminist countries and other countries being considered masculine countries. According to Hofstede Insights “the fundamental issue here is what motivates people, wanting to be the best (Masculine) or liking what you do (Feminine)” (2021). Hofstede describes people from masculine societies, which some of my informants come from, to be success oriented. They “live to work” and leisure time is regarded as less important. Leaders are expected to be decisive, and performance is emphasised. In Asian feminist countries, people “work in order to live” and free-time and flexibility at work are valued. Supportive management is favoured, and conflict is solved by compromise and negotiation. Leaders strive for consensus and equality and solidarity are valued. Norway, being a very feminist country, share these characteristics and adds on with values as levelling with others, having sympathy for the weak, and societal solidarity. Self-development and growing insight on these areas are encouraged and supportive leadership, promoting cooperation and decision making through involvement and consensus, is considered as effective.

2.3.2 Intercultural creation

Mahadevan, Weissert and Müller's theoretical perspective of integrative intercultural management (2011) is a non-essentialist model of culture within organisational studies. They classify cultural research in two major perspectives they call the perspective of *Given Culture* and the perspective of *Intercultural Creation*. Mahadevan et al. do not reject the contribution the models of given cross-cultural differences give but find them useful only initially in the process of intercultural creation. In their conclusion, they propose a shift from the paradigm of comparative cross-cultural management based on predefined dimensions, to a new paradigm of an integrative intercultural management of emic cultural meanings.

As mainstream comparative cross-cultural research builds on given cultural differences, Mahadevan et al. regards culture as "a process of intersubjective sensemaking" (p.56), and based on Geertz, they define it as "a process of making and remaking collective sense under changing boundary conditions, the goal of which is to provide a sense of collective belonging" (p.60). They argue that as individuals, we constantly reflect on who we are, and that some of the answers include concepts derived from being part of different groups. This makes our self-perception as social beings, a constructive interactive sensemaking process. Further they assume that if such a process takes place among people of different cultural backgrounds, it can be understood as an *inter-cultural* creation, which results in a new *inter-culture*. An "in-between" culture, or a hybrid "third" culture.

Hofstede's cultural dimensions describes different aspects of the cultures, how the Asian and Norwegian culture differ, which gives an understanding of what the different challenges that the leaders face, are rooted in. Further, it creates a base for understanding the processes of intercultural creation which Mahadevan et al. describes. Together these theoretical perspectives contribute to a better understanding of the specific aspects culture leads to in the leadership of Asian migrant congregation leaders.

3 Method

In this chapter, I will present the methodological approach of my study, how I collected my data, and the approach that I use to analyse the empirical data in order to answer the research question of this study. I will also reflect on the validity and reliability of the thesis, and on ethical considerations.

3.1 Methodological Approach

I have chosen a qualitative methodological approach as I want to explore a new and complex field through an in-depth study. With this approach, I will answer to the following overarching research question “What perception do leaders of migrant congregations have of their own role as a leader?”, and three related sub questions which are “How do they understand their leadership roles?”, followed by “What do they regard as the greatest challenges?” and finally, “What strategies do they apply to solve them?”. With these questions, I want to study how my informants reflect on their roles as leaders. To do this, I need a theory of science and methodological approach that allows understanding and interpretations of what the informants tell about their self-perception as leaders. I therefore chose a hermeneutical theory of science approach with circular process with rounds of reflections and re-reflections on the empirical material from the informants and of my understandings as a researcher. (Krog, 2017; Thomassen, 2006)

To get information on migrant congregation leaders’ self-understanding, I used open in-depth interviews when collecting the empirical data. To analyse this quite unstructured material, I chose an abductive approach (Jacobsen, 2016), going back and forth between my empirical data and the different theoretical perspectives presented in the former chapter, while changing between focusing on details and having a holistic view on the different elements. As narrative method represents an open approach and is recommended for studying self-perception (Sørli & Blix, 2017), I applied elements from this method in my study. Especially in the data collection process where I in the interviews encouraged the

informants to tell their stories. This gave me a very broad material which resulted in topical stories in addition to a thematical analysis based on coding.

3.2 Data collection

To collect data, I conducted unstructured in-depth interviews (Johannessen, Tufte & Christoffersen, 2010) using an interview guide to make sure I got data on areas my research aimed to explore. I sent the interview guide to the informants in advance so they could reflect on the topics. The interviews took place in the interviewees' offices, in their homes, or at the congregations' locations to make the informants comfortable. In addition, it gave me an impression of their setting. The interviews which lasted from 60-90 minutes, were conducted as open as possible to allow the interviewees to lead the conversation into the areas they found most interesting. After some background questions I started by asking them an open question about their role as leader of the congregation and encouraged them to narrate (Sørli & Blix, 2017). I wanted to give room for the informants' own stories and reflections. Only when the informants stopped up, I introduced another question. In this way the data I collected was quite unstructured as the different questions or topics were addressed in different orders and contexts. Topics included in the interview guide that I thought would be important, turned out to be of quite little interest. On the other hand, some of the themes that really stood out surprised me. An example of the first is theology-based perceptions of leadership. This was not absent in my findings, but of less importance than I expected. And I was surprised by the profoundness of the challenge of language.

As I study leaders of migrant congregations' self-perception and understanding of their leader role, I exclusively need to interview such leaders. So, the study consists of six informants and is a small explorative, qualitative study that excludes the possibility of being a representative sampling (Johannessen et al., 2010). I wanted some variety but also enough focus to be able to handle the material, so I concentrated the study to leaders of various East-Asian protestant migrant congregations. To secure anonymity I selected interviewees from different parts of Norway. I also chose a variety of age, sex, denominations, length of service in the congregations and countries of origin, being aware that a qualitative study cannot be representative. The age of the leaders varies from around 35 to 60, and both men

and women are included. Their countries of origin include China, Myanmar, Vietnam and the Philippines and their theological standings stretches from more traditional protestant point of view to Pentecostal identity. Some of the pastors have just been working in their congregations for a couple of years, while others have been leading the congregation in more than 15 years.

To find and get in contact with the informants, I mainly used the network I have access to through one of my former colleagues who has been working with migrant congregations for years. He gave me some advice and I started contacting relevant pastors. Some agreed to be interviewed, and others advised me to other leaders of more relevance. I experienced a great openness and willingness to participate, which may rely on the relation my colleague has with many of the pastors, the reputation of the organization I worked for at that time, and my own background as a missionary to Asia.

3.3 Analytical approach

My data was quite unstructured and included a broad variety of stories since I used open unstructured interviews as data collection method. I therefore spent quite much time analyzing, going back and forth between my empirical data and the theoretical approaches (Jacobsen, 2016). I started by using the topics from the interview guide to code the data, but the topics had often been changed through the open unstructured interviews. I then added a more inductive coding method inspired by Malterud's "Systematic text condensation" (2012). I read through the transcriptions again, one at a time, coloring the text in different colors for themes emerging from the texts, making different categories. I used the same categories in the next transcriptions and added new ones as they came up. I looked for both manifest and latent content, what was directly formulated in the text and what was more implicit present, written between the lines.

Using an abductive approach, I also went back to the theoretical approaches in the analytical process and applied topics from them to the data material. Some of these theoretically based topics, supplied by a long ongoing cross-case-analyzing process helped me define and present my findings. Analyzing my findings with help of different theoretical perspectives,

gave me new insight in my own findings which again indicated new focuses, new contexts and also new structures.

At the same time, inspired by narrative method which is known for studying the particular (Riessman, 2008; Sørli & Blix, 2017), I searched for stories which I analyzed individually before putting them together to longer coherent stories presenting each informant. Many of the stories in the empirical material could be analyzed as part of the thematic content analysis or as narratives on their own, so I made a choice of what to present as topical stories, and what to present in the thematical analyses.

3.4 Validity and reliability

For qualitative studies it is not possible to make the same demands regarding validity and reliability as we do for quantitative studies as qualitative research is based on the researchers' understanding and rely on context. To study my informants own understanding of their roles and ensure validity, I used an open approach in the interviews for them to lead the way to what they themselves find important and relevant. With the understanding of a person's self-perception as a socially constructed phenomenon, I have emphasized to grasp the informants' own interpretation of reality (Jacobsen, 2016). I am aware that what they chose to tell me, a Christian Norwegian woman with experience from Asia, studying valuebased leadership, and working in an organization for migrant congregations, has affected what the informants say. The stories they told me, can be understood as a reality which was created in our encounter.

It is impossible also for me, the researcher, to not influence the outcome as I have my preconception. I have a preunderstanding coloured by impressions from growing up abroad, working in intercultural settings, and living in Asia working in a local congregation, to mention some sources of influence. This preconception can be regarded as a helpful tool to search for relevant information and to understand and analyse this data (Krogh, 2017). For this to happen, it is important to be aware of, and critically reflect on, one's own preconception and add to this through existing research and theories (Johannessen et al., 2010) as I have strived to do through the analyses process.

While the internal validity (Johannessen et al., 2010) of the study might be satisfactory, its reliability and external validity is lower since the sample of informants is small and random. It is likely that other informants might have provided different results. Also, the strategy of open interviews strengthens the validity, but it contributes to a lower reliability since all interviews had a different logic and were not comparable. So, to ensure reliability, I try to describe the course of the study as detailed and transparent as possible. This makes it possible for the readers to draw their own conclusions regarding the study. Also, my reflections concerning the study contributes to ensure its validity (Sørly & Blix, 2017). The external validity of this study is limited by its volume, but there may be some aspects in the descriptions, analyses, and reflections that are relevant to others and of interest beyond the context of the study.

3.5 Ethical considerations

As my study is based on data collected from human informants, I have considered the ethical aspects with a special focus on respect for individuals (NESH, 2021). In accordance with the conventions on human rights, the interest of individuals, including their personal integrity, cannot be set aside in the search for new understanding through research. I have therefore strived to respect my informants' privacy and self-determination, and to protect their personal integrity through the whole research process. In choosing the topic for my study, during the interviews, in deciding the research question, through the analyses and when presenting the results. I have throughout the thesis tried to listen to their voices and aimed for my work to produce good consequences

The aspects of privacy and self-respect are taken care of through ensuring confidentiality. Also, to make the informants comfortable in sharing their thoughts and reflections, I anonymized their contributions. In addition to a common need for anonymity, there is a need to safeguard against harm and unreasonable strain in this research project as there are aspects of religious belonging and ethnicity connected to my informants. In a Norwegian context these aspects are normally not considered to be connected to the informants' safety, but this is not always the situation, neither in Norway nor in the transnational context my informants live. Anonymization of the informants do not only cover their needs, but it

also protects other persons connected to the informants, as co-workers and congregation members, from being recognized.

To ensure anonymization, I have used cover names for the informants. I had to pay special attention to how to express the topical stories to avoid the possibility of being recognized. Therefore, I have not included any sensitive information, such as age, country of origin, length of stay and the town where they live and work in Norway. By giving them male and female names, their gender is recognizable. I considered the value of including this information to be relevant, and since there is a high representation of both genders among Asian leaders of migrant congregation, I found this information to be of little risk for recognition. Still, people who know the informants well, might be able to recognize them through the thoughts and meanings they express, or through the vague personal information this thesis reveals. Nevertheless, telling these stories gives an added value to the readers who might not have much pre knowledge about leaders of migrant congregations. Through the stories they get an impression of this specific group of leaders which can contribute to a better understanding of their leadership.

Also, to ensure an adequate ethical standard, I have notified NSD - Norwegian Centre for Research Data about the study which has been approved. An approved dictaphone was used to record the interviews, and the data was stored on an encrypted memory stick. The informants signed a consent form, in which they were insured that no identifying information was to be included in the theses, and that they could withdraw their consent for being part of the research at any time without giving a reason.

