



A Qualitative Study
A Journey Towards Hillsong Church
A Norwegian Story

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Abstract

Hillsong Norway, which have congregations in several of the larger cities in Norway. Hillsong Norway quite recently formally established through incorporation of an already existing comparable locally grown church network. Based on qualitative studies and fieldwork in both churches, the thesis discusses how individuals and congregations come to see themselves as part of a global church and how this relates to individual and congregational identity. Using especially transnational social theory and globalization perspectives, the thesis addresses how taking part in global networks like these affect the sense of belonging, identities as well as social and community values in the congregations.

My master thesis set focus on young adults putting church as number one priority in their life. The church is Hillsong Norway, where my fieldwork has primarily been on the west coast of

Norway, in Sandnes and Stavanger. I want to investigate what attract young adult towards Hillsong Church, and further what it means to be a part of a global network like Hillsong.

As there are no research published on Hillsong Norway at this point, I find it very exciting to enter this new field. As Hillsong being such a fast growing and worldwide church, I wanted to study this church and the concept it is built on both a local and global perspective. Moreover, why is this church attracting so many young people- especially people who might not be used to going to church. Personally, I have been to Hillsong Church several times- both at their global conferences and Sunday-services at my local church. I find the enthusiasm and engagement interesting, therefore I wanted to find out more about this particular church, Hillsong.

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Introduction

Sunday morning came the news; Intro changes name and becomes a Hillsong church.

The young and vibrant congregation Intro has been part of the Hillsong Family since 2014, but on Sunday, May 14, Intro founders Jostein and Brit Krogedal announced that Intro takes a step further and becomes the fullest Hillsong church. From 21 May, the eight Intro campuses in Norway will change their name from Intro to Hillsong Norway. (Lunde, 14.5. 2017)¹

During the period between 1982 and 2018, the Australian church Hillsong has been growing and established churches all around the world. With churches in 19 countries, in Australia, Africa, America, Latin America, Asia and Europe, Hillsong's expansion continues to new countries and contexts.² According to founder and global pastor Brian Houston on a recent "Vision Sunday," Hillsong Church will also be established in Asia in 2018. Since Hillsong established itself it has become a growing and well known global church. Christian or not, one might have come across their songs and worship in churches, on YouTube or Spotify. But, Hillsong is more than just a church, a place to meet on Sundays, a collection of worship songs, a style of praising God, a hip pastoral team or a big brand. Hillsong is also a home and family to many (Gerardo, 2017.)

One theme that this thesis will evolve around is Hillsong's global growth of impact, making Hillsong Church a global network, building relations beyond borders, and creating a larger global church family. One needful perspective to understand this phenomenon is to recognize how globalization works as a force behind this growing success. Without globalization, communication and connections from Sydney to the rest of the world would not be that efficient. There would be no YouTube channel to listen to Hillsong music, and there would be no Instagram, where one could follow Hillsong Church or Brian Houston. There would likely not be held large conferences in London, or Cape Town, or more Norwegian students at

¹ Translated by author.

² Hillsong.com. Accessed 2.4.2018.

Hillsong College in Australia, and likely few people would know to participate in global events such as A21's "A walk for freedom" in the streets of Stavanger, Norway³.

Globalization breaks territorial boundaries, so that we can listen to Hillsong United's newest release on Spotify or watch Hillsong Church News in a Sunday service in Hillsong Sandnes, Norway. This brings us to the main focus of this thesis: The fact that Hillsong established itself as a church network in Norway about one year in May 2017 (Ystebø, 2017). From that time Hillsong has drawn attention from both secular tabloid newspapers, national broadcasters and multiple Christian newspapers in Norway. One of these newspapers, *I Dag* reported: «Over 2000 attended Sunday service: Hillsong Norway started with a record»⁴ (24.5.2017). This thesis will look closer at the phenomenon of Hillsong in Norway.

1.1 Background context for the study

Today, we live in a society where secular values seems to characterize society and how people understand themselves, other people, and the world. We make decisions every single day, and in every situation that we face. Some decisions we take only affect the next couple of hours in the day. Other may govern the direction of the rest of our lives. On the other hand, Christianity has been a major part of Norwegians identity. Historically, the church has been a place where people have gathered both in celebration, but also through crisis and sorrow. The church has given Norwegians traditions, customs and a common set of values.

In recent years, an increasing number of churches has grown and spread throughout the country. It has been stated that over 400 new congregations have been planted in Norway the last 20 years (Dawn, 2014). The Intro churches were some of these churches. Intro Church first started in the region of Rogaland, on the west coast of Norway 2003. It was in the living room of the founding pastors Jostein and Brit Krogedal, in Jærveien 247 in the city of

³ A21 is a non-profit organization working to rescue and free people from human trafficking and slavery. <http://www.a21.org/>. Accessed 12.5.2018.

⁴ Translated from Norwegian, by author.

Sandnes that the journey began.⁵ Starting with ten people, Intro Church, soon started to grow and eventually spread to other cities in the region and beyond.

By 2016, Intro had planted a total of eight churches in Norway located in the west, south and east of Norway. Starting on the west coast in Rogaland district, Intro had churches in Sandnes, Stavanger, Egersund and Karmøy. Moving southward there was one Intro church in Kristiansand. Further east there were Intro churches in Oslo, Tønsberg and Drammen. In May 2017, the Intro churches became a part of Hillsong and changed its name from Intro to Hillsong Norway. Since then, two more churches have been established, one in Trondheim in the middle of Norway and one in Ålesund, on the north-west coast. Being aware of this spread and transformation made me wonder: Where did that come from? How did that happen?

1.2 Motivations for the study

My driving force for selecting the specific topic is curiosity. In the spring 2015 I wrote my bachelor thesis on Hillsong, but from a different angle, doing a text study on Sisterhood, a global women's movement within Hillsong Church. Studying the phenomenon of Sisterhood, I developed more questions and curiosity, wanting to study Hillsong beyond the women's movement, and making me very interested in why Hillsong as a global church had experienced large growth within a short time.

Another area of interest is the debates around the so-called 'megachurches' that arise in all corners of the world, including Norway. Though there is much critique against this type of church, I have wanted to study this myself and not just read from everyone else's perspective. In this view, I have been eager to research and experience myself what makes Hillsong attract people all over the world. Is there something behind the surface that can help explain this attraction? With its culture, music, style and young people, it is not what one would associate with a traditional church with its lively music and where people can move and express themselves freely in front of God with few limitations or restrictions. I have also been

⁵ Sandnes is the seventh largest city in Norway, with approximately 36300 people living there and still growing. The demography of Sandnes is also worth noticing when it comes to the average age group, and the fact that it is very young. (<https://no.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sandnes>) Accessed 12.4.2018.

interested in what may provide a sense of personal belonging for the people in the church, how being part of the church contributes to how people live their everyday lives. I was also very curious about their concept of family which I have noticed was frequently used by friends who are members within church, wanting to dig deeper into what makes Hillsong Church a “home” and “family” for so many of their members. For instance, what creates feelings of fellowship, or the sense of being a part of one big family. In this, I was interested in people’s prioritization and investment into church life. I want to know what inspire people to live church, not just on Sunday, but all days of the week, fully committed to the church and its members. And lastly, what may be the difference between people who are part of the Hillsong church family and people in secular, Norwegian society? These have been some of my driving questions which have contributed to my curiosity, to write my thesis on Hillsong Norway.

The goal of this thesis is thus, to find out more about the background factors that may play a role in the growth of the Hillsong Church and to better understand the link between Hillsong Australia, where the church was founded, to Hillsong Norway. In this, I want to emphasize the role of globalization for this rather new wave of Pentecostalism in Norway. In my thesis, I have wanted to emphasize in particular the attraction that Hillsong Norway has on young adults. More concretely, the main research questions for this study are a). *Why are young people attracted to the Hillsong Churches in Norway?* (A local perspective), and b). *How does it feel for Hillsong Norway to be a part of a global network like Hillsong?* (A global perspective).

An important note in this is that everything exists in a contextual frame. In this study, the contextual frame is for one the Norwegian society and the young men and women who are drawn to Hillsong Norway. The context is also global, in the sense that Hillsong Church is a global phenomenon taking place in a Norwegian context. In short, one could say that the contextual frame shifted from global to local, and from local to global.

The Hillsong church movement and its recent establishing in Norway, in my city, raise several questions. How can we understand and measure the rapid growth of Hillsong churches around the world, but also, especially on a national and local scale? An important note

concerns the defining element of growth, when looking at the trend in churches taking over already existing churches. This was the recent situation with Hillsong Ålesund, that used to be “Agapekirken”, an older Pentecostal church that was given a modern uplifting and updated style to boost the church attendance. In this situation, Hillsong is not really planting a new church, but giving the Hillsong name and brand to an already existing church, changing its concept with their directions and guidelines and concept of doing church.