Another aspect discussed by Sørly & Blix (2017), is to be aware of the relationship established between the researcher and the informants. Although I had only one meeting with each of the informants, except one with whom I had two meetings, a relationship of trust was created. The informants shared openheartedly stories about their life and work, joys and challenges. I therefore consider it an ethical responsibility to handle the information they shared according to norms and standards for good scientific practice (NESH, 2021), including to focus on how my study can best contribute to improvement for the informants and their equals as a response to the trust they showed me.

4 Findings

The findings from the interviews will be presented in two different ways. First, the informants are presented through topical stories of them as leaders. As this group of leaders are little known, their stories are important to give an impression of who they are, their background and their visions. Then comes a thematical presentation of themes that emerged from the interviews through the analysis. The first theme is called *leaders with responsibility and authority* and looks at how the leaders understand their leadership roles. Then comes a theme which was highly emphasized by the informants: *communication, community, and change* which is a presentation of what the leaders regard as their greatest challenges. The following theme is called *integration* and looks at what strategies the migrant leaders apply to handle the challenges. Another theme which is an important aspect in the leadership of migrant congregations, is presented under the title *transnationality as leadership context*.

4.1 The stories of the migrant congregation leaders

Adam came to Norway due to political reasons. In his home country he acted as a peacemaker intervening with the government. The peace process almost succeeded but was unfortunately broken just before signing the documents. Adam then ended up in prison. As the political situation improved, he was able to flee and arrived Europe in 2008, and to Norway the year after. As newly arrived, he heard about this recently planted congregation in need of a pastor. As Adam himself was an experienced pastor with a Bachelor of Art in History and a Master of Divinity from his home country, he took the job and became the congregation's first pastor.

He built the congregation following the the pattern and structure he knew from the churches he had led in his home county. Based on democracy, openness, and transparency, with the Bible as the fundament. Still, he finds spiritual development for the congregation to be the main task for his work and adds teaching and counselling to the role of the pastor. Adam has a 60% position but still finds time to join in on all the programs in the

congregation such as the youth program, women fellowship and prayer meetings, and he follows up the members by visitations.

In addition to being the senior pastor of this congregation, Adam has contributed to establishing a federation involving more than 20 migrant congregations in Norway where he is also the secretary. Furthermore, he has participated in creating an association for their migrant congregations in Europe where he is the chairman. He has a very close relationship to the other leaders in these networks and cooperates with them on different programs like camps and mission work. He also has a good connection to leaders in Norwegian congregations of the same denomination. In their annual leader conference, Adam spoke to his Norwegian colleagues about the lack of a program for Christian growth for all generations in their congregations. He also promoted the concept of the generations worshipping together, and people expressed interest for it.

Being a refugee, Adam does not see it possible for him to move back to his homeland, although it is possible for him to go and visit. He enjoys leading his congregation, especially worshipping together through singing together youth and adults. He hopes and believes that the congregation will remain also in the future, that the people will continue to meet as a group, even though the language and the culture may not remain forever, as the new generation takes over.

Ruth grew up in a Christian family in her home country. She believes her grandmother was one of the first Christians in the country and both her grandfather and her father were pastors. At the age of fifteen she received a call to study the Bible, but her country was very strictly regulated at the time, so there were no possibilities to study. She thought that if she could get out of the country, she would study the Bible, and at the age of 20 she was able to flee by boat. They were 114 persons in a small boat with the capacity of only 58. Just one hour before a storm arrived, they were saved by a bigger boat. Ruth believes this to be a proof of God's protection.

Ruth landed in an Asian port before arriving Scandinavia. In her new home country, she attended language classes while working for a living. But the calling kept "popping up", so she enrolled at a theological seminary in Norway and studied for a bachelor's degree. Today

she also holds a Master of Theology from America. After finishing her bachelor, she became a pastor and worked with people from her home country in a Norwegian congregation. In 2004 she became the leader of a small group of 8 to 10 persons who broke out as they felt they needed to be independent and not leaning on others in order to grow. Now Ruth leads a congregation with over a hundred members.

When she was asked to take the main role as pastor of the congregation, Ruth thought a lot about it, including asking God, as in the culture where she grew up women should not take the leading roles in the congregations. But, she received support from many persons who confirmed the call. Another important factor was age, as Age is very important in her culture, so respect to the elder is a bigger challenge for her as a leader than gender is. There are only a few men older than Ruth in the congregation, and she describes their relationship as good.

To describe her view on leadership she talks about faith and theology. When Ruth and a group of people started their own congregation, it was very much in prayer for guidance. And during a night of prayer, they experienced the Holy Spirit just like the first Christians did. So, Ruth led the little group to start on a new path where they practice the spiritual gifts. In her opinion, a positive side of the leader role she has in the new congregation they started, is that she is free to work as she like. Ruth and all the congregation members who wants to contribute are free to work as they like. They work very closely, and they agree, so everybody do their jobs.

Regarding the future she expects the Norwegian part of the congregation, which is now quite intercultural, will grow more. She is not sure what her role will be, as she does not think she will fit in with the young group due to language and age barriers. Ruth says that she might continue in the congregation, or she might become a missionary to her home country or other countries where they speak her language. She believes she can work better with them.

David has been working as a youth pastor in the congregation for a bit more than a year, but he has been a member of the congregation for more than 20 years. He is a second generation Asian himself and speaks the language. David has been a leader in the second-

generation group in the congregation since he got baptised. At that time there was no program for youth so the elder of the congregation pushed the youth group to start something themselves. They started what is now the second-generation assembly of the congregation of which he is the responsible pastor. It was not always easy for them to be heard as they were regarded too young to understand, but the elder of the church stood up for them and took those fights.

One of the reasons why David wanted to become a pastor in his church was that he wanted to break some barriers, to show that it is possible to employ a second generation as a pastor in church. He says that it has also motivated other congregations to rethink the role of the pastor. Breaking these barriers and leading the way, and also making it possible for others to contribute, makes him happy. To see other members grow, to take part in their journey, is important for him and the best part of being a leader.

Being youth pastor, he is part of the congregation's pastoral team, and he is the congregation's representative in the Nordic council. The other leaders have all studied theology, but they have less leadership training than David who has been working as an accountant for several years before studying theology. He says he has another perspective on leadership and ask questions and challenge them on their leader style. They challenge him back, something he likes. In David's opinion, the first-generation pastors have a more authoritarian leader style than what he practices.

David has been told that one day he will become the main pastor and lead the first-generation assembly. But he does not picture himself in that role as he does not know the language well enough and does not have the right cultural understandings for the first generation. Neither does he see himself being pastor in the same congregation for the rest of his life. He is open for doing something else, like working in an organisation. He believes the main thing is to spread the gospel in the setting you are.

Leah was born in Asia, but her family moved to America where she has spent the most of her childhood. Leah and her husband were sent as missionaries from America to Norway to work in a migrant church. She has been working as a pastor for almost two decades now and has

studied Christian education and pastoral ministry. She holds a master's degree in counselling and is now working on a PhD.

The first time she came to Norway was in 2007. She took a group of young people from her church in America to Norway as mission-team. This was after a global mission conference for youth from her home country living abroad. During this trip it struck her how the young people in Norway were trying very hard to remain faithful to God and still stand firm to their identity in the society. She used to think that young people in America were having a hard time being Christian, but realized it was not even comparable to the situation for youth in Norway. So, Leah and her husband decided to move and arrived in Norway four years ago on a six-year missionary contract.

Leah feels there is a need for a revival, a mobilizing of the Christian movement among the young generation. She challenges the young people in her congregation to invite friends, also those who are not Asian, to church. She still tries to figure out why the young members are so hesitant to do so and reflects on whether the migrant church is the right setting to bring Norwegian friends. Another part of the work that Leah enjoys is the counselling. Usually she works very closely with her husband, for example do they always visit congregation members together.

As they are here on a six-year contract, she believes they most likely will go back after this. They both have aging parents, and she believes it important to support and care for them, to honour the parents. She asks God to show her how He wants to use her as her heart for mission is still the same. Leah wants to continue to be used by God, something she describes as "being His message".

Jacob came to Norway in 2005 when he got a calling to come and pastor an existing migrant congregation which had growing problems. The congregation needed a pastor who could understand the language and the culture of this migrant church. They knew about Jacob through Norwegian missionaries and church leaders. He met them in his country and had developed good relations and strong connections to them. It took a while before he decided to come, because he had to leave his family far behind, not knowing what challenges he would have to face in Norway.

Jacob was overseeing as many as 12-15 congregations and one school in his home country when he left for Norway. These congregations became the first organisation he founded, and he is still overseeing it from abroad. He regards this organisation as his base, and the first three and a half years in Norway he received financial support as missionary from this organisation, receiving only small allowances in addition from the migrant congregation in Norway. He says he “fell in love with this church” and explains that it became his family as well, so he has been here ever since.

When he arrived, the congregation counted 40 to 50 people. Today it is registered as an organisation holding four congregations in different places in Norway, including a hand full of churches in other European and Asian countries. Jacob’s vision for all these churches in both organisations is to see strong, faithful followers of Jesus Christ, Christians being role models in the family, the society, and to the rest of the world for the glory of God. That is where he wants to lead his congregation.

Jacob holds a master’s degree in Christian education, but he has never stopped “educating himself”. For the future Jacob wishes to return to his country, so he is mentoring new pastors to take over the congregations. He follows them closely as he does not want to see them suffer. He also studies for a Master in Chaplaincy as he plans to be able to work as a chaplain in hospitals in his country and step down from leading the organisations. Jacob wants to be with his family, in his own country when he gets old, which he believes is a wish shared by many migrants, including Norwegians living abroad.

Levi came to Norway on a student visa some years ago. Even though he already had a Bachelor of Theology and a Master of Divinity from his homeland, he wanted to study for a Master of Theology in Norway as he believes academic education is important for being a good leader. His theological degree includes leadership and church management which he finds helpful through all his ministry. He served one year as a youth pastor in his home country before he was installed as minister in the church, and since then he identifies himself a pastor.

When arriving in Norway he helped as a pastor serving migrants from his home country in a Norwegian church for one year. Now he works as a pastor of a migrant congregation where

he has served for two years. He lives almost 200 kilometres away from the congregation as he has a second job. Even though he has the full responsibility as a pastor, he is only employed 24%. Levi says it helps that he has a good understanding with the congregation, so he only goes there twice a month. He also tries to be with them if they have special activities.

Levi has also employed a youth pastor to help him serve the second generation, as well as to communicate with the Norwegians. He does not feel qualified to work with youth himself, being himself a first-generation migrant. He feels confident working with adults even though there are challenges also in the first-generation group in the congregation. This is because the members come from different denominations and church-cultures in their home country. Levi explains how he must find flexible solutions that fits all, finding a good balance. This influence and controls him in his work, especially with the sermons.

For the future Levi wants to continue to serve as a pastor. He believes he himself will not change much as he is very conservative and does not consider working exclusively for a different culture, like being pastor in a Norwegian congregation. Still, he wants to cooperate with Norwegian churches.

The stories give insight to a group of inner motivated and dedicated leaders not much known from research. They are all well-educated, most of them on master's level, and they consider their education to be important for their role as leaders. They all have different stories of how and why they became leaders of a migrant congregation in Norway. Two of them came to Norway as refugees, two came as they received or experienced a calling, and one came to Norway to study. The last one wanted to break the barrier of only employing first generation Asians as pastors in migrant congregations. Some of them have worked as pastors for many years, either in Norway or in their home country, while some are quite newly educated and have just worked as leaders of congregations for a few years. Their employment arrangements differ, some are full time employed, while others work part time. Their thought for the future also varies, some have just vague ideas, while others have quite clear plans and dreams. They all want to continue to "serve the Lord", but not necessarily as leaders of migrant congregations.

4.2 Leaders with responsibility and authority

The first part of the thematical presentation of the findings in this study looks at different aspects of how the migrant congregation leaders understand their leadership roles.

Firstly, the leaders express a clear understanding of having responsibility for everything which is going on in their congregations. The congregations they lead vary in size from around a hundred members and more. The participation on the Sunday services is good with around two third of the members or more joining every week. The congregations are financially self-reliant due to members donations and some support from the local government. The percentage of the leaders' employment depends on the economy of the congregation, so not all of them are full time workers. Still, they all have the full responsibility of the congregation they lead, or the unit of the congregation they lead.

Some of them have employed co-workers, mostly in part time positions, but mainly their co-workers are congregation members who actively take part in congregational work as volunteers. The volunteers are members of boards and committees, or leaders for different programs or departments. Work is in this way delegated, still as pastors, the informants would be responsible for all the work which is going on in their congregations. Here in Adam's words: "I am the church pastor you know, ... I mean for the church council, all of the church, is the responsible person also, I myself." They also express to be respected as leaders, that their decisions are being listened to, even though many of them emphasize striving for consensus, a topic which I will present more in depth later. Only one of the informants questions the power issue related to leading a congregation all on your own. David, the second-generation pastor, believes it is too much power on one person, and that it may lead to burn out for the pastor. At the same time, he acknowledges that if the congregations are small, they cannot afford to employ more than one pastor. David also mentions being long term pastor in the same church, can result in abuse of power if the pastor doesn't want to share power.

4.2.1 Developer of the congregation

The leaders also have an understanding of themselves as responsible for further developing the congregation. Creating what they see is needed, and what is good and right both spiritually, culturally, and legally. First, I will present the structural and organisational aspect.

Part of their responsibilities is to establish new structures and administrations, or to improve the existing. This is a task they manage well, and they talk about their achievements. They describe starting up new programs, and organizing them with leaders, committees, or teams, and they delegate work. The pastors set up communication lines and routines for planning, reporting, meetings, and decision making. They also see to that the congregations are legally registered and follow the standards. They build structures to ensure that the congregations reach their goals and to avoid conflicts. One example would be Jacob who took over a congregation where he described the leadership as sporadic. Roles and responsibilities were not clear, so Jacob had good use of his experience and education in setting up a new management with a decision-making board and departments for the different working areas. To avoid the board to be regarded as above the other volunteers, all board members had to go through interviews with all the department leaders before being qualified as board members. According to Jacob this structure works well.

Growing, independent, and self-reliant congregations, seem to be what the leaders aim for. At the same time there is a discussion of, and a praxis of belonging to a church organisation, even creating such ones.

4.2.2 Spiritual leadership

The leaders regard spiritual leadership to be the most important part of their work, as the organisations they lead are congregations which are religious organisations. They point to the importance of leading the congregation on a biblical base where spiritual development is regarded as the main issue. Ethical and cultural teaching is regarded as important aspects which promotes Christian and social development. Several of the leaders explain they are the ones leading and holding the visions of the congregations. They are responsible to set the goals and to encourage and inspire the co-workers and members to join in and participate to reach the goals. Here explained by Levi: "I try to be a good leader in church ... who has a good vision and who has a good leadership practise."

In different ways they all describe their responsibility of being spiritual leaders for the whole congregation, including co-workers and all the members. They do so by preaching and teaching the congregation, but also by following up the individual members and the families by counselling and visiting them in their homes. The goal of all this is to further develop the members as good Christians, but also as good members of the society.

Some describe their role as spiritual leaders for their co-workers in particular. They follow them up by training and guidance and by being present. David explains that to see others develop, to take part in their journey, is the best part of being a leader. This training of their co-workers is also a necessary part of their work as it makes it possible for them to delegate work as the congregations continue to grow. Jacob explains how he is mentoring leaders to become pastors of new communities growing from his congregation. Leah is speaking warmly about training the mission fellowship she established in the congregation. She first taught a mission course herself before inviting in external speakers which is now done on a regular base once a year. Not only gives this the leaders someone to delegate their work to, but also someone they can work together with.

This section shows leaders who describe a comprehensive leader role embracing both organisational and spiritual dimensions. Leaders who experience to be respected and listened to. Only the second-generation pastor questions the power issue of leading a congregation all by yourself. Some of them have part time employees, but mainly they rely on volunteer co-workers. To develop the congregations, they build and improve structures in order to reach goals and avoid conflict. Being spiritual leaders, training co-workers and leading the whole congregation on a biblical base, is regarded as the most important responsibility.

4.3 Communication, community, and change

Communication became a central theme in the interviews, and language stood out as the most important topic as it was described as one of the greatest challenges of the migrant congregation leaders. In the following I will first present how language- and culture-knowledge qualifies the leaders, before looking into how the lack of language is described as

their biggest challenge. I will also present some other cultural aspects which are described as challenging.

4.3.1 Language

A reason for the existence of the migrant congregations is the migrants' need, and specially the first-generation migrants' need for a place to come together and worship in their own language. And these congregations need leaders who understand them, who can preach in their own language and communicate with them. Having this ability is regarded as a criterion for success described with church growth in this example from Jacob's congregation where the number of members has increased greatly: "...because the people felt that they were understood, since I speak the language and I know the culture." The leaders are called to their congregations and employed because they have the right language and cultural qualifications, so they manage to communicate well and understand how best to lead their congregations.

Still, communication is also regarded as a challenge by all the leaders. Illustrated by Jacob at the end of our interview: "Let me first tell you before I end, what happened to the tower of Babel. It was disintegrated because of communication." Language and culture are very closely linked. To understand the culture, it helps to know the language, and the other way around, knowing the culture helps in understanding what is communicated. The migrant congregation leaders do have the right qualifications of both language and culture for some members of their congregations and some parts of their work, but for other parts of the work they feel they lack the right skills. Here expressed by Leah: "We don't understand the language enough to understand the culture." As the leaders understand language as the most limiting aspect and a fundamental reason to the challenge of communication, I have chosen to focus specifically on the challenges of language as they have described.

The first-generation migrants, the pastors included, finds it hard to learn the new language sufficiently to be able to understand and communicate with the society. And the challenges do not stop there, as for the second-generation migrants the situation is the contrary. They learn the local language in school and through friends, and for them it is hard to keep their mother language. This creates challenges for the migrant families, the migrant

congregations, and the leaders themselves. And as leaders, they are expected to handle the challenges on all the three levels.

The challenge of language in the families occurs as the children use the Norwegian language in school and with friends. They are “being marinated in school” as one of the leaders expresses it. This makes Norwegian their preferred language and they start losing their Asian language. Combined with their parents’ struggle to learn Norwegian, it makes it a challenge to communicate also within the families. Parents and kids do not have a common language in which they are able to express themselves and communicate, so problems arise.

As the members of the congregations face these problems at home, the pastors are dealing with this through teaching, counselling, and by visiting the members in their homes. This is described as a very important part of the work of both the first-generation pastors and the youth pastors.

The challenge of language in the congregations can be seen from two different sides, with focus on the first-generation migrants or focusing on the second generation. Both sides agree on the challenge of worshipping together, which importance is already described. How to solve, or handle this problem, depends on which of the two focuses one has. Looking at it from the first generation’s perspective, teaching the mother language to the second generation would be one solution to the problem. While addressing it from the second generation focus, a solution would be to create separate meetings or even separate assemblies for the different generations. According to what the leaders tell, they have both focuses on mind and try to find solutions that meet both needs.

One example is how Adam has organized a mother-language teaching program in church. He also arranges for the youth to practice reading the bible and singing the songs before the Sunday service, so that they are able to participate. On the other hand, he sees to that they use both languages equally, in the Sunday service and in Sunday school. Additionally, they have separate youth gatherings to meet all needs.

Ruth tries to solve the challenge in another way. First, she led her congregation to use both languages in the Sunday meetings translating everything. This made the meetings quite long, so they decided to once a month split the congregation in two groups according to language.

She now considers making this the standard and having the whole congregation worship together only once a month. Ruth also thinks a lot about the second and third generation, and she does not want to force them to use the mother-language hoping to keep them in church.

David's focus is mainly on the second and third generation and he stresses that faith comes before language. He tells that even himself, who understands the mother-language fairly well, has problems understanding a traditional sermon. David explains the problem to be that the parents want their children to attend the first-generation service instead of the children and youth program. Being the youth pastor, he has tried to explain to the parents that "this is a church, not a school", but he has not yet reached through. Even in David's generation, there are people who want their children to learn the mother language, and he admits that he wants the same for his children, while stressing that the church is not the right arena for this.

The leaders' own challenge with language is expressed to be the most limiting one. Levi says that the migrant congregation needs a leader who can speak Norwegian and communicate with Norwegian leaders. Then he claims that based on the language, he is not qualified to this. He also finds himself unfit to be a leader for the second generation of the same reason, as explained in this quote: "I decided I'm not eligible, I'm not qualified for them because we cannot communicate with each other."

This understanding of disqualification to lead the other generation is expressed by all the leaders. Adam says he is not qualified to be pastor for youth as they do not understand his language well enough. Ruth and Jacob say their language is not good enough to work with the young Norwegians in church. Leah clearly expresses that language is her limitation, while David do not feel qualified to be a leader for the first generation because he does not speak the Asian language well enough.

Employing a youth pastor who is a second-generation migrant, speaking both languages is presented as the preferred solution to this challenge. Levi explains that he has a vision to be able to lead the second generation through his colleague the youth pastor, and to communicate with the surroundings. And David, who is a second-generation pastor himself,

says there must be others who are more qualified than him to lead the first generation. The solution to this is recruiting from the home-country, to make sure the language skills and the cultural understanding are right.

4.3.2 The aspects of community

Community influences the leaders' leadership and leader roles on many levels. It is mainly described as something positive, but also connected to challenges, especially when meeting the individualistic Norwegian culture. The first aspect of community the informants presented is how they practise collaborative leadership by inviting others in leading together with them. The second aspect focuses on community between the leaders and the congregation, and the third describes community within the congregation.

Leading together is practiced in different ways by all the leaders. They explain how they are not only working together with, but also leading together with their colleagues or volunteer co-workers. This is emphasized and pointed to as something positive. Ruth is the one that most clearly expresses this by explaining how they collaborate in the congregation. A pastoral team of three to five pastors and volunteer congregation co-workers lead the congregation together, and they are open for everyone who like to be a congregation co-worker. As the main pastor, she usually joins the meetings, but she also encourages the groups to work on their own.

The leaders explain how they work closely together in their congregations. Keeping the work going, or starting up new things together, either new areas of work, or new congregations. Many of them also talk about achieving or striving for consensus. Decision making is sought to be communal even though the leaders have the final responsibility. Her explained by Levi: "in every situation I try to be a leader ..., we try to decide together, but I am responsible for all the decisions." Levi explains this to be difficult as the congregation consists of members from various church backgrounds who are used to quite different church cultures in their home country.

Being together with the congregation, being present, is also described as part of their role. Some explain how they sit with the members and listen to their stories, and how this is

important for them to be able to lead the congregation according to its needs. As the leader they try as much as possible to join in on the different programs like youth programs, women fellowship, and prayer meetings to mention some. This is time consuming, and even though most of them have the full responsibility for their congregations, they are not all full time employed, which makes it even more challenging. One of the leaders expressed that these limitations are also understood by the members in the church.