Because Hillsong Norway is a part of Norwegian Pentecostal movement, I will cover some relations regarding Norwegian Pentecostal movement. Some areas in the tradition of the movement might have some contradictory implications towards Hillsong church Norway. Some of these implications may concern such as the view on gender roles, leadership, role of independency, membership or organizational structure.

The use of internet was of huge significance, and one may ask if the Hillsong Movement would be where it is today if it was not for the internet. Thanks to social media, Hillsong is known all around the world. Those who know Hillsong only through music and CDs, can now see the whole story behind it. Namely, that Hillsong is not just a band, playing good music and have multiple albums, but that Hillsong is in fact a church, a church described as “one house with many rooms.” In this sense, Hillsong is one big, global church with campuses in all corners of the world, from South Africa to Kiev, Los Angeles to Tel Aviv and from Stockholm to Norway.

1.3 Academic context

Global studies are the head discipline for this thesis. Within a large field of global studies there are a few selected disciplines. The research disciplines I have focused on in this thesis are as follows: globalization, Pentecostal movement, social relations and church growth. With a large focus on globalization, it is important to note that globalization is an umbrella covering increased interaction between people and countries. It covers growth, flow of money, trade, culture diversity, languages, technology, accessibility and communication. It is the cultural and religious aspects of globalization that will be the focus on this thesis. Further, “Ideas and images circulate with particular ease in transplanetary, supraterritorial spaces by means of electronic networks. Information technology (IT), telecommunications, and mass

media have thereby become primary sites of surplus accumulation in recent decades” (Scholte 2005). Further, one could say that Hillsong Church in Norway is a result of globalization. Because of technology it is possible to follow Hillsong on Instagram or Facebook, or watch a Sunday service on YouTube or their new Hillsong Channel. It is worth mentioning that I will not dig deep into the theological perspectives and of Hillsong Church due to the limited framework of the thesis.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

The thesis is divided into seven chapters. In chapter one, the introduction, I will give a short background story and motivation behind the choice of topic for this thesis. Chapter two focuses on the background and context for understanding Hillsong Church in its Norwegian context. I will look at the Intro Churches and their journey towards becoming Hillsong Norway. I will also briefly look at Hillsong Norway as being part of the Norwegian Pentecostal movement, while key focus will evolve around Hillsong Norway as being part of a global movement. Chapter three will draw attention to key theoretical perspectives that I have selected to guide my discussions. It will also include past research on the topic. In chapter four, I will present methodological considerations for the study. This includes research strategy, selection and collection of data, as well as methods for analysis. Further, I will discuss some of the ethical considerations in the project, along with research validity and reliability. Chapter five gives a presentation and analysis of the material gathered through observation and interviews. This involves the participants’ experience of being part of Hillsong Church in Norway and what this meant for various aspects of their lives. Chapter six continues a discussion of the key findings, followed by the final chapter where I will summarize and make some concluding reflections from the study, as well as presenting suggestions for further research and reflection about this thesis’ value and contribution in a larger context.

1.5 Little scholarly attention/ further research needed

I hope the following chapters may provoke to new questions and ideas for further research, particularly within the Norwegian context. Given the increasing number of Hillsong members, and the growing attention from social media, especially in the United States where names like

Justin Bieber and Kevin Durrant is often associated with Hillsong, the church has probably never been so popular. With a number of research on the Global Hillsong Movement, there are proportionately little scholarly attention on individual Hillsong Churches particularly from a local perspective. On that note, there is Miranda Klaver, who have conducted ethnographic research on local Hillsong churches in New York City and Amsterdam (Klaver, 2016). Still, I hope my research can contribute in the attention toward local Hillsong churches in the world, not just Norway.

2 Background and context

According to their own numbers, Hillsong Church has grown to have an average weekly attendance of 100 000 people across the churches around the world⁶. With an aim to reach those people who are not used to going to church, they present a church that seems to fit in with today's secular society. Here, it is worth noting how Hillsong distances itself to the idea of "religion" and Hillsong does not identify themselves as a denomination. To illustrate, Brian Houston, once said, "Jesus did not die to give us religion."⁷ In another quote, he stated,

⁶ <https://hillsong.com/no/media/>. Accessed 12.3.2018.

⁷ Hillsong Conference, 5-7.7.2010. Session 6.

“It’s not about religion, it’s about Jesus.”⁸ One question within our context of the study of Hillsong is then, could a church be both fun and modern, evangelizing and Jesus-centered at the same time?

2.1 Key concepts

This work falls under the discipline of global studies, which can be said to be an interdisciplinary approach within the social sciences. Within this frame of study, I will focus in particular on aspects of globalization, global Pentecostalism and culture to shed light on Hillsong Norway. Methodologically, the project has mainly an ethnographic focus and approach, which will be detailed further in the methodology chapter.

2.1.1 Globalization

Why is globalization theory relevant in the study of Hillsong Norway? To answer this question, I will turn to Jon Aart Scholte, who defines globalization as “The spread of transplanetary – and in recent times more particularly supraterritorial – connections between people” (Scholte, 2002, p. 13). In this sense, people are less restricted and more able to contact people beyond territorial lines. Globalization can thus take down the fences and reduce the barriers that are limiting us.

Globalization has been a phenomenon that has captured the focus of a great number of academic disciplines, language of discourse and scholarly encounters, allowing numerous viewpoints on what globalization is. Not surprisingly, there are a multitude of definitions, aiming to understand the complexity of globalization. In the challenge of concentrating on one applicable definition, one needs to look within the appropriate academic dissertation, in this context that will include, church growth and a religious network sharing the same culture and vision (Deininger, 2014 p. 19). Though the process of globalization prevalently is a term established within the economic sphere, and associated with the worldwide expansion of western capitalism, globalization also covers political, cultural, historical and social

⁸ Hillsong Conference, 5-7.7.2010. Session 1.

dimensions (Robertson 2003, pp. ,15-19 in Deininger 2014:21). Among all the current globalization theories, it is not my intention to provide an overview of these, but will only present the theory I find best suited for the subject of my thesis. I will therefore confer my argumentation to Jon Aart Scholte's (2005) critical introduction to globalization and his definition, but who at the same time stresses in this regard that "no definition is definitive" (Scholte, 2005, p. 53, 84).

On this ground, I believe Hillsong is evidently a result of globalization processes. Like most megachurches, Hillsong is participating in the win for attention in the secular arena, often with the use of marketing strategies surpassing what is generally common for other churches or other institutions of faith. So, in this perspective, one might say that Hillsong Church has made use of the tools available in today's modern and globalized world. With technology, mass-media, and other strategies for seeking outward, Hillsong has become a transplanetary and a supraterritorial church (Scholte, 2005).

2.1.2 Pentecostalism

In the same way, one might say that Pentecostal movement is a distinct expression of globalization (Demster, 1999). Birgit Meyer, who studies Pentecostalism as a global religion, presents some key features taking place in the Pentecostal landscape including: technology, material practices, things, and body moving/expressions. In Meyer's opinion, globalization is a concept with diversity, multiple identities, fragmentation, hybridity and post-modernity (Meyer, 2010, pp. 113-117).

Many consider the Azusa Street Revival in 1906 as the start of Pentecostalism. In Azusa Street at the time, one of the poorer areas in Los Angeles, a group of "ethnic minorities of Los Angeles" met. They experienced an encouraging sense of dignity and community in these gatherings, but which were absent in the larger society (Anderson, 1979, p. 69). The Azusa Street revival built on among others John Wesley's theology of "total sanctification" and the American holiness movement during the 1800s. It was especially the Afro-American preacher William Joseph Seymour who lead the historical revival that would develop into the

Pentecostal movement we know today. Through reports in the Los Angeles Times in April 1906, people heard about a “sensational revival meeting in Los Angeles”. This was the first of many reports about what was becoming one of the fastest growing religious meetings of the 20th century. The building in 312 Azusa Street, downtown Los Angeles is where the revival took place. It was a gathering of poor, interracial seekers speaking and singing in tongues, preaching and praying out loud moved by the spirit. The revival with Afro-Americans and white worshipping together got attention from both religious and secular media. The visitors coming to 312 Azusa Street, did not leave there empty handed, but brought the “fire” back with them, to the churches at home. (Synan, 1997, pp. 84-85, 98-100). Originally, The Pentecostal movement was intended to infiltrate already existing Christian groups, but ended up becoming a worldwide church community (Synan, 1997, p. 95). Thanks to excited and enthusiastic missionaries, the revival stretched rapidly. First in the United States then continued beyond American borders to all different parts of the world. What is broadly known as the Pentecostal Movement is today the largest group within Protestantism in the world (Synan, 1997, p. 285). Further, the Azusa Street Revival would be ranked as the farthest reaching religious occurrence in America in the twentieth century (Owens, 2005, p. 102). From the days of the Azusa Street revival until today, Pentecostalism has become the fastest growing religious group in the world. The most rapid growing and dynamic part of global Christianity with more than 500 000 000 Pentecostal-charismatics across nations and denominations (Ibid).