The fellowship when the whole congregation is together, regardless of generations, worshipping together, is expressed to be very important by several of the leaders. Adam is the one who emphasizes this the most. He connects it to happiness and church growth and promotes it to Norwegian colleagues: “every time we have our Sunday worship service program, we are very happy. ... we mix youth and adult also, together, worship together.” But a successful common worship service is also regarded as difficult to achieve, so they explore different solutions of partly splitting up according to age and partly practising togetherness. Daniel, being a second-generation immigrant himself, focuses more on the disadvantages of worshipping together, as presented in the chapter of language.

4.3.3 Change management

The stories told by the leaders uncover a need for them to be flexible and creative leaders who are able to adapt to a new situation in a new country. Constantly seeking for solutions in an ever-changing situation as the congregation and its members grow and develop. They tell stories of success, measured in church growth and expressions of happiness, and they talk about plans and ideas related to challenges and difficulties not yet solved. Only two of the leaders talk about the unwillingness of change as a challenge they face. This is Daniel, the second-generation pastor, and Leah who can also be regarded as a second-generation migrant.

Daniel explains this topic by telling a story related to the corona situation. The first generation, influenced by news from their home country, asked the second generation to cancel a planned camp even though the authorities had not yet given any restrictions. In Daniels opinion, the possibility of one youth getting to know Jesus would make it worth going through with the camp. He says he knows that most of the first-generation leaders

would agree, but not enough to make the decision. He knows many leaders find it hard to make difficult decisions, so they just avoid conflict situations and then nothing happens. Daniel believes such leaders should be replaced to avoid stagnation. In his opinion, change management is one of the things a leader must be capable to handle.

As Daniel mainly addresses other leaders, Leah talks about her congregation which she describes as the most “set in stone” congregation she has served. One example would be when she wanted to help the church to change the structure in the chart, which she described “looked like a spiderweb” and did not make sense to her. The answer she received was “why change?” since it had been like that for 30 years and they found it to be fine. Leah finds this unwillingness to change, or to adapt, to be the biggest challenge for her to handle. She believes we should be mouldable by God and let the Holy Spirit renew us every day.

This section has addressed the challenges of communication, different aspects of community, and change. We have seen how language and culture knowledge qualifies the migrant congregation leaders for the role and is regarded as a criterion for success. But, also how language is a challenge as the first and second generations speak different languages. The leaders regard it their responsibility to help the families, and they need to deal with it within the congregation where they also try to meet the needs of both generations. Though their own lack of language skills is described as the greatest challenge which makes them consider themselves disqualified to lead parts of the congregation. We have further seen how the aspects of community influences the leaders in different ways. How it is mainly described as positive, but also connected to challenges. We have seen the necessity for them to handle change, and how the second-generation pastors describe unwillingness of change as a problem.

4.4 Integration

This section will present what strategies the migrant congregation leaders apply trying to solve the challenges presented above, and also other task and responsibilities they have. An important part of the leaders’ role is to keep the community together, and to help the members integrate both in the congregation, and in the society. The topics that stood out is

the need to find ways to integrate the second generation and Norwegian members into the congregation, and to help Asian members to integrate into the Norwegian Christian society and the surrounding society in general.

4.4.1 Integration between the generations

There are challenges connected to the first and second generation in the congregations. As the children are learning the Norwegian language in school, they are also exposed to the Norwegian culture in school. Because of this influence, they may find it hard to accept the decisions of the first generation, as in the story of the camp that they had to cancel. On the other hand, some parents are worried that their children will lose important values in their Asian culture. As already presented, being together is regarded as a value in itself, and it is also regarded as a means to pass the values and the culture over to the next generation. The leaders suggest different solutions to make it possible to integrate all generations in the community, where most of them try to integrate everyone in the same Sunday service. Some describe how they talk to both sides, trying to explain and achieve understanding both ways. Some compromises made were very practical, such as singing both hymns and Hill songs in the Sunday service. The churches where the Sunday worship services, are offered as separate services, which is mainly because of the language problem, while they still try to keep parts of the service together, such as having camps and special programs together.

4.4.2 Integration of Norwegian members

Many of the congregations also have Norwegian members. It is seen both in the second-generation and the first-generation groups or assemblies. This leads to another area for the leaders to handle, here described by Jacob: “there are many people who are getting married to ... Norwegians may I say, so it becomes more challenging.” He describes it as very interesting and exciting to be together with the Norwegian members, both for himself and for the members. He also explains a difference between European and Asian culture: “compared to the Norwegian culture where there is a big gap regards to privacy, European culture is more private than the Asian culture, so probably that become interesting to some of our Norwegian people.” He is happy to welcome the Norwegian members into the

congregation, but he finds it difficult to include them in the board because of the cultural differences.

In addition to finding structures that meet everyone's needs, the leaders find themselves in a situation where they have to understand both sides in order to integrate the Norwegians into the congregation. Jacob stresses that he constantly needs to educate himself and characterises the Norwegians as "logical readers who think deeply". David explains that even in the young adult assembly it is not easy to integrate the Norwegian members. Even though the youth are second generation migrants speaking Norwegian, they are still quite influenced by Asian culture. To include Norwegian members in the congregations is something they all express a wish to do, and some of them see it happen more and more, especially in the second-generation young adult group.

4.4.3 Integration into the Norwegian society

Another task for the leaders is to help the Asian members to integrate into the Norwegian society. This is said to be even more important than to help Norwegians integrate into the congregation. Levi even says that what a migrant congregation needs the most, is a pastor who can communicate and lead the integration into the Norwegian community.

Jacob explains that it is not easy to adapt to the culture that surrounds them, but if you want to be integrated, that is what you must do. So as a leader he needs to bring the congregation into the perspective of a biblical Christian life, to emphasize on how to treat people, how to relate to the authority, and how to be respectful. He is counselling them not only spiritually, but also to understand the society. Jacob explains how he has been listening to the stories of the church members, stories of disappointment and discouragement in meeting the Norwegian culture which is more direct and different. He describes Norwegian culture like this: "if you are late, you are late, if you are not invited, you are not allowed to, if you're invited in a restaurant, it doesn't mean that I will pay for you. This is something that is weird for us". To help the members he says he gives them "an advance information, not only the biblical information, but also the social information" and tells them not to spiritualize everything, but to learn by studying the Norwegians behaviour. His vision for the members is

that they become good citizens of the society and that one day the government will recognize that the migrant churches are helping the society in general.

At the same time the leaders find it as their responsibility to also maintain the Asia culture, their identity. To be a leader who knows “who we are” and who can help the migrants to a good integration which does not mean a total assimilation. Jacob explains that he teaches the congregation members not to lose their ethnicity, their tradition, and specifically mentions the respect to the family as fundamental. This includes to not totally accept everything what is from Norway. He believes there are good values that the migrants must be allowed to keep, while at the same time there are good things from the Norwegian culture they should add into their own family culture, without compromising their own good values.

Levi points to the importance of leading the younger generation to be good Christians, and good persons for the community and the society outside of the church. He still feels they are on the side of the society and finds the duty very challenging for him as a leader. The desire to help developing the young generation to become good Christians and citizens is communicated also by the other leaders and is regarded as best to delegate to the second-generation pastors.

4.4.4 Integration into the Norwegian church landscape

Several of the leaders express that they also regard it as part of their role to be a link between the congregation and Norwegian churches and communities. They express a wish for more cooperation and fellowship. Levi says he feels they need to communicate with “their friends here” and has a plan to do so through the youth pastor. Some are, or have tried to become, members of the Norwegian Council of Churches or other Norwegian church networks, while some feel more isolated and alone.

There is some cooperation going on, especially for children and youth work, like confirmation programs. David, who has studied theology in Norway, explains that before he started on his bachelor, he knew almost nothing about the Christian society in Norway. He describes it as being “totally in our own bubble!”. To study in Norway gave him a network of

classmates in different Norwegian churches he can ask for advice and recourses. Now they also have cooperation with different Norwegian organisations. David says it feels risky to take contact with someone you do not know what stands for. This explains the tendency of finding resources as Sunday school materials from well-known sources abroad instead of in Norway, even though they often use Norwegian language in youth and children's work.

Some of the leaders also point to local Norwegian congregations and their leaders, that they have good connections and relations to. Jacob tells about such a congregation who wants a partnership in mission work to congregations in his home country. Still, the strongest connections with the closest fellowship and cooperation they have with other congregations and networks of their own ethnicity, either in Norway or internationally.

In this section I have shown how the leaders work to integrate all generations in the community, and also how they try to integrate Norwegian members even though the cultural differences might be even bigger. To do this, the leaders need to understand both sides. They also regard it part of their role to help the members integrate into the Norwegian society, as one leader explained; by counselling them not only spiritually, but to understand the society as well. At the same time, they work to maintain their own culture, and believe that a good integration does not mean total assimilation. And finally, they consider their role also to be a link to the Norwegian church landscape.

4.5 Transnationality as leadership context

The transnational context the leaders work in was not emphasized as much by the informants as I had expected, still the leaders described such contexts to be of great importance. The two most emphasized aspects were the role of the international migrant networks and the contact with their home country.

4.5.1 International migrant networks

The leaders and their congregations are all part of different migrant networks consisting of migrant churches and congregations of their own country or ethnicity. Most of these networks or organisations work across borders. They can be Norwegian, Nordic, European or

international. Many of the leaders have leading positions in those networks, some are even the founders or have participated in establishing them.

The networks or organisations are described as the closest connections the leaders have. Levi says that all the pastors from their migrant congregations have a very close relationship. They call each other, they work together and sometimes they meet for a retreat program. They have a fellowship where they share their experiences in the local congregations, a place they can discuss their needs and their challenges. Other leaders talk about yearly conferences and camps they organize together with their colleagues across borders, mainly within Europe, but there is also participation from Asia and America.

The networks are an important support for the leaders, this is where they find resources and seek advice. The networks are cooperation partners in some of the activities, like camps for children- and youth. David explains that these camps are quite special for the young generation. If you ask them how they become Christian, 90% will answer that it happened on summer camp. A special fellowship is created there, where migrants from all the Nordic countries come together. This is something that has created growth in the congregations, as the camp is a place they feel comfortable to bring new people. David also tells that a professor at a theological seminary in his home country brings students to those camps to see if they would like to come and work in Europe. Therefore, these networks can be arenas important for recruitment of new members and new leaders.

4.5.2 Contact with the home country

All the leaders have ongoing contact with their home country They keep contact with family, as well as local pastors, congregations, institutions, and organisations. Most of this contact takes form as mission work and support from the migrant congregations to local congregations or organisations in their home country (or other countries where their people live). But there is also example of support going the other way, as Jacob being supported as a missionary in Norway from his home country. Another example is the professor at the Asian seminary motivating students for work overseas by bringing them to the migrant congregation summer camp. These are examples of the transnational context of the leadership of the migrant congregations, and how it goes both ways. Contacts from their

home countries, in particular pastors, are visiting the congregations in Norway, and the “Norwegian” leaders are visiting the home countries to follow up the projects they support. They sometimes bring teams from their congregations, like the mission group or youth. Bringing the second generation on these teams serves multiple reasons; not only are the young being motivated to engage in mission work, but they also get to know their home country, which some informants explain to be important for identity building.

This section shows how transnational migrant networks are described as the leader’s closest connections and support. Here they find resources and seek advice, the networks serve as cooperation partners and important arenas for recruitment. The transnational context is also seen in the regular contact with their home countries. Most of this takes form as support back home, but support may also go the other way. Visits are also mutual; local pastors visiting Norway, and the “Norwegian” leaders visit home church to follow up mission projects. Bringing the second generation on such trips is important for identity building.

4.6 Summarizing the findings

The informants’ stories show well-educated, inner motivated, and dedicated leaders. They all have different stories of how and why they became leaders of a migrant congregation. Some of them have worked as pastors for many years, while some are quite new. Their vision for the future varies from vague ideas to clear plans and dreams, but they all have a common wish to continue “serving the Lord”.

The thematic presentation shows confident leaders with the responsibility to lead and improve the management of the congregations. Even more important is their responsibility to lead the congregations spiritually, on a biblical base.

Communication skills is much emphasized as it qualifies the leaders for the role. On the other hand, it is a challenge that the generations speak different languages. The leaders need to deal with it and try to meet the needs of both generations. Though their greatest challenge, which makes them consider themselves disqualified to lead part of the congregation, is their own limitations with language. The aspects of community influence and characterize their leadership, which is mainly described as positive, but also connected

to challenges. Finally, the necessity for the leaders to handle change, but also the unwillingness to do so is described.

The leaders work to integrate all generations into the community, and also Norwegian members even though the cultural differences might be a challenge. The pastors need to understand both sides. They also regard it as part of their role to help the members integrate into the Norwegian society. At the same time, they work to maintain their own culture, and believe a good integration does not mean total assimilation.

The transnational migrant networks are described as the leaders' closest connections and support as well as important arenas for recruitment. The transnational context is also manifested in the contact with their homelands through visits and support both ways. Most of this takes form as mission work and bringing the second generation on mission trips is regarded as important for identity building, and to motivate for mission work.

The Asian migrant congregation leaders are a group of inner motivated and dedicated leaders with multiple expectations. They cooperate with the congregation members, and are involved in various tasks, both spiritually and managerially, and they face challenges which they have strategies to solve. The responsibilities they have are very comprehensive, so they can best be described as overall responsible leaders.

5 Analysis

In this chapter I will analyse my findings with the help of theoretical perspectives about leadership roles and leadership in intercultural and congregational settings. The chapter consists of three main parts. In the first part, I use Choi (2020) and Hofstede's theoretical perspectives (2021) to analyse the importance of language and culture against the background of what the leaders describe as their greatest challenges. In the second part I look at strategies they apply to solve the challenges by going more deeply into the leaders' roles connected to integration with help of Askeland (2015a), Choi (2020) and Mahadevan et al.'s theoretical perspectives (2011). For the third part I discuss the leaders' understanding of their leadership in an overarching perspective using Askeland's model of leader roles (2015a).

5.1 Leading through communication

As discussed earlier, language and culture might qualify migrant congregation leaders for the leader role, but the informants have also communicated the same aspects to be a challenge. Some doubt even if they are qualified to the leader role due to their communicational difficulties. In the following sections I will reflect on what the leaders regard as the greatest challenges using the theoretical perspectives of Choi (2020) and Hofstede (2021).

5.1.1 The challenge of language

Language, or lack of language skills, is considered to be the greatest challenge for the leaders. It especially influences the relational part of their work on many areas also in a very fundamental way. Language is an aspect that is often not included in leadership studies. Neither Askeland (2015a) nor Hofstede (2021) are directly addressing the topic of communication and language, and Mahadevan et al. (2011) only mention language skills as an important criterion for employment in the organisation they studied. Choi (2020) presents communication as one of four challenges that migrant congregation leaders face and defines it as dis-communication between the first- and second-generation. She claims

the first generation's lack of English language skills to be the root of this communication problem. The informants of my study describe language to be an obstacle for communication in many areas. As in Choi's findings, language is seen as a challenge between the first and second generation, a challenge the leaders express they need to handle. This challenge does not only occur in church, as the leaders also regard it their responsibility to help the migrant families deal with the communication barriers at home, in the private sphere. While taking the responsibility and helping the migrant families, the congregation members and volunteers correspond with how Hofstede (2021) describes collectivistic societies where the relationship between leaders and employees resembles a family link, and people take care of each other as an extended family. Choi (2020) describes dis-communication to be a challenge for both first- and second-generation leaders, but that they have different strategies in finding solutions due to different leadership styles. This corresponds with my findings. All the pastors try to find solutions, but they do not always agree on what is the best solution.

In addition, the Asian migrant congregation leaders in Norway describes language limitations to be the most fundamental challenge, also for themselves, when communicating with congregation members of the other generation, and when communicating with the surrounding society. However, Choi is not mentioning this as a problem for the migrant congregation leaders in America. The reason why my informants encounter this additional challenge, is due to the burden of learning the Norwegian language. While the migrant congregation leaders in America struggle with two different languages, the setting in Norway usually consists of three languages, Norwegian, the Asian language, and English. Many of the pastors were fluent in English before coming to Norway, but it may have been a disadvantage more than a help, as it blurred the need to learn the Norwegian language.

5.1.2 Between communality and power distance

The aspect of community is described as the most important cultural aspect for leadership in these Asian migrant congregations. In many ways this corresponds with Hofstede's description of collectivistic societies (2021) where people are loyal to and take care of their in-groups. It also corresponds with Choi's concept of individuality and communality (2020)

pointing to the importance to meet both the individualistic and communal needs in leading migrant congregations, but there are also differences between what Hofstede and Choi find and my results. In my findings community is mainly connected to happiness and can be identified with three aspects. The first aspect is the importance for leaders to spend time with the congregation and to join in on meetings and gatherings. The second aspect of community values the fellowship of the whole congregation worshipping together. The third level is working and leading together with co-workers and volunteers. These often act as co-leaders participating in leader teams, and as leaders of sub-departments or specific work programs. This communal leadership is described as positive and helpful for them as leaders, but there are a few challenges connected to it, such as striving for consensus. Still, when achieving consensus, it makes the co-workers and volunteers feel happy and perform well. This corresponds with Choi's understanding of Asian immigrant Christian leadership characterized as communal leadership by multiple leaders based on communal consensus. Though, Choi's leadership understanding is more normative than descriptive when she claims the lack of ordained woman clergy to be a challenge for Asian migrant leadership in the USA, as she regards female leadership to be more communal. Also, according to my findings, the leader who emphasises communality the most is a female pastor, but they all describe distinct communal features and cannot be classified as authoritarian.

The importance for a leader to be together with the congregation, and for the whole congregation to worship together, can also be analysed in the light of Hofstede's theory of collectivistic cultures (2021) which he describes to be characterized by in-groups with strong family like relations, where loyalty to the in-group is paramount. In the informants' stories, collectivism is characterized by a preference of community rather than a feeling of loyalty, though the expressions of trying to be present as much as possible might indicate that it is a mix of both. Anyway, this preference of community, or feeling of loyalty, is challenged when the common worship faces the problems of the different languages as described above. This will be further discussed under the topic of integration.

The nature of a communal leader style becomes particularly clear in the case of the second-generation pastor who questions the power issue of leading a congregation all on your own. This may be rooted in an understanding of an authoritarian leader style similar to the clergy-

centred leader style Choi (2020) is critical towards. This can be better understood by looking at Hofstede's description of the dimension of power distance (2021). In the Asian cultures people would expect and accept hierarchical differences between leaders and members, while in the Norwegian culture power is expected to be decentralized. The second-generation pastor would be influenced by the Norwegian culture. It is then natural for him to react negatively towards an uneven distribution of power to one leader, while none of the other leaders mention any issues about power. Rather on the contrary as they describe to be respected and listened to.

According to Hofstede (2021) the topics discussed above, high acceptance of power distance and collectivism, are features all Asian cultures have in common. Encouraging cooperation, involvement and consensus, which Choi promotes in her theory of communal leadership (2020), are features belonging to the feminine side of Hofstede's dimension of masculinity (2021). Only a few of the Asian countries, like Vietnam, are categorized as feministic cultures, while other Asian countries, among them the Philippines, score high on masculine values like performance and success, as does also the USA. Norway is categorized by Hofstede as a very feministic culture. This might influence the Asian leaders in Norway and encourage them to promote feminine values, such as involvement and consensus. According to Choi (2020) migrants perform *hybridisations* as they understand the surrounding culture and adjust it to their own context. Applying this theoretical perspective to the discussion, might make Norway a better context for creating a communal leadership than the USA context, simply because Norwegian culture is more feministic, according to Hofstede's understanding of the term (2021).

5.1.3 Between change and tradition

The challenges of language and culture in the congregation is something all the informants are constantly facing. As previously mentioned, the pastors choose different ways of handling the situation. One of my informants is teaching the Asian language to the second generation so that they can participate in the common worship service. The pastor emphasizes the shared happiness experienced in these common services. According to Choi's understanding (2020), the fellowship can be seen as a tool to protect the Asian

identity and ethnic values, which would be regarded as a good solution from the perspective of a first-generation pastor who would mainly be influenced by the Asian culture. On the other hand, another informant questions the practice of making the second generation join the Asian language service and stresses the importance of faith before language knowledge. He promotes separate meetings for the different generations adapted to the different cultures and languages.

Some of the informants are talking about the reluctance to change as a challenge they are facing. Both congregation members and leaders are described as reacting negatively to change and activities done differently than what has always been done. The second-generation pastor explains this as different leader styles in accordance with Choi's findings (2020). Choi describes different strategies in handling challenges between the first- and second-generation pastors. The pastor describes his leader-style as very different from the style of the first-generation leaders. My number of informants is far too small to be able to argue for such a difference. Still, all the leaders describe their strategies to handle the challenge to both take into consideration tradition and change on a scale between emphasising Asian language and culture on the one hand or Norwegian language and culture on the other hand. Choi explains these different strategies with different leader styles. I would rather explain this through different cultural focuses and different cultural values in the decision making. While some of the leaders would focus on the community as a whole and on the common good, others would focus more on the individual members through a more individualistic world view. Seen through the prism of Hofstede's model (2021), they are either emphasising the Asian collectivistic values or the Norwegian individualistic values the most. David believes change is something a leader must be able to handle. Even though the other informants do not directly mention change, they all describe how they make changes when meeting the different challenges. In the coming sections this will be further discussed in the light of Choi (2020) and Mahadevan et al.'s (2011) theoretical perspectives.

5.1.4 Communication between cultures and languages

Reflecting on my findings concerning communication in the light of Choi (2020) and Hofstede (2021), language stands out as a fundamentally important aspect, and an even greater

challenge than what Choi (2020) describes in her analysis. As in Choi's findings, the leaders need to address the communication challenge between the first and second generation. In addition, my informants express their own lack of language skills in Norwegian or in the Asian mother tongue to be a limitation. Hofstede (2021) is not addressing language but focuses on cultural differences. The leaders need to consider both the Asian collectivistic cultures with high tolerance for uneven power distribution, as well as the Norwegian individualistic culture with an expectation to be included in decision making processes. The latter as the second generation, as well as Norwegian members, are influenced by Norwegian culture. Choi's description of a communal leadership (2020) by multiple leaders, based on communal consensus, corresponds well with my findings. Though consensus belongs to the feminine side of Hofstede's dimension of masculinity (2021), in which only some of the Asian countries are categorized as cultures on the feministic side of the scale. Norway is also a very feministic culture according to Hofstede, so seen in the light of Choi's theory of hybridization (2020), the Norwegian culture would be a good context for developing the leadership style that Choi argues for. My findings show that all the leaders perform change in facing challenges, but they use different strategies to solve them. Choi explains the dissimilar strategies to be caused by different leader styles and control issues amongst the generations. Another explanation might be different values influencing the decision making.

5.2 Integration as a leadership task

As mentioned above, recruitment of new believers, or new members of the congregations is one of the main goals for the leaders and the congregations. Meaning that integration might be regarded as a goal in itself, while communication is a tool to reach this goal. By using Askeland (2015a), Choi (2020) and Mahadevan et al.'s (2011) theoretical perspectives as framework, I will look deeper into the strategies the migrant congregation leaders apply to solve the different challenges they face connected to the four tasks of integration that stood out in my findings.