2.2 The Local Context

2.2.1 Intro Church Sandnes

In 2002, Brit and Jostein Krogedal were standing at a crossroad. As they tell their story, they had two options, one being to take a comfortable and easy way in terms of living life, and the other way, taking them on an unknown journey of faith. They took the latter and decided to re-design their whole life, cutting unproductive ties and bond with their dreams (Intro, 2009).

Already in 2003, on the 17th of August, Intro had their very first service at Hotel Residence in Sandnes with 27 people, and the hotel was the first ‘church building’ for Sunday services. In 2004, the church moved away from Hotel Residence and celebrating its first anniversary in

the cultural house for the municipality of Sandnes. They invited well known preachers, both from Norway and from abroad. Norwegian well-known TV-pastor Egil Svartdahl was invited, along with the company of profiled Pentecostal leaders such as Magnus Persson, founding pastor of United churches in Sweden, Scott Wilson, well-known teacher and preacher from Australia, and Gary Clark, pastor of Hillsong London. Brit and Jostein Krogedal and the Intro church thus had great support from people who believed in them, believing in a church that could break the ice between people, but also break down barriers for the church. They wanted to plant a church, “a meeting place between heaven and earth” (ibid).

The same year, Intro Church moved to “Pakkhuset” where they had their services for two years, until 2006. “Pakkhuset” was a nightclub at that time. This drift of doing church in secular buildings can be seen as a common trend in many of Hillsong churches all around the world, for example Hillsong NYC have Sunday services at the Manhattan nightclub Irving Plaza, and at a theatre in Times Square, and in an auditorium at Montclair State University⁹. Intro Church states that here they became less religious, but still with a clear message rooted in the Bible. They wished to give an insight of a Christian culture in a secular society. (ibid) In 2006, Intro church moved to Fredheim Arena in Sandnes, where they have been until today (2018). There was already another existing church in this assembly building, and this cohabitation of churches has been seen as a ‘role model’ in a Norwegian context. At this stage, Intro had grown from the ‘puberty stage’ to become a well-known, modern church. Further, Intro’s growth process did not stop at Fredheim Arena. In 2007, the church aimed at starting work also in the city of Stavanger, only 25 minutes away from Sandnes. Starting with a worship concert at a nightspot, Tou Scene, they wanted more (ibid). Before planting a church in Stavanger, Intro was started in Drammen, a city about a half an hour from Oslo with pastors Andreas and Kristine Hasseløy who already were connected to Intro and had similar dreams to plant a church for people who were not used to go to church (ibid). In Stavanger, the church was able to overdraw without cost the building of a former Pentecostal church in Kirkebakken 34, a building that was worth millions of Norwegian kroner. By May 2017, Intro had grown to become eight churches in the cities of Stavanger, Sandnes, Egersund, Karmøy, Kristiansand, Tønsberg, Oslo, and Drammen. Then in May 2017 the Intro churches became part of Hillsong Norway. Since then, two new churches have been established, one in Trondheim and one in Ålesund (ibid).

⁹ <https://www.gq.com/story/inside-hillsong-church-of-justin-bieber-kevin-durant>. Accessed: 13.5.2018.

In telling this story, however, pastor Jostein Krogedal attributes the development of the church in Norway to a vision inspired by Hillsong Church in Australia. Detailing the history, Krogedal often recalls the experience he had when he visited Hillsong in Sydney observing young people standing in line to get into the Sunday service. To hear God's word and worship, even on a stunningly beautiful summer day in Sydney Australia. Krogedal often says that if this was possible in Australia, then it is also possible in Norway. (ibid)

2.2.2 The Pentecostal Movement in Norway

Hillsong Norway is a part of the Pentecostalism movement in Norway and is as such also part of the evangelical 'free church' landscape in Norway. In 1907, the Pentecostal movement first arrived in Norway. It was Thomas Ball Barratt, who had been inspired through his journey in America, and wanted a revival in the already existing churches in Norway. Instead he ended up establishing a new Christian movement. Barratt was inspired by Azusa Street Revival. Pentecostal Christianity has a few aspects contrasting with other forms of Christianity. For instance, Pentecostals believe in baptism to take place when a person is matured enough to take an independent standpoint for what one personally believes in. Pentecostals also put more emphasize and focus on the Holy Spirit in everyday life, for instance, believing in the practices of 'spiritual gifts' such as speaking in tongues and healing through faith (Søderlind, 2007).

There are more than 330 local Pentecostal churches in Norway, most which are independent and self-governing churches. While there is estimated to be around 500 000 000 Pentecostals in the world, there is around 40 000 members in Norway, including both adults and children. Most Norwegian Pentecostal churches have democratically and congregationally elected leaders.¹⁰

¹⁰ <http://www.pinsebevegelsen.no/pinsebevegelsen/om-pinsebevegelsen.html>

Norwegian researcher Geir Lie (2007) states that even though there may be relatively many Pentecostals in Norway, Pentecostalism is only a subculture in the country whilst on a worldwide level, the landscape is different, and the Pentecostalism is growing enormously, often having significant influence in various spheres of society. An important quality of Pentecostalism to consider for this current study, is its flexibility and adaptation to the local conditions. With its informal style, ecstatic spirituality and its emphasis on the importance on often emotionally characterized music and worship, Pentecostalism often goes hand in hand with globalized media culture. Lie expresses, for instance, how worshipping is a praise sung directly to God where the style often includes repetitive lines, emotional surrender with arms lifted high (Søderlind, 2007).

Another relevant and vital characteristic of Pentecostalism is its ability to adapt. I believe this is a main factor of growth, especially in today's constant changing world where nothing seems to stand still, a church adapted to today's secular society may be more likely to succeed reaching the citizens of this modern, secular world. A step into the traditional church life may seem too far away and "old school" that young adults find it hard to relate to or fit in with, because it is a too big of a contrast with their life outside the church. Hillsong aims to reach out to all sorts of people, with a special focus on people that are not used to going to church. On this ground, the traditional church "look" and behavior may not be as present to what many associate with church. Instead Hillsong aim to make church appealing for nonChristians (Connell, 2005, p.316).

2.2.3 Brian Houston, Oslo Christian Center (OKS) and Hillsong Family

It should be mentioned that Intro church was already a part of what is known as "Hillsong Family" before it became Hillsong Norway. Hillsong Family is a global network based in 192 countries and encompasses churches in 77 denominations for like-minded Pentecostal churches that in various ways are inspired and encouraged by the way Hillsong does church. It is a relational network with common dreams of building local churches around the globe.¹¹

¹¹ <https://hillsong.com/it/family/about-hillsong-family/>. Accessed 3.3.2018 ¹²
<http://oks.no/hillsong-family/>. Accessed: 2.3.2018.

Another Norwegian church that is member of Hillsong Family, is Oslo Christian Centre (OKS) with its network churches, having bonds to Hillsong and Brian Houston through a long-term friendship since 1994 when Houston visited Oslo and Norway for the first time¹². Since then, Houston has been to Norway around ten times, every time being part of the annual leadership conference at Oslo Christian Center (OKS).

Global Senior Pastor Brian Houston visited Hillsong Norway for the first time Sunday 28th of January 2018. His first service was at 11 o'clock in Oslo, traveling westwards to Sandnes and Stavanger in Rogaland district. As Brian Houston entered the stage the atmosphere seemed to explode with excitement. It was an atmosphere in which one must be present to understand. With his robust and distinct voice, Houston start explaining how the atmosphere, faith and expectations, felt like it could be in Hillsong church anywhere around the world. One might recognize this as a reference to what Brian Houston often display as “One House, many rooms”. Expressed in other words, there is one global church with different locations all over the world sharing one church culture.¹²

Attending a Vision Sunday at Hillsong Sandnes, I was present to see pastor Brian Houston on the large screen on stage and hear his dark, concise voice when he announced that during 2018 Hillsong Church was going to plant Hillsong campus in Bali, (Asia), Monterrey (Mexico), and more churches in The United States, United Kingdom and Germany.¹³ A later article in the Norwegian Christian newspaper *Dagen*,¹⁴ wrote that a total of nine new Hillsong churches (Included the above locations) are planned for 2018, among them Berlin, Tel Aviv, Toronto, and Milan.¹⁵ I found the statement below to be a summative description of how the structure is being practiced within the individual, local churches in Hillsong. The situation around the church organizational structure is in fact one of the immediate changes in the transition from Intro to Hillsong Norway in May 2017:

¹² I will comment further on Brian Houston’s visit in a later chapter.