5.2.1 Integrating generations

The first task is connected to the generation gap, both in the private sphere but also in the congregation. Being leaders in a collectivistic culture, and being pastors of the congregations, the leaders regard it as part of their role to help the families cope with the generation gap. It is also considered part of their role to deal with the challenges this gap brings into the church life. The first generation has a need for a place to get together and worship in their own language. These members are also mainly influenced by the culture of the society they come from, and they wish to maintain the parts of this culture that they value. For the second generation, Norwegian has become their first language, and they are more influenced by the Norwegian culture than what their parents are. So, the leaders try to find ways to meet all needs and expectations. The solutions they choose differs depending on the situation in the different congregations and depending on who they are as leaders, which generation they belong to, and what culture and values they are influenced by themselves. In the perspective of Choi's research (2020), which focuses on the intercultural side of integration, this corresponds with her concepts of *hybridity and authenticity* and *communality and individuality*. The leaders explain how they try to find ways to keep the second generation in the congregation. By using both languages in common meetings and by organising separate activities for the second generation. Not either the one or the other, but by having a mix of both with a variety of what is emphasized the most depending on the culture and values the leaders and their congregations are influenced by.

Seen from another perspective, using Askeland's model (2015a) of leader roles, the integration work can be understood as part of the internal-relational leader role which Askeland illustrates with the leaders' dialogue with the employees, guiding them into an integrated team. In my study the leaders try to integrate both generations into the congregation. To do this successfully, the leaders listen to both generations. They join in on group-meetings like youth evenings and leader-group meetings, and they talk to people individually through counselling for instance. In this way they also act as mediators between the generations or the different groups in the congregation. This is a role they also have as they work with the cultural and lingual challenges within the migrant families, as described above. So, the internal-relational leader role of the migrant congregation leaders demands for them to be both integrators and mediators, while Askeland only describes the integrator-

responsibility to this role. These differences may be explained by different need as the cultural differences are greater in the organisations of this study.

5.2.2 Integrating external members

Another responsibility for the leaders is to integrate Norwegian members into the congregations. This is the second task, and it has the same aspects as the integration of the second generation, only it is described to be even more challenging as the language barriers and cultural differences are even greater. As described in the findings chapter 4.4.2, this integration task is considered very difficult, shown by the example of integrating Norwegians in the congregation's board. In the light of Askeland's model, integrating Norwegians into the congregation belongs to the external-relational leader role, as the newcomers are so different because of the cultural and lingual differences. Nevertheless, including Norwegians is something all the pastors wish to do, and some of them see it happen more and more, especially in the young adult groups. Also here, the leaders need to act as mediators between the Norwegian and the Asian members. To be able to do so, they need to understand both sides. This corresponds with Choi's concept of hybridization (2020) which requires an understanding of, and acceptance of both cultures authenticity to be able to adjust them into a new context, or a new hybrid culture.

5.2.3 Integrating members in society

The third task the informants express they need to handle, is to help the Asian members integrate into the Norwegian society. The migrant congregations need leaders who are able to communicate with and understand the surroundings in order to lead the integration with the Norwegian community. This may not be a typical leader task according to leadership models, but it is an important factor to understand this particular group of leaders. In a church setting this integration work can be regarded as part of holistic pastoral care based on biblical values. It can also be understood as supportive leadership in a feministic culture seen from the perspective of Hofstede (2021) who points out values as sympathy for the

weak and solidarity as characteristics for a feministic culture. Looking at Askeland's model (2015a), these examples show how difficult it can be to differentiate between internal and external relations. Integrating congregation members into the surrounding society can be understood as internal-relational as the leader focuses on the internal members and help them. On the other hand, it can be seen as an external-relational role as the integration is into the external surroundings, and not to the internal congregation.

Choi (2020) describes a similar challenge which she calls *difficulties of developing social services*. In her research, the leaders introduce American culture and values to the members, by providing a range of services like English-teaching and legal advice, in order to help the migrants survive in the society. They also strive to meet the members needs to preserve their culture and values, which demands the leaders to provide different programs like Asian-language teaching or cultural programs. My informants also consider maintaining the migrant's culture and values as an equally important part of their responsibilities as promoting integration, but they do not link it directly to developing social services. Their integration work into the Norwegian society can rather be described as something that influences everything they do, as culture, values and identity are linked together. Again, what the leaders strive to achieve can be seen in the light of Choi's concepts of *hybridity and authenticity*. They are open for change or hybridisation of cultures as they need to adapt to the reality in which they exist. At the same time the aspect of authenticity can be seen in not accepting everything without consideration, but with the Bible as the base, trying to maintain the good parts of the Asian family-culture. Or, as one of the leaders explains, taking the good parts of the Norwegian culture and put it into their family-culture, without compromising any good values.

Another relevant perspective, similar to Choi's theoretical perspective, is Mahadevan et al.'s concept of *intercultural creation* (2011). They consider culture to be an ongoing, constructive, interactive sensemaking process where people constantly reflect on who they are and that some of the answers come from being part of groups. When these processes happen with groups of people from different cultures, an *inter-cultural* creation takes place. This corresponds with how the leaders, together with their co-workers, volunteers, and the congregation members, constantly strive to find solutions for the different challenges they

meet. When they find solutions, this forms the culture in the congregations, which can be regarded as new hybrid “third” cultures, or “in-between” cultures. According to my findings there may be several different “third” cultures in the congregations existing side by side. It seems like the first-generation group, the children’s group, the youth group and the young adult’s group all have their own hybrid culture build up by different elements of the Norwegian, Asian and also international culture. The leaders try to understand them all but find it best to delegate to others the part which they find most different. One may ask whether there is a limit for the ability to adapt or hybridize? Still the leaders strive to keep the congregation together as described under the first task. Mahadevan et al. studied the meeting between German and Chinese co-workers with which are more different than what one would expect the cultural differences between the generations to be, and they found examples of intercultural creation. Nevertheless, the need to create such solutions would be even more pressing between family members and congregation members, who can be regarded as an extended family for migrants, than it is for co-workers in a company.

5.2.4 Integrating the congregations to the surrounding context

The fourth task for the leaders under the topic of integration is being a link to Norwegian churches and communities. This task can be understood as the external-relational leader role called the mediator in Askeland’s model (2015a) which includes the responsibility of building external relations. The goal for the migrant congregation leaders is to integrate the congregation into the Norwegian context. As described earlier, it is within the transnational context of their own culture and language group the leaders’ and the congregations’ main networks exist. Still the leaders express a wish for more cooperation with Norwegian churches, organisations, and communities, and they regard it as their responsibility to be the mediators between these and the congregations. Also this integration task, is described to be challenging because of language and culture differences. Additionally, uncertainty of theological standing, caused by lack of knowledge, is mentioned as an obstacle. Most of the informants have good Norwegian connections though, and these are described as beneficial strengths. Nevertheless, my findings indicate a duality in this role which is not indicated in Askeland’s model. The Asian migrant congregation leaders are the link to the transnational networks, a role in which they show confidence. They also consider it their responsibility to

build such networks locally, but when it comes to integration into Norwegian society, they express less confidence and satisfaction with their own achievement. Still, they all express a wish for more cross-cultural cooperation which according to Mahadevan et al. (2011) gives room for intercultural creations. One may ask if this duality in building networks gets enough attention in leadership research.

5.2.5 Leaders as Integrators

Based on four tasks rooted in cultural and lingual differences, with help of Askeland (2015a), Choi (2020), Hofstede (2021), and Mahadevan et al. (2011) I have reflected on my findings on the topic of integration. In the light of Askeland's model (2015a), this work mainly belongs to the *Integrator* role. My informants see it as very important to integrate both the second generation and new members, amongst them Norwegians, into the congregations. They also regard it as their responsibility to integrate the whole congregation into the Norwegian society. They try to do this by acting as a link to Norwegian communities, which according to Askeland's model can be categorised as the *Mediator* role. They also see it as their role to help the members integrate to the surrounding society individually, which can be understood as either internal- or external-relational or both. All this work is characterised by challenges in the encounter of Asian and Norwegian culture. Seen through the prism of Choi's concepts of *hybridity and authenticity* and *communality and individuality* (2020), the leaders should work with both the communities and the individuals as they try to maintain what they consider as good parts of their culture, while finding ways to include new cultural influences through hybridisation. The integration work can also be understood by the help of Mahadevan et al.'s concept of *intercultural creation* (2011) as the solutions the leaders create when answering challenges, can be regarded as new hybrid "in-between" cultures.

5.3 Overall responsible leaders

A red thread in all the interviews with the leaders of the Asian minority congregations is that they understand themselves as overall responsible leaders. The stories that the informant tell can be analysed as different aspects of this overall responsible leadership, and Askeland's model (2015a) can be helpful to understand how they understand the different

leadership roles and illustrate where they coincide with leadership understanding in other contexts. It is especially the relational aspects of their work which is emphasized as important and as challenging in my findings. I will therefore discuss these aspects more thoroughly in this chapter.

5.3.1 Spiritual leaders and managers

As already described, my informants consider themselves as overall responsible leaders, both as good administrators but also, as spiritual and theological leaders. This corresponds with Askeland's description of the *Institutional leader* role which has an overarching responsibility for management as well as a responsibility for promoting values and managing meaning and purpose. Like Askeland's model, there is no clear distinction between the Institutional leader and the other four leader roles as the activities and responsibilities described can be understood as a manifestation of both this role and the other roles simultaneously. The part of Askeland's *Institutional leader* role that corresponds most with my findings, is the aspects of promoting values and managing meaning and purpose. Being the spiritual leader, responsible for leading the congregation on a biblical base and promoting values and visions, is regarded as the most important part of the migrant congregation leaders' responsibilities. Askeland found that the faith-based welfare organisation leaders also highlighted the aspect of responsibility of managing values, purpose and meaning. This part of the leader role is more dominating in my findings, as all the work and responsibilities described by my informants can be categorised as belonging to this role. This is because the organisations my informants lead are religious communities that are producing and maintaining faith, values, purpose and meaning. This is not just an overarching dimension; it is the very service or product they deliver. Spiritual development and the recruitment of new members, or believers, are regarded as the main goals of the organisations. Promoting values through ethical and cultural teaching, is regarded as important aspects for Christian and social development.

All of my informants gave the impression of mastering this overarching leader role based on the competence they have achieved through their theological education. Some of them also describe an understanding of being called by God, which gives them confidence in their role.

In their opinion, to be wanted and respected as leaders in their congregations, and also that their decisions are respected, are aspects of the leader role that communicate self confidence in the leader role. Only one of the informants, the second-generation pastor, questions the power issue of leading a congregation all on your own. I will discuss this further under the topic of communality and power distance.

Another one of Askeland's leader roles that can be used to better understand the leader role is the internal-task role that he calls the *Director*. Askeland explains the role to involve building structures and procedures, and to coordinate and plan work processes to achieve goals efficiently. My informants share how they establish and improve structures to ensure that the congregations reach their goals and to avoid conflicts. This includes organising the work in different programs which they delegate to volunteers to lead, setting up communication lines and reporting routines. As with the institutional leader role, the pastors do not mention any challenges connected to this role, rather many of them explicitly expressed a feeling of success and completion based on their experience and, also here, their education. While the institutional role is based on theological knowledge, the tasks of the Director is supported by church management skills. Several of the informants emphasized the importance of church management which was included in their study.

Further my informants describe responsibilities belonging to the external-task oriented leader role called *Service-developer* by Askeland even though it is not much emphasized. While Askeland defines the role of being responsible for developing strategic goals and services adjusted to the environment outside of the organisation, my findings show overlap with the area of developing services. Examples of tasks of a Service-developer would be building external structures, like legally registering the congregation, and finding resources for youth and children's work. Askeland does not go into details about the external context, but in my study, transnationality is an interesting aspect. Finding resources like Sunday school materials in the nearby Norwegian context is rare, explained by lack of theological knowledge which again leads to lack of trust. It seems common for the migrant churches to search for resources abroad, from their home countries, from the US, or other European countries, among sources which they know and trust. The transnational context is regarded

as closer than the nearby context that surrounds them, so the external-task oriented work of the migrant pastors is mainly carried out in the transnational context.

It is also mainly in the transnational context they recruit new members, volunteers, and co-workers, and it is in this context they build their networks and find their external cooperation partners. This includes cooperation with churches and network in their home countries, where the term mission work is commonly used. Leaders in the transnational networks support each other in their leader roles, and cooperate in organizing camps, mission trips and likewise. This matches the external-relational leader role Askeland calls the *Mediator*. The leaders express satisfaction with the networks and connections they have in the transnational context, but they also communicate a wish for more contact and cooperation with Norwegian pastors and communities in their neighbourhood. They find local networking challenging because of limited language skills and different cultures, as discussed under the topic of communication between cultures and languages. Askeland does not describe a similar division, but like my study he uncovered the importance of building, maintaining, and developing external relations and alliances. Also, he describes the leader as a role needed to balance and buffer for pressure from the outside. As for my findings, the leaders emphasize that the pressure comes from the internal challenges rather than external.

Being pastors, it is not a surprise to find that the part of the work my informants gave the most attention to was leading the members, the volunteers, and the co-workers. This part of their work can be classified as Askeland's internal-relational role, the *Integrator*. They describe how they encourage and inspire the co-workers and members to join in and participate to reach the goals and keeping the values of the congregation. They focus on community and practice communal leadership, leading not only their co-workers, but all the members. They ensure this by preaching and teaching the congregation, by following up individual members and families with counselling and home visits, by training and guiding volunteers, and by simply being present. Also here, language and cultural differences were pointed to as a source of great challenge.

5.3.2 Responsible leaders in contexts of translation

Reflecting on my findings with the help of Askeland's model, the different roles in the model can contribute to understand how on how Asian minority congregation leaders reflect on their role as leaders. The responsibilities of the internal-task role, the *Director*, is a role that my informants express to master well. The external-task focused *Service-developer* role is not much emphasized and only partly overlaps with Askeland's definition of the role as the task of finding resources. An interesting finding is that the transnational context is regarded more relevant than the Norwegian surroundings. This is also the case for the external-relational role called the *Mediator*, where transnational networks of the same culture are considered as the leaders' closest cooperation partners, while Norwegian connections and relations are rarer. Of the four roles, the internal-relational role, the *Integrator*, is emphasised the most. Still, being the spiritual leader, leading the congregation according to biblical values, is regarded as the most important part of the leaders' responsibilities. The spiritual part of the leader role corresponds to Askeland's *Institutional leader*, but in my findings, it is even more comprehensive. For my informants, who are leaders of religious organisations, spiritual growth and recruitment of new members, new believers, are the main goals and the very product delivered. Having all these tasks and responsibilities, my informants can best be described as *overall responsible leaders*.

5.4 Summarizing the analysis

My findings can be understood on the background of Askeland's model of leader roles (2015a), but as my informants work in a transnational context, the cross cultural and intercultural theoretical perspectives of Hofstede (2021) and Mahadevan et al. (2011) are helpful to understand important aspects of their leadership and leader roles. Choi's work (2020), which has many similarities to my findings, contributes to the understanding of the specific challenges these leaders face. I have found the leaders describe work and responsibilities that can be related to the five leader roles of Askeland's model (2015a). The tasks which can be categorized to the *Institutional leader* role is regarded to be most important. This because of the nature of the organisations they lead where faith and values are the main products. The task-based leader roles are not very much emphasised, but mainly described as something the leaders' master. It is the relational focused roles which

are given most consideration and it is here the language challenges and cultural challenges occur. The language challenges in my findings resemble but exceed Choi's descriptions (2020), and Hofstede's model (2021) helps to understand the cultural differences. Choi's concepts of hybridity and authenticity, communality and individuality (2020), and Mahadevan et al.'s concept of intercultural creation (2011) gives an understanding of what happens as the leaders find solutions for the challenges. Going back to Askeland's model (2015a), the relational-focused work these leaders describe, includes responsibilities for integration, both internally and externally, and mediating between different internal and external groups.

6 Concluding discussions

Through open interviews and analysis, I have explored the leaders of Asian migrant congregations' own understanding of their leadership. My main question has been what perception leaders of migrant congregations have of their own role as a leader. To answer this, I have formulated three sub questions of how they understand their leadership roles, what they regard as the greatest challenges, and what strategies they apply to solve them. I will now answer these questions and present my contribution to the field of research and the limitations of this study. I will also give my suggestions for further research and practical implementations.

6.1 The leaders' perception of their own role

I will now give brief answers to the three sub questions of this thesis, starting with the first question of how the migrant congregation leaders understand their leadership roles.

Analyzing the leadership of the Asian migrant congregation leaders with Askeland's model of leader roles (2015a) has given a picture of overall responsible leaders who can relate their work to all of the leader roles that Askeland is sketching in his model. What stands out most clearly from the material is that they describe themselves as "overall responsible leaders" having the full responsibility for their congregations, spiritually and managerially, which corresponds with what Askeland describes as *institutional leader*. This role also includes the responsibility for managing values and meaning which belongs to the role of being *spiritual leaders*, even though this responsibility appears more up front in the work of the leaders of migrant congregations than it does for Askeland's faith-based organization leaders. The migrant congregation leaders fill this central overarching leader role of Askeland, but the term *Institutional leader* does not fit. The congregations they lead are too young to be described as institutions, and the work they perform too dynamic to be regarded as institutional. The congregations can rather be described as fluid organizations which have to be constantly in change to meet the different needs and influences coming up internally and externally, and through members joining and leaving constantly due their character as

migrant congregations. In the same way the leaders must constantly work to make sure the community exists, that old members keep coming and new members join. Therefore, their leadership must be defined in relation to a fluid organization. I will therefore use the term *overall responsible leaders* to this leader role which includes both spiritual, relational and managerial responsibilities.

How they understand their spiritual and theological responsibilities emerge from the stories of the migrant congregation leaders as a very important part of their leadership, and it is interconnected with the managerial part of their work. They describe themselves to be holistic leaders which is also Askeland's description of the Institutional leader. *Pastors* is another label that can be used for this role. It is a theological term for leadership which translates "the (good) Sheppard" and is a commonly used title for this group of leaders that often carries all the responsibilities of this role. Though, in some contexts the term pastor is used primarily for spiritual and theological leaders, while the managerially leadership lay on others.

The following part gives a brief summarizing answer to the second sub question of the thesis asking what the leaders regard as the greatest challenges.

Communication, with its language challenges and intercultural challenges, stands out as a crucial aspect of the leadership of my informants. This is an aspect Askeland does not emphasize much though it is present in the description of the relational focused interpersonal leader roles. In my study, the challenge of communication is addressed on a more basic level and needs to be more profoundly analysed. Choi's descriptions of communication (2020) related challenges resemble my findings, though the language difficulties my informants face are more complex as they have three languages to handle, Norwegian, English and the Asian language, and not only two as in the US context

Communication is also complicated due to the different cultures the leaders deal with. The leaders need to be aware of and understand the different values and cultural characteristics the congregation members have, to be able to communicate in a way they understand. Cultural characteristics as collectivism and high acceptance of power-inequality, described in Hofstede's model (2021), are recognized in the informants' descriptions of Asian, and first-

generation Asian migrants' culture. The challenges occur when this culture meets the Norwegian culture which is characterised by individuality and an acceptance of power-inequality. Still, other sides of the Norwegian culture, as promoting cooperation and consensus, appear to match the understanding of leadership of the Asian migrant congregation leaders as they describe a communal leadership.

Finally comes the answer to the third sub question asking what strategies the migrant congregation leaders apply to solve the challenges.

The Asian migrant congregation leaders' leadership is most of all described to be integrative. Askeland's *integrator* leader role (2015a) overlaps with my findings, but the integration-work the migrant congregation leaders perform also differs in many ways. He describes faith-based organisation leaders dialoguing with the co-workers integrating them into a team. This is also done by the migrant congregation leaders who in addition work with integration on several other areas. This because the context they lead in consist of different cultures, languages, groups and levels, and as there is no clear line between co-workers, volunteers and members in the communal leadership they perform. Also, to perform integration, both internally and externally, they need to be mediators who help communicating between cultures. Here my findings show a more complex picture compared with Askeland's research as he is only describing the mediating role in relation to external relations and not in connection with processes of integration. When the migrant congregation leaders are doing so, searching for solutions, they lead processes which can lead to *intercultural creation* of hybrid "in-between" cultures as described by Mahadevan et al. (2011). Such solutions would be to combine elements from the Asian and the Norwegian culture in the congregations, and in the leadership of the congregations. Singing songs in different languages would be an easily observable cultural expression, while it takes more cultural knowledge to understand a communal leadership style as a result of intercultural creation. This understanding of leadership corresponds with Choi's concepts of *hybridity and authenticity* and *communality and individuality* (2020) which she summarises as a Postcolonial leadership. She describes this understanding of leadership as the opposite of an authoritarian leader style inherited from the oppressive colonial rulers. I have few findings pointing to authoritarian leader styles amongst migrant congregation leaders. It might be the difference between the

Norwegian and the American contexts that leads to dissimilar findings. Different focuses and volume of studies may also be a reason.

To conclude, it can be helpful to present the leadership of Asian migrant congregation leaders in a modified version of Askeland’s model (2015a). This model answers the overarching question of what perception migrant congregation leaders have of their own role as a leader.

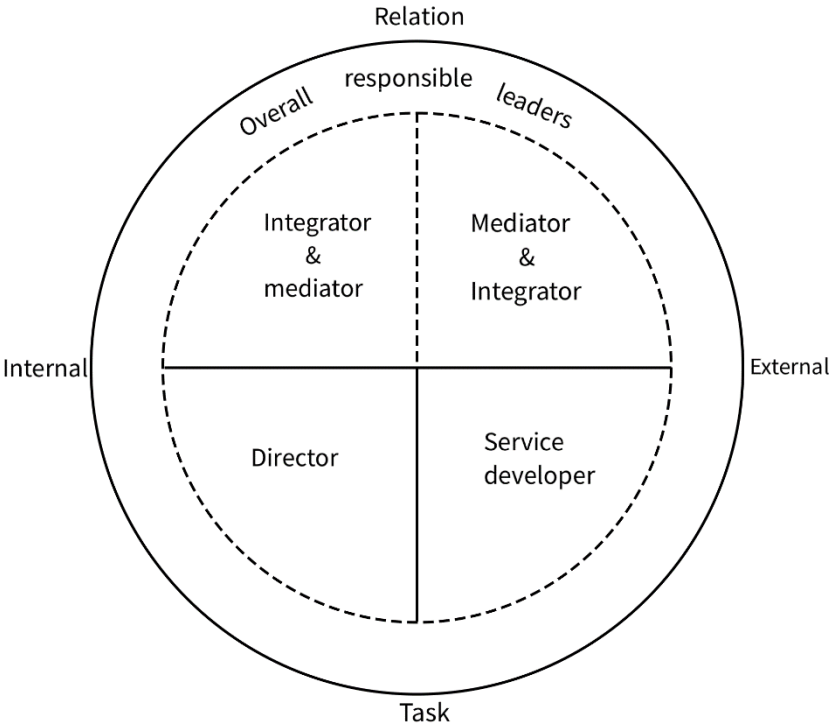


Figure 2: *Organisational functions and managerial roles of leaders of migrant congregations*

The circle of the overall responsible leader is placed outside the model of the two dimensions, enclosing all the other roles instead of being placed in the middle. This indicates the importance of the value- and purpose-based role these leaders have. There is an inner circle keeping the broken line from Askeland’s model, as the manifestations of the overall responsible leader role are blended together with the other roles.