¹³ Fieldnotes, Hillsong Sandnes. Vision Sunday 18.2.2018.

¹⁴ (<http://www.dagen.no/Nyheter/ekspansjon/Hillsong-starter-ni-nye-menigheter-587628>). Accessed: 4.3.2018.

¹⁵ Brian Houston on Vision Sunday 28.1.2018. Hillsong Sandnes, Fredheim Arena. ¹⁷Hillsong Church Annual Report. https://d9nqqwcssctr8.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/13053820/Hillsong_Church_Annual_Report_2016-WEB3.pdf. Accessed 8.4.2018

Hillsong continues to plant churches around the globe with our latest church commencing in Sao Paulo, Brazil during the year. Whilst international churches operate independently and are governed by local boards, Hillsong Church Australia has provided Senior Pastoral leadership, managerial support and some shared services. Through Board deliberation and professional advice received, a Board dedicated to the leadership of our international churches and ministries was established and met for the first time in November. We are excited for the support this dedicated team will provide for ministry opportunities across the globe. (George Aghajanian) ¹⁷

2.3 The Global Context

Christian mission has been a large part of the Pentecostal movement and is still today. Hillsong church has emphasized this in their Mission Statement: “To reach and influence the world by building a large Christ-centered, Bible-based church, changing mindsets and empowering people to lead and impact in every sphere of life.”¹⁶

2.3.1 Hillsong Australia – A historical perspective

Hillsong is today a modern church and a global movement, but was founded in 1983 by pastors Brian and Bobbie Houston in Baulkham Hills, a suburb in Sydney. It is a member of Australian Christian Churches (ACC) which is the largest Pentecostal Church movement in Australia. ACC was founded as early as 1937 and previously named Assemblies of God in Australia. In 1997, Pastor Brian Houston was elected as the youngest national president of Assemblies of God in Australia. Today, ACC consists of over 1000 churches with more than 350 000 constituents.¹⁷ Hillsong Church is thus part of the Pentecostal Christian tradition with evangelical and Pentecostal beliefs with the Bible as the authoritative guide to faith.¹⁸

¹⁶ <https://hillsong.com/it/vision/>. Accessed: 2.2.2018.

¹⁷ http://religion.wikia.com/wiki/Hillsong_Church. Accessed 2.4.2018.

¹⁸ <https://hillsong.com/it/what-we-believe/>. Accessed 2.3.2018

In August 1983, there were no more than 45 people in the congregation. Today, Hillsong has campuses in all corners of the world. The church is growing, campuses expand, reaching new urban centers regularly. Today (2018), Hillsong has locations in 21 countries; Australia, Argentina, Brazil, Denmark, France, Germany, Israel, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Russia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, United Kingdom and United States.¹⁹

The church's headquarters are located in Sydney, Australia. Hillsong has a strong bond to music, using the power of worship in adoration to God. Hillsong music is known worldwide, sung in thousands of churches, but is also popular in the secular sphere. Around 1990's, when the church was called "the Hills Christian Life Centre", they released worship albums internationally with the name "Hillsong". The Hillsong music has undoubtedly raised the church's profile, and renamed from Hills Christian Life Centre to Hillsong church in 1999. Already in the 1990's "The Hills Christian Life Centre" had also planted churches in London and in Kiev. What we know today as Hillsong London and Hillsong Kiev, was back then, London Christian Life Centre and Kiev Christian Life Centre.²⁰

2.3.2 Hillsong Church Movement – A Global Church (incl. graphic structure)

Hillsong Norway is part of a global Pentecostal church, or "The Hillsong Movement". It is the so-called "movement" that makes it a distinct characteristic of globalization. Hillsong has been a Pentecostal network since 1983, starting in the small and growing enormously, reaching one continent after the other. This is an example and a result of global Pentecostalism. In fact, when the Pentecostal worldwide network was first established, the network also signaled a global vision/mission. Stated previously in this chapter, Pentecostalism is a product of a global, evangelical missionaries early 20th century (Deininger 2014, p. 24).

¹⁹ <https://hillsong.com/>. Accessed: 12.5.2018

²⁰ Ibid.

John Bevere, a speaker and author who has spoken multiple times at Hillsong conferences, says that he is very inspired and impacted by Brian and Bobbie Houston with their desire to “reach hurting humanity and represent Jesus with excellence”. Furthermore, Bevere states that it is because of Hillsong’s worship, their way of representing Jesus and encounter the lost, that U.S. Congregations have been growing: “I don’t believe the American church would be where it is today had it not been for the influence of Hillsong.”²¹

As the above statement points out, Hillsong is a church that does not stand still. It is a global church that moves, develops, grows larger and get more impact on the world around it. For John Bevere, America and the American church, Hillsong has impacted the growth and presence of Pentecostal movement. Hillsong is not a new phenomenon, but for many Christians a well-known church and music. But since May 2018, the Hillsong movement seems to influence Norway on a new level by having Hillsong churches in various cities in Norway. One question to be asked of the future is how Norway will be impacted by Hillsong’s “passion to reach a hurting world” in the years to come.

2.3.4 Hillsong Worship (“Shout to the Lord”)

In the 1980s, Hillsong started to experience growth and the Hillsong Conference was established. However, it was not before 1996 that Hillsong had a global recognition, mostly as a result of the church releasing the song “Shout to the Lord” by Darlene Zschech. Zschech shares that from the early days of Hillsong, “the music back then was quite raw.... We had this funny array of lovely people who sang-we could never get a choir together. The agenda was to worship. Come as you are and do your best» (Partridge, 2010). It was Zschech who at that time was worship leader in Hillsong who wrote “Shout to the Lord” in 1993. Zschech appearing in the magazine, Today's Christian Woman shared that:

I wrote it when I was feeling discouraged. I felt I could either scream and pull my hair out, or praise God." She added: "The line "Nothing compares to the promise I have in

²¹ Bevere, John in: Nicole Partridge (2010). From Down Under. p 29. From: <http://nicolepartridge.com/wpcontent/uploads/2011/05/Partridge-Sound-Down-Under-CM-1-10.pdf>

you" was something I clung to when our circumstances seemed so bleak. I think that rings true with anyone going through tough times.²²

The song which can be seen to draw from the Book of Psalms echoing some of the same biblical truths, has since it was released been used in worship in congregations all over the world. Put into numbers, around 25-30 million people in Sunday services worldwide are believed to have sung the song²³, including many churches in Norway. In addition, the song has been performed both for the Pope at the Vatican and for the President of the United States.²⁴ Interestingly for the Norwegian context, the song has also found its way into the traditional hymnal of the Church of Norway, and thus sung by men and women in all generations and not only by young people. "Shout to the Lord" may as such be a point in case to illustrate the globalization aspect of this thesis. A global community sharing the life in Christ worshipping the same songs, simultaneously all over the world.

2.4 Research Context/Academic articles

I believe the research material and the scholarly attention on Hillsong church is growing and becoming a more popular field as the movement is continuing to grow. There are as far as I know, little or no research on Hillsong Norway. This is vastly understandable considering the few months Hillsong has been in Norway.

2.5 Summary:

In this chapter, i have presented the background and story of Intro Church and Hillsong Norway, because I believe the background is an essential place to start when telling a story. To know why something happens we may grasp some answers from the past. The key concepts, globalization and Pentecostalism should prove useful to have knowledge of when exploring the journey towards Hillsong Norway.

²² <http://www.songfacts.com/detail.php?id=11164>.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

In a local context, I have provided some information about how everything started when first planting Intro Church to what it is today: Hillsong Norway. Hillsong is one of many Pentecostal churches in Norway, and to help with the understanding of Hillsong in the local context of Norway, I have presented a few notes on the Norwegian Pentecostalism. Further, I have introduced the concept of “Hillsong Family”, which can be understood as a foundation of the transformation of Intro to Hillsong Norway. I have presented the founder of Hillsong, Brian Houston, who is a passionate leader have been the greatest inspirator to Jostein Krogedal, pastor in Hillsong Norway.

In a global context, a part of Hillsong’s history, what it was and what it is today. Starting with Hillsong’s Mission Statement, then Hillsong’s origin story to how Hillsong Australia has influenced the world. The Hillsong Church Movement has expanded globally, and their songs are heard and sung all around the world in many different. Texts of worship born from individual feelings, to songs that harmonize with people in different life stages and in different cultures. These songs are of big inspiration for churches all over the world.

Starting to dig in the enormous “scholarly market”, there was as expected, little information to be found about the newly transformed Hillsong Norway. Luckily, I have been met with willingness and openness from various people attending Hillsong service when gathering data for my Thesis.

3 Key Theoretical Perspectives

In this chapter, I will present key theoretical perspectives and key terms employed in the study as well as noting already existing research on Hillsong. I will interact with theories concerning globalization, belonging and identification. These perspectives will be helpful for framing my study as well as aiding the analysis of the empirical material of the study.

Regarding the concept of globalization, I will focus on Jan Aart Scholte's term of globalization. As Hillsong exemplifies the globalization of Pentecostal Christianity, it also emphasizes local bonds through the technology of social media. In addition, I find it relevant to base my analysis on the central perspectives of Roland Robertson and glocalization (2014, p. 105). This will cover the area of globalization in a local context, and help exemplify the effect that globalization has on local communities, in my case, Hillsong Norway. With the focus on Pentecostalism in my research, I will focus on the Pentecostal movement as a culturally transformative movement. This is something that various scholars of Pentecostalism have pointed out often has taken place when Pentecostalism has entered new contexts (Wilkinson, 2009, p. 272). This can also be related to historian Bjørn Slettan (1995), who wrote an article on religious movements in Norway, defining a movement as a group of individuals working towards the same goal and purpose. In Slettan's work, it appears that religious movements are not a new phenomenon. Interestingly, it may seem as, The Hillsong Church Movement is a recent trend, but one might say that because of globalization marking the last decades, the movement today is more extensive and covers is therefore increasing faster than earlier movements.

3.1 Belonging

A key concept in my study has become the concept of 'belonging.' Sociologist Zygmunt Bauman (2013) talks about belonging and liquid modernity. In this thesis I find both terms relevant. In Bauman's explanation of belonging, it includes a person's awareness of that he or she is a part of something, therefore he says, belonging also involve awareness of one's own uncertainty. Belonging is also to know the possibilities for isolation and strive to prohibit the true colors of alienation. Further, Bauman sums it up, saying that in the modern time we live in today, that whether one feels unisolated or unalienated, it is just as common as feeling isolated or alienated. In short, Uncertainty is the only certainty (Bauman, 2013).

Bauman's term of liquid modernity describes the time we live in, emphasizing changes in society and its growing occurrence in the modern world. Nothing is constant or stable in liquid modernity, nonetheless all aspects of life are everchanging. In his reference to classical thinkers, Bauman presented a world with cracking borders, failing ideologies, and fractured family bonds and relations (Kuisz, 2017). Further, the world become a growing spectrum of dissolved interpersonal relations (ibid). According to Bauman, it seems that belonging is a problematic concept in today's modern society. In this thesis, I will encounter stories and life experiences of Hillsong members, and then investigate the notion of belonging in the context of my research. For instance, is the following statement of Bauman's statements true about the difficulties on belonging in context of my study?

3.2 Identification

In his search for reasons of identification, Norwegian scholar Karl Inge Tangen presents seven themes and categories of identifying with an organization, which in this case, is Hillsong Church. Further, he distinguishes between two identification themes, where the first is on organizational qualities, including terms of geography, and the other on how these qualities work in constructing the individuals' identity of self-narrative and life strategies. These perspectives relating to describing relational qualities of identification (Tangen, 2012, p. 193) will be used to see if one may discover, if there may be connections to some of the identification themes of the informants I interviewed. As detailed later, I find two identification themes applicable in understanding my informants' stories. First, Tangen's emphasis on "a community and friendships with family qualities" (Tangen's theme 5) and the importance of "connecting to caring growth models and trustworthy pathfinders" (Tangen's theme 6) will be used as model for investigating what meaning and purpose the sociorelational context of Hillsong Norway within my contextual frame of research.

Tangen (2012) uses "relational qualities", being an important theme and reason for identifying with the church. I find this theme relevant for my further investigation on "themes of attraction". Relationships with friends, leaders and pastors is very important for all informants. In this sense, the church gave a sense of community, commitment and belonging. Most of the informants shared that their closest relations in life were in Hillsong church. This

made them a part of a big church family, which they said to be the most important in their life.

3.3 Community

Bauman (2001) presents “Community” as a word that gives a good and safe association. In the world, that Bauman identify as “liquid modernity”, there is all sorts of dangers and obstacles waiting to ambush and destroy. Community provide a sense of safety, promises, in an unpredictable, insecure world. As the context of my research is in today’s secular society and ever changing trends to keep up with, there is definite challenges regarding oneself, one’s faith and ones belonging in the world.

On my academic journey towards understanding the young attraction toward Hillsong Church, I find Bauman’s thoughts of community applicable. As my study also investigate what it means to be a part of a global network, I believe the theory will help to better understand this aspect as well. Bauman writes the following about community:

Thus, there is a feeling of community as a pleasant place to be which precedes all argument and reflection. In this place times may be difficult, but one can always find a solution in the end. People may seem harsh and selfish, but one can count on their help if the need arises. Above all, one can understand them and be certain of being understood by them. (Bauman, 2013b, p.31)

Further, Bauman (2013b) discusses that there is no need for a physical presence in order to be a part of a community. One can still have that link between people, and share the same feelings or beliefs whether a group of people are face-to-face or those who are placed in different parts of the world. (Bauman, 2013b, p.32)

3.4 A global religion

Along with several global churches, Hillsong is participating in the win for attention in the secular arena, often with the use of marketing. Using marketing strategies on this scale, might contrast slightly with other churches or other institutions of faith. In this perspective, one might say that Hillsong church has taken all available tools and methods in today's technological world. With technology, mass-media, seeking outward, Hillsong has become a transplanetary and a supraterritoriality church. Globalization is in fact a core element to the mega church movement, or The Hillsong movement.

3.5 Globalization

There are many themes to highlight in this study. I will start with the theme of globalization. To give a proper introduction, I am asking: Why is globalization theory relevant in the study of Hillsong Norway?

Hillsong Norway is part of a global Pentecostal church, or as many scholars speaks of as «The Hillsong Movement». It is the so-called “movement” that makes it a distinct characteristic of globalization. Hillsong church (Hillsong Norway) has been a Pentecostal network since 1983, starting in the small and growing enormously, reaching one continent after the other. This is an example, factor and a result of global Pentecostalism. In fact, when the Pentecostal worldwide network was first established, the network also signaled a global vision/mission from the very start. As I stated in chapter two, Pentecostalism was a product of a global, evangelical missionaries early 20th century. (Deininger 2014:24)

Jan Aart Scholte (2005, p. 54-64) identifies globalization as the spread of transplanetary – and in recent times more particularly supraterritorial connections between people. Scholte (2005, p. 13) further writes: “With globalization people become more able – physically, legally, linguistically, culturally and psychologically – to engage with each other wherever on the planet Earth they might be.” (Scholte, 2005, p. 59). With this new social condition, people are less restricted, and more able, to contact people beyond territorial lines (Engelsviken & Lundeby, 2011). In other words, as Schirato & Webb's (2003) puts it, globalization is the collapse of space and time. Globalization take down the fences and reduce the barriers that are limiting us. On this ground, globalization has been a phenomenon of a great number of academic disciplines, language of discourse and scholarly encounters, allowing numerous of

viewpoints. Not surprisingly, there are given a multitude of definitions, aiming to understand the complexity of globalization. In the challenge of concentrate on one applicable definition, one needs to look for one contested within the appropriate academic dissertation (Deininger, 2014, p.19).

3.6 Summary

In this chapter, I have presented key theoretical perspectives and key terms of the study, with inputs from different scholars. The work of these scholars has greatly benefitted my understanding of the different terms and perspectives. In short, I have turned to Jan Aart Scholte's theory on globalization, including the terms of transplanetary and supraterritoriality. Further, I presented the concept of 'belonging' from Sociologist Zygmunt Bauman and his theory on community and liquid modernity. Norwegian scholar Karl Inge Tangen, has provided theory from his search for reasons of identification.

I have looked at how Hillsong is an example of the theme of globalization. Because of globalization people with the same faith and dreams are working together as a global network, influencing the world, locally and globally.

4 Methodological Considerations/ Methodology

In this chapter, I will outline the qualitative methods I have selected for my study, and explain why and how I have used these methods in the preparation, gathering the data and analysis. I

will also discuss my positionality as a researcher, as well as other ethical considerations and issues associated with my research.

4.1 A Qualitative Research Design

The aim of this research project was to generate knowledge and understanding of Hillsong Norway. Based on my research question and the theoretical framework, I believe a qualitative method paradigm was most expedient and useful for my research. A qualitative project could, for instance, give room for both doing participant observations and interviews to collect data (Johannessen, et al. 2004, 114). In particular, I found qualitative interviews essential to gain access of the life experience from the participants. Within this qualitative research paradigm, my focus was on social science approach to human behavior, social activities and attitudes. The study also involved observations of social interaction and activities within Hillsong Norway. I will explore why people chose to be members of the church, and what their drive was for investing so much time and effort in Hillsong. Through in-depth interviews my aim was to find some of these factors (Freebody, 2003, p. 46).

To anchor this on an empirical level, I decided to do my fieldwork in the Hillsong churches in Norway. In terms of delimitations, the empirical material in my thesis was restricted to Hillsong Norway, more specifically primarily the congregations of Hillsong Sandnes and Stavanger where I did most of my fieldwork, in-depth interviews and participant observations. Most of my research was therefore done in Hillsong in Sandnes and Stavanger. This had obviously some practical advantages since Sandnes was the nearest city to where I live. Circumstantially, I have also visited Hillsong Oslo a few times, while I was visiting family and friends, which provided a chance to look for local differences and for me to compare.

The decision to do a qualitative research had to do with developing a connection or bonds to my informants. With this, I was searching for feelings, depth and “hidden treasures”. The qualitative interview will have room for the informants’ personal reflections, emotions and experiences (Kvale, 1997, 21). The purpose with qualitative interview is to present their subjective thinking and their subjective understanding of Hillsong church and thereafter analyze this thinking and understanding based on previous research and theory (Kvale, 1997).

This type of research method does not directly reveal the actual performance as such, which is in fact not the aim of this research. Neither is the empirical data collection enough to provide any definite conclusions. More precisely, the real aim of this research is to go beyond the façade in the search for deeper understanding. The intention is to go into depth of what we can see and hear and find deeper and thicker meaning and knowledge. As a researcher, qualitative methods gave me the opportunity to get both physically and mentally closer to the informants that were interviewed or observed. In qualitative studies, a primary element is built on proximity. At the same time, it is significant that the researcher has a reflexive attitude in order to give an analytical interpretation of the empirical material (De Nasjonale Forskningsetiske Komiteene, 2010). Combining qualitative interview and participant observation, I also listened through many hours of podcasts, DVDs, YouTube films and interviews. I also engaged in Hillsong's Instagram posts, blogs produced by Hillsong members, newspaper and magazines articles.

4.2 Validity

Research validity can be explained as either external or internal validity. In this section I will first describe internal validity and in the following paragraph, external validity. Internal validity is described as the level of consistency between the researcher's observations and the theory that the research results in (Bryman 2012, p. 390). Putting this theory into my research project, it will address to what extent I am able to present a clear and nuanced representation of my informants' stories. This means that a significant part of my role as a researcher is to get to know my informants well enough and understand their viewpoints and opinions. A basic tool for this is communication, I am talking about those situations where one is not 100% certain if one heard one's informant correctly, as there might have been some noise, or one might not have understood his or her pronunciation precisely. I learned after my first interview that it was better to ask twice in case of uncertainty. When listening to the interviews, I had often trouble transcribing, for instance in the case of my informant was mumbling, so I struggled to sort out the words and ended up with a question mark on some of the sentences. Instead of trying to sort the meaning out myself, I decided to ask my informant for a short follow-up interview to get clarification and to ask a few follow-up questions on places I wanted additional information. In this situation, internal validity was to correct any misunderstanding or uncertainties to create an as real image as possible of the participant. Continuing to the part of analysis, I had to clarify the premises for further interpretation, and with regard to the logical reasoning as I aimed for trustworthiness.

In terms of external validity, this relates to levels of generalization. Based on our findings, the question is to what extent we can generalize (Byram, 2012, p. 390). In qualitative research, there is a strong exploratory element which gives room for analytical generalizations. In other words, it is dependent on the reader with his or her evaluation who decides the level of generalization. As a researcher, it is my job to lay the groundwork, to present clear premises and specific evidence for the reader himself or herself to assess the level of generalization (Kvale, 1997, 162). Another factor is the person who reads the text' general knowledge about the topic of church growth within Hillsong church on a global level as well as on a national level in Norway. Another factor is what experience the reader of the text, have, to Hillsong church in Norway as part of a growing Pentecostal movement. Therefore, it is up to whoever that reads this thesis to judge the generalization of it. The findings in my research will only demonstrate something about “what is, what may be or what could be” (Ibid., 163). To ensure validity I have explained step by step procedures related to the context, the participants, selected methods and analysis with which I have worked consistently to stay critical and aware of my bias to safeguard the quality of the research.

4.3 Reliability

Reliability relates to whether or not a piece of research can be reproduced in another time by a different researcher and provide the same results (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). However, human encounters are unpredictable and therefore difficult to be produce over again in a precise manner. It is worth noting that reproducing identical result is not necessary for qualitative research. Rather, the aim is to achieve authentic information/data from the informants (Postholm, 2005). In this study, the intention is not to generalize a large group of people, but to look for deeper meaning behind the appearance that we see (ibid).

Validity in research include quality of the data which is best seen in relation to reliability and the credibility of the collected data (Kvale, 1999). Reliability and validity are vital for the quality of the data collected (ibid). Reliability is assured by providing information about the structure of collecting data and insight to the procedures of analyzing the material. In sum, various methods were implemented in the research process to ensure validity, reliability and transparency.

4.4 Methods for collecting data

4.4.1 Participant-observation

When taking part in participant observation, I could personally experience the energy and the atmosphere in the Sunday services. I sat among members and visitors, either on the middle to back row. I had my pen and paper where I wrote my notes, including what I saw, heard and felt. Because I did participant observation, I participated on the same level as everyone else in the church. I sang along in the worship, bowed my head and folded my hands while the pastor was praying. When they occasionally had holy communion, I participated. I think I slipped into the environment quite elegantly, doing same as most people around me, singing, moving and having a good time. The only difference was my constant writing. My fieldnotes included the content and structure of the meetings from beginning to the end, the theme and key points of the sermon, the worship section, who led the meetings, and other performances on stage. In addition to what I saw on stage, I also observed people in the room, their appearance, acting and involvement. Whatever thought or feelings I had in that instant, I tried to write it down. Whatever questions arose, I attempted to take note. After the services, when everyone went out in the foyer, I continued my observations, taking part in the social act, having a cup of coffee, chatting and feeling the mood and atmosphere, while observing the interaction between people.

I started to attend Sunday services regularly in August 2017. Hillsong Sandnes had two services at Fredheim Arena every Sunday at 16.15 and 19.15. Usually it was the evening services I attended, but since January 2018, they have started with only one service, at 16.15.

The two services have some difference in the attendances was that the on the 16.15 services all the kids, babies and their parents were. I observed the interaction between the guests/participants, their engagement and attitude towards other members but also towards guests/ new people.

To come to a more nuanced understanding of Hillsong church's attraction and its committed members, I decided to supplement my participant-observation with semi-structured interviews. I conducted nine interviews in different periods of times during my fieldwork, because it took some time to recruit informants. Qualitative interviews allow participants to answer freely as it also given room for complementary responses. I chose to conduct the

interviews through a semi-structured interview-guide. This was a method that made it easy and natural for the informant to share his or her reflections and feelings. Through this, I could document their relationship to Hillsong church, and their thoughts and reflection, in a constructive way (Kvale, 1997, p. 21).

The exciting aspect of semi-structured interviews is the fact that the conversation could easily turn from one relevant issue to another interesting point that the researcher had not even thought of before. It was also easy to clarify any misunderstandings along the way. Another side of qualitative interviews, a weakness, is what Pål Repstad (2007, p. 66) names the “research effect”. This means that the researcher, with no intention, plays a role that affects the informant’s response. When meeting the researcher, the informant may want to put her or himself in a positive or advantageous light. Another challenge is when the informant is uncomfortable or stressed about the interview situation or the interviewer. In this case, there are factors that may affect quality and depth of the information communicated. In my situation, I did not think this became an issue since for most of my informants, we had common friends so we had the advantage of already knowing about one another through our mutual friends at Hillsong Sandnes or Stavanger. Another factor regarding the “research effect” is that I had been open about my research project to those I knew within the Hillsong church, and it seemed as if some of these initially were the ones most hesitating to participate in interviews for some reason (ibid).

Concerning the interview guide, I developed a semi-structured interview guide which would help me stay on path, ask similar questions to each informant, but it also had the feature of “going with the flow”. In this scenario, the questions were more like themes that I wanted to be discussed on the way, but whatever came to the informant’s mind could hold valuable information that would not come up if I had done a structured interview. The disadvantage of this arrangement concerned the shift of focus, interesting and new topics that might have been interesting, but eventually could drift away from the main theme on the interview guide (ibid).

I designed the interview guide around several topics: ‘Family,’ ‘home,’ identity, attraction, culture and globalization. The leading research question in the interview were related to why and how Intro became Hillsong, and what factors of attraction (x-factor) drew so many young people to the church. From these main questions, I had numerous sub-questions that were

more specific in their formulation. In addition to main and sub- questions, I had prepared for some more detailed follow-up questions that could help me dig deeper and get hold of as much relevant information as possible. This helped the conversation flow, because I was flexible and not completely bound to the interview guide (Kvale, 1997, p. 21).

During the interviews, I actively took notes in addition to having it recorded. Having my own audio recorder, I transferred the audio files over to my computer and opened these in an audio program ready to be transcribed. In most cases this process was successful and most informants did not seem to mind that they were being recorded. Unfortunately, I had two incidents where one interview had only been recorded partially, where the sentences suddenly were cut short and it became difficult to put it together as a whole. The other time, I was overly cautious about checking every ten minutes that the recording was going okay, but somehow when I got home, the recording was nowhere to be found. Luckily, I had done proper notes during this interview so I had some material, while for the first interview I was left with just short cut sentences that I had to interpret. I decided to continue my work, focusing on the interviews I had recorded 100%.

After the very first interview, I had been very nervous and a little uncomfortable in a role I had never been before. I was relieved and happy when it was over, sensing it went okay. I was, however, more curious about how my informant had experienced it. I asked if it was possible to give me any feedback on my role as an interviewer, if there were anything I could have done differently or better. In the response I got, it came up that the interview questions were more “deep and personal” than expected. Another part involved the information I had given out. When I first got acceptance from the informants to participate, I sent them two separate files for them to read. One letter of consent, and a document giving information about the ethical matters, such as the anonymity, routines for storing the recorded files and the opportunity they had to withdraw at any stage of the project. Assuming my informant had read the document that I had sent, I did not go into further detail about it when starting the interview. This informant had not read the document, and said that:

Because I did not know anything about the rules and practice in this setting, I must admit that I was a bit uncomfortable sharing and opening up. I guess I

am kind of uncomfortable not knowing who will get this information and read about me.²⁵

The constructive feedback I received was very helpful to me. I should never assume that the informants had gone through all the information beforehand, and it is never wrong to repeat important information and guidelines before starting the process of interviewing people that are not used to being interviewed. In the second interview, I started with a presentation of myself and my research project, and then I continued to explain what was going to happen with the data material, including my written notes and the recording. I asked the informants if they had any questions, and said I could elaborate more. In my experience, I felt more confident in my new role as an interviewer for every interview I did. I think my confidence made me more direct, or even more brave to ask and dig for further information. I was not afraid to stop the conversation if it was going in the wrong direction and away from the topic in order to come back on the right track again.

In the interview setting, time is essential, and the more material I have on my audio recorder, the more there is to transcribe. So, I learned after completing half of the interviews, that there was not really a point in letting the informant go on about a topic if they are heading towards something that is not related to any of my research themes. Instead it was my role as an interviewer to lead the direction to where I could get information that would fit into the core of my research question.

Speech, or oral language are very different from written language and they each have their own set of rules. It was difficult to “transcribe” body language and mimic into written text. It appeared to me how much we use our body and facial expression in our daily conversation, and in this context, I was more perceptive of putting the language I saw together with the language I heard. Hence, the transcribed interview is never identical to the spoken language (Kvale, 1997, pp. 101-102).

²⁵ Interview, Sandnes 27.11.2017.

In conclusion, through my interviews I was able to document and identify various patterns of strategic thinking and reflection of their personal engagement in the church. Through participant-observation I was able to document the practices of what I observed and experienced.

4.5 Informants

The group of people I have interviewed were both men and women between the age of 20-40, all are born and raised in Norway. They were all in various stages of life, some were single students, others were recently married and had bought an apartment together, and some had been married for a few years and already started a family. In this study, all participants were interviewed individually in private surroundings. I was searching for people with different life settings, different professions and jobs, different background to get a more nuanced picture of the church and its members. Another point was that I wanted to interview people that were on different levels of commitment and engagement to the church. The reason for this was to see if these members shared the same experiences of commitment and belonging in the church.

4.6 Limitation and selection

The purpose of this study was to access more knowledge about Hillsong Church in Norway. Because of a strict framework in a master thesis, there were a few challenges with limitations. For example, ideally it would have been interesting to have the time and resources to do research in other Hillsong churches in Norway, but also in Hillsong churches abroad. I think I would have found very interesting material in doing comparative research within Hillsong Norway, for example in Hillsong London or New York.²⁶

I had based my choice of informants on my own connections inside Hillsong church. First, I contacted everyone I knew on Facebook that was a part of Hillsong church in Sandnes and Stavanger. With little success in the beginning, I started to ask if anyone knew someone who might be interested to participate and be interviewed in my study on Hillsong Norway. This means that I was given a list of names from a girl there, who had recently been a student at

²⁶ Outside of Norway, I have visited three other Hillsong locations. I recently visited the locations of Hillsong Amsterdam (11.2.2018). In May 2016, I attended Women's Color Conference in London, and back in 2008 I attended a Sunday service in Hillsong South Africa (Cape Town).

Intro Academy (now Hillsong Academy), a Bible school now run and operated by Hillsong Norway. This was like a “God-given list” sent from above. I had finally found eager people to meet and who wanted to share their story.

All informants were contacted by Messenger (a conversation function via Facebook). I found that to be the easiest way to get in contact with people because most people had the Messenger app on their phone so as soon as I had sent them a request they were notified. I could also see whether they had opened the message or not. Another aspect of this way of making contact, was that the other person can see your profile, have some instant information about you and photos, but you can also see if you have any mutual friends. I believe this made it easier and “safe” to accept my invitation.

When I had received a response, I explained the project, the ethical consideration regarding anonymity etc., and what it would mean to participate in the study. The response I received was mixed. I did not get any direct negative response, a few said no, but the majority of those I asked did not respond at all. I experienced this process to be more challenging than expected.

I interviewed a total of nine people, with four of these coming from the list mentioned above. As mentioned, I tried to get as wide range of people as possible, from people who were regular visitors in Sunday services to people with leadership roles and responsibilities. I also had informal conversations with people I met out in the foyer before and after the services, getting some insight from meeting and talking to the people there. These informal talks and involvements contributing to more detailed and rich fieldnotes during my observations. I experienced a sense “addiction” to collect more and more data and information as I came further into the research. The more insight I got, the more questions arose that I wanted answers to.

Even though I got a list of names, I tried to contact people of different positions in the church or who were parts of different ministry teams in the church. I decided that to get the big picture, with all kinds of nuances, I had to find people who had different functions, had different life-situation, and had been around to a certain degree at different periods of time. I wanted to find as many variations as I could, to hear from different perspectives and different experiences.

I had to be flexible, so whenever an informant had time between job, studies, travels or sickness I was ready to meet him or her. All interviews were conducted in a period of three months. Every interview was transcribed as soon as possible after they were recorded. The transcription took around six hours for one-hour recording. On the side, I documented what I had written in my field report as an attachment to the interview. Transcribing was a process of interpretation where speech is converted into written text (Kvale, 1997, p. 77).

4.7 Strategy for analysis

The process of analysis started as soon as I had started to transcribe, I had already made up boxes and categories in my head to develop further. At the time, I was listening through the interviews, and my research questions were still a work in process depending on matters of definition. After transcribing two interviews, I realized that the formulation of the questions was starting to take shape. It was easier when I went back to the material I had gathered, the interviews, to identify the core purpose of my study, and be reminded of what I was searching understanding for in the first place. Namely, I want to understand and identify the reasons behind the growth of the Intro churches that became Hillsong Norway. I wanted to understand how members perceive themselves as a part of the Hillsong 'family' and what first attracted them to this church. The interviews and the work of transcription enabled me to recognize common features that were repeating from one interview to another. This helped me better get an overview of the main categories I would work on later in the process of analysis. The content and results of the analysis of the interviews will be presented in chapter five and six. The interview guide is attached in the appendix of this thesis.

4.8 The Role of the Researcher

According to Johannesen, Christoffersen and Tufte (2004), all that is observed is interpreted. How can we understand other people? And who is the most appropriate ways to describe a human community? In qualitative methods, the researcher's character and attitude has a great potential in affecting the different aspects within the research. In the role as a researcher, my personal values and attitude are underlying factors that influence the whole process of my

research, starting with asking the first questions, collecting data, taking notes and records, to the phase of analysis and writing (Carling, Erdal, Ezzati, 2014, p. 37). Below, I will describe my position as a researcher and what it means to be an “outsider” versus an “insider.”

Research from an insider perspective takes place when the researcher him or herself is a member or a part of the group/community being studied. A researcher with an outside perspective is one whom is a not a part of the field/community that is being researched, but a member of the majority population in the region or country (Carling, Erdal, Ezzati, 2014, p. 52). The advantage of doing research from an insider position is that the insider has the language skills and knows the cultural codes and norms within the group, and this provides him or her more access to the field, mutual understanding and equal trustworthiness. The disadvantage is that an insider is more likely to take things for granted, whereas an outsider would be more excited and interested to know more about those things that he or she would not be familiar with (Carling, Erdal, Ezzati, 2014, p. 38).

When researching, there is a divide by insider perspective and outsider perspective, and these are two positions that will impact the interaction with one’s informants. In the encounter between researcher and informant, the insider-outsider perspective can be a relational concept. The relation between the researcher and the informant will always assign specific meaning of the “other” person in the meeting. Carling, Erdal and Ezzatri (2014) talk about “mental overview of social categories,” where both the researcher and the informant interpret and categorizes of one another (Carling, Erdal, and Ezzati, 2014, p. 41).

In this study, there were not so obvious specific markers or characteristics that immediately made me look like an outsider, but instead there was a sense of a steeled community, where one can see that on one level everyone knows one another. It was interesting to see most of the visitors seemed to be familiar with each other in some way, where everyone seemed to be parted in different sized groups and were comfortable mingling. Here, there was not the case of how one looks on the outside, because the majority were Norwegian, mostly white and western-looking. I was, however, someone different, because I was not a familiar person in the group, and people there could see that I was standing alone, maybe that I was insecure, tense and stressed. The informant does not necessary assign meaning to me as a researcher

because of my looks, but more how I appear in the setting, what my expressions are, for instance, looking insecure, questionable, or uncomfortable.

From a researcher's position, I would go under the category of an "outsider" since I was not a member of the church, was not recognized, did not know the worship songs and all the people on stage were strangers to me. This role as an outsider started as a very convenient role, since the focus was on "them", not myself. I felt rather comfortable, in the sense that I had accepted my own position as an outsider and decided that was okay. It would be worse to be in the middle, where you have one foot in and one foot out, which may create a sense of insecurity.

In my case, when I first entered the field, I defined myself as an "outsider", where I was being "me" investigating "the others" from a distance. After some months in the field, my research position changed. The more time I spent, the more people I talked to, the more I participated and showed my interest, I learned that my status as an "outsider" guest, developed into an "insider" guest that some people recognized. From an outsider perspective, I could see the happy, energetic people in a church jumping in front of the stage. From an insider-perspective I looked closer on the characteristics around me, and I could see a thrilling audience worshipping a powerful God. Getting close to the informants who shared their life experiences, could be challenging considering the construction and knowledge of "the others". One can easily fall into the trap of overseeing the fact that one is being a researcher.

I briefly introduced the term reflexivity in chapter two, which I will elaborate some more on here. Reflexivity is described to be a researcher's ability to see the significance of his or her own role in interaction with the informants, the empirical findings, the theoretical standpoints and the researchers pre-understanding that is brought into the project (De nasjonale forskningsetiske komiteene, NESH, 2010)²⁷. A large amount of research topics are based on values. In addition to the researcher's religious and moral attitudes towards the research subject, the researcher also must be reflective and observant of his or her own social background and level of awareness with the phenomenon. These influences affect the research, either in a positive or a less positive way. Here, the researcher must be fully aware

²⁷ <https://www.etikkom.no/FBIB/Praktisk/Forskningsetiske-enheter/Nasjonal-forskningsetisk-komite-forsamfunnsvitenskap-og-humaniora/>. Accessed: 15.5.2018.

of his or her views and be prepared of what meaning they can get within the context of interviewing or interpreting the data (Ibid.).

4.9 Ethical considerations

Before I could start my fieldwork, I had to report my research project to NSD (Norwegian Centre for Research Data) to get their approval before I could start conducting interviews. I sent them my plans, project description, interview guide and the letter of consent for those participating in the study. After six weeks and one email of importune, my research project was approved.

Regarding the church and the pastors, I have not anonymized their names. The reason for this is that Hillsong church Sandnes and Stavanger are public institutions and both the local pastor in Sandnes and the lead pastor of Norway are public person. The informants, however, being a regular guest, a member, leader in a Connect group²⁸, a singer in the worship band, a former student at the Intro Academy (now Hillsong Academy) will not be able to be identified. I will use fictitious names and the descriptions of their jobs or studies were only partial true, as well as where they live or where they are from. I am doing this because I am very specific in what churches my research was conducted, and the congregations in Hillsong Sandnes and Stavanger were very small in a global comparison. In my observations and conversations, I experienced that members within Hillsong church are tight connected. In other words, it seems as if most 'Hillsongers' knew or were familiar with most people there. It seemed to be a relatively small community where one can easily be recognized, and that is why the ethical considerations in this case must be handled with extra care. The aim was that no informant would be able to be recognized or be able to be traced in any way.

4.10 Summary

The purpose of this study is to generate knowledge about Hillsong Church Norway, the factors of attraction and how it feels to a part of a global network. To study Hillsong Church on a local level, in Norway have primarily done fieldwork in Hillsong Sandnes and Stavanger.

²⁸ Connect groups are smaller groups within the large Hillsong Network, where people, share faith, the word of God and do life together on a more individualistic level.

This chapter also presented an account of methodological strategies, where I chose to conduct qualitative interviews with members of Hillsong Norway, and do participant observation. Because Hillsong Sandnes and Stavanger is a relatively small community it was important for me to put extra emphasize on the ethical challenges in order to anonymize my informants. In addition to the interviews and observation, I have included various sources (YouTube, Podcast, blogs, DVD's, books, etc) of information to triangulate and ensure the quality of my material.

5 Presentation and Analysis of Findings

In this part of the thesis I will introduce the findings from my interviews and observation. I will present the data strategically in form of categories. The categories functions as a guidebook providing systematically understanding and answer the theme and key research questions: Why do Hillsong Norway attract so many young people in today's secular society, and how can we understand Hillsong Norway in the global context of Hillsong. Before I present my findings, I want, however, to underline that all names are pseudonyms. Excerpts from field diary were translated from Norwegian to English.

5.1 Sense of belonging (Family)

One of the frequently mentioned aspects related to my informants' experiences in Hillsong Norway was the mentioning of the idea of 'family.' In this sub chapter I will therefore examine different church members and their understanding of family. We will see that there were differences how each individual related to or felt part of the Hillsong church family. I found the material I had gathered to be quite diverse in general attitudes, levels of commitment and understandings of oneself within the community. For those informants who perceived Hillsong as their 'family,' I will compare their role and their commitment to the church and in the following chapter I will analyze some patterns in my findings.

Anita from Oslo regularly visited her brother who had moved to Stavanger. When visiting him in Stavanger they always attended Hillsong on Sundays. She had been there four to five times, the Sundays when he was on team-duty, Anita joined him on his duty. Anita is used to going to Pentecostal church when she was younger, but the style and content was very different than what she experienced after her encounter with Hillsong:

I think it was very exciting, something new and another way to make a church that was a little livelier and where there were young people or older youngsters who contributed on different levels. I am used to a church where the members are either young or well grown up. So, it was exciting, I saw people had a lot of energy and such joy with what they were doing. So, when I moved to Stavanger, it was ... I thought about it this day ... it was not a question of where I should start to go when I moved to Stavanger, it was just where I should go.²⁹

Anita, who moved to Stavanger to study teacher, have lived here for a couple of years now and she have never regretted her way into Hillsong (Intro before May of 2017).

Another informant, Isabell, from Oslo, did not became a Christian before the age of fourteen. Neither her or her husband is raised in Christian homes, but together they are fully dedicated to their faith in Jesus. Isabell shared her first impression of Hillsong as they just started to go there. With a slight hesitation she told me:

Hhmm... So, it was very, very much good things about it, but it is a different expression than what we are used to, and it can... and I have heard