The relation focus is placed on top to indicate its significance. The line between the internal- and external-relational part is also broken as they are both integrators and mediators working in between of people and in between of cultures, internally and externally, often at

the same time. The director and the service developer will be placed at the bottom of the model as the relational work is more emphasised.

Based on the revised model above, the understanding of leadership among the leaders of Asian migrant congregations can be summarised like this:

They understand themselves as *Overall responsible leaders*, responsible for creating and leading fluid organisations or organisational units. They have the overall responsibility, spiritually and managerially, for the performance and results in producing and managing purpose, meaning, and values.

For them the most important task is to be *Internal integrators and mediators*, relationally oriented, focusing on motivating, developing and empowering the employees, volunteers and members. Co-leading and consulting with them, mediating between groups and individuals and integrating them to becoming a dynamic team creating hybrid cultures.

Being responsible for the organisations implies also the *External mediator and integrator* role, which has an orientation towards building, maintaining and developing external relations by translating and mediating between cultures, forming new alliances of functional hybrid cultures, and integrating the organisation and its members to the surrounding context.

The *Service-developer* is also task-focused, but with an external orientation, responsible for building structures and services connected to the environment outside of the organisation, both the local- and the transnational context. Some of these tasks must be done in the Norwegian context, as finding meeting locations and legally registering the congregations, while other tasks are regarded to be easier accessible in the transnational context, as Sunday school teaching material.

Less emphasised is the leadership role as *Director* which is task-oriented and has an internal focus which involves building structures and procedures, planning, delegating and coordinating work to achieve goals efficiently and avoid conflict.

With these modifications, the model gives a picture of Asian migrant congregation leaders leadership and their leader roles through the perception of my informants. It is a leadership of multiple expectations: from the congregation members, from the surrounding society, from the transnational networks, and also from the leaders themselves. It is a holistic leadership which includes both spiritual, relational and managerial leader roles. The relational responsibilities are most emphasized, while the spiritual aspect is regarded to be the most important. Also, their leadership must be adapted to the migrant congregations which are organizations in constant change. Holding all these aspects together, the Asian migrant congregation leaders can be described as overall responsible leaders, spiritually and managerially, leading processes of hybrid intercultural creations while performing integrative leadership, mediating between cultures, languages and contexts.

6.2 Contributions to the field of research

As shown in the state of the art, the field of research on migrant congregations in Norway has expanded the recent years. So has also research on leadership of congregations mainly in the Church of Norway, but not much on leadership of migrant congregations. This study has aimed to fill a little part of this gap. The outcome of the study points to the importance of language and cultural competence to achieve good communication which is needed when leading individuals and groups living between two cultures. The study further points to the leaders' responsibilities of mediating between languages and cultures, integrating internals and externals into the congregations and to the surrounding context. In doing this, they are leading processes of intercultural creations which make the congregations hybrid. These are leader tasks which seem to be especially important for this specific group of leaders, but transferable to leaders of other organisations operating in transnational and intercultural contexts. These aspects might be relevant for all leadership research as there will always be different cultures present in all organisations, and as the world is getting more and more intercultural and transnational.

For the field of research on migrant congregations, this study contributes by exploring what the characteristics and contexts of these organisations demand of leadership. The study shows the complex and demanding role leaders of migrant congregations have, and through

this it confirms the importance these leaders, as earlier studies show. Also, there is little knowledge about how leaders of migrant congregations think and act. Some think of migrant congregations as closed organisations that further parallel societies. This research shows the opposite: the leaders focus on mediation and integration and see it as their task to help the members find a role in the Norwegian society.

6.3 Limitations and further research

As a study on a master's level is limited, this thesis has looked into some aspects of the leadership of migrant congregations without possibility of going deeper into different topics which emerged from the interviews. I therefore suggest for further studies on migrant congregation leaders with focus on their integration and mediation work. Such studies can have an internal focus to learn more about this special kind of leadership. They can also have an external focus studying these organisations in relation to the local and transnational context they exist in.

A finding that really stood out from the study is the importance of communication in leadership of congregations. In my findings the topic is addressed on another level than what is common in other research about leadership in congregations, as the challenges my informants must handle are as basic as different languages. The impact these challenges have on the leadership is profound. I draw this conclusion from the leaders' expressions of not feeling qualified for parts of their work. Communication related to migrant congregations is an important area to do further research because new migrants will continue to come as the world is getting more and more intercultural and transnational.

This study has also uncovered the processes of intercultural creations which take place within migrant congregations, further studies would be interesting, not only in migrant congregations, but also in other international organisations.

6.4 Practical implications

This study has given us an understanding of Asian migrant congregation leaders as an important group of leaders, not only for the organisations they lead, but for our society in general. They have a strategic position in between which they use as integrators and mediators with a vision for their congregations and their member to be resources for the society they live in. This is the opposite of understanding migrant congregations as parallel societies. Nevertheless, the study has uncovered areas which can be useful for this group of leaders to strengthen their capacity to do this job.

The first area is to build or improve networks with local Norwegian leaders of congregations and communities. Migrant congregation leaders have supportive transnational networks to lean on. Some of them also have Norwegian connections through their denominations, while others do not. Building local networks with Norwegian churches and communities, could make an arena for sharing the vision and responsibility for leading integration processes. Secondly, this study has shown the complexity of the leadership of this specific group of leaders. Therefore, it could be useful to make arenas where migrant congregation leaders of different nationalities and denominations can come together and discuss common topics of their leadership and leader roles.

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Appendix 1, Interview guide

Topics with questions I might use:

I would start with background questions

1. Background

How long time have you had this leader position?

Is this your first position as a leader?

What is your educational background?

What is your nationality?

In which countries have you lived before you came to Norway?

Then I will first ask quite open questions

2. Perception of leader role

Tell me about your role as leader of the congregation, you may very well use example stories.

What makes you happy about being a leader of the congregation?

What is the most challenging?

If needed I will ask further, using more specific questions to cover topics which I believe relevant

2. Leadership in practise

What do you do in your work?

Who do you interact with?

What are the most important aspects of being leader?

How is the leadership of your congregation organized?

Do you have employed co-workers/volunteer co-workers?

Who are your most important cooperation partners and/or connections?

3. The transnational and transcultural aspects

How many of your members have migrant background/ from what countries?

How does this influence your job as a leader?

What are the most important needs of the members/migrants?

How does your job differ from leaders of “normal” Norwegian congregations/ “normal” congregations in your home country?

Do you/the congregation have links to a church or congregation in the country of origin? If so, how does this influence your role as a leader?

Are there other connections to the culture/country of origin?

How does the transcultural and transnational context influence your work and role as leader for a Christian congregation?

4. Resources for being a leader – faith, theology, education and values

How does faith influence your work/role as a leader?

How does your education influence your work/role as a leader?

How would you describe the importance of theology for your work/role as a leader?

How would you describe the importance of leadership training/education for your work/role as a leader of the congregation?

What does it mean for you to be a man/woman, young/experienced?

What are the most important values for your work/role as a leader?

Have your values changed since you came to Norway?

How would you describe your values in relation to “typical” Norwegian values and values “typical” for your home country/countries?

5. Future aspect

What do you think the congregation looks like in ten years? Hopes and fears

How/where do you picture yourself in ten years? Hopes and fears

Appendix 2, Information letter with Consent form

Are you interested in taking part in the research project?

“Leaders of migrant congregations’ perception of their own role as a leader”

This is an inquiry about participation in a research project where the main purpose is to do qualitative research on leaders of migrant congregations’ perception of their own role as a leader. In this letter we will give you information about the purpose of the project and what your participation will involve.

Purpose of the project

In this study I want to explore how leaders of migrant congregations understand their own leader roles. The research question of the thesis is: “What perception does leaders of migrant congregations have of their own role as a leader?” In recent years there has been done several research projects on migrant congregations, and also on leadership of congregations, but so far not so much on leadership of migrant congregations. I believe the combination of these two factors makes the leader role more complex and want to explore both advantages and challenges seen from the leaders’ own perspectives. Topics of leadership in practice, transnationalism and trans-culturalism, education/training, theology, and values will be included. The project is my master’s thesis in the Value based leadership program study at VID Specialized University.

Who is responsible for the research project?

VID Specialized University is the institution responsible for the project.

Why are you being asked to participate?

You are one of the 5 to 7 leaders of various East-Asian protestant migrant congregations from different parts of Norway who are asked to participate in the project. I aim to have a variety of age, sex, denominations, countries of origin and length of service in the congregations.

What does participation involve for you?

If you chose to take part in the project, this will involve that you give an in-depth interview. It will take about 60-90 minutes. I will use narrative method to make the interview as open as possible, giving room for your own stories and reflections. I will start by asking you to tell me about your role as leader of the congregation, about what makes you happy, and what is challenging. Further I may ask about what you do in your work, how transnational and - cultural aspects influence your work, the importance of theology and/or leadership training for your role as a leader, and about values in different cultures.

Your answers will be recorded electronically on an approved Dictaphone. Additionally, I will make notes of relevant observations during the interview. If it is convenient for you, the interview will take place in your office or at the location where your congregation meet.

Participation is voluntary

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

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

We will only use your personal data for the purpose specified in this information letter. We will process your personal data confidentially and in accordance with data protection legislation (the General Data Protection Regulation and Personal Data Act).

In addition to me, only my supervisor, Annette Leis Peters, will have access to the data.

To ensure that no unauthorized persons are able to access the personal data, I will replace your name and contact details with a code. The list of names, contact details and respective codes will be stored separately from the rest of the collected data. I will store the data on an encrypted memory stick, and all data, digital and on papers will be locked away.

The information that will be published is that my informants are leaders of East Asian protestant migrant congregations in Norway. The informants will be anonymised and no information of age, sex, country of origin or city in Norway will be published.

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

The project is scheduled to end at the end of 2021. After this all personal data, including any digital recordings, will be deleted.

Your rights

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

- access the personal data that is being processed about you
- request that your personal data is deleted
- request that incorrect personal data about you is corrected/rectified
- receive a copy of your personal data (data portability), and
- send a complaint to the Data Protection Officer or The Norwegian Data Protection Authority regarding the processing of your personal data

What gives us the right to process your personal data?

We will process your personal data based on your consent.

Based on an agreement with VID Specialized University, NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS has assessed that the processing of personal data in this project is in accordance with data protection legislation.

Where can I find out more?

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

- Merete Hallen, by email: merete.hallen@kianorge.no or by telephone: +47 48 31 41 57

- VID Specialized University via my supervisor: Annette Leis Peters, Annette.Leis-Peters@vid.no
- Our Data Protection Officer: Nancy Yue Liu, nancy.yue.liu@diakonhjemmet.no
- NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS, by email: personverntjenester@nsd.no or by telephone: +47 55 58 21 17

Yours sincerely,

Project Leader Anette Leis Peters
(Researcher/supervisor)

Student Merete Hallen

Consent form

I have received and understood information about the project “Leaders of migrant congregations’ perception of their own role as a leader” and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give consent:

to participate in an in-depth interview

I give consent for my personal data to be processed until the end date of the project, approx. end of 2021

(Signed by participant, date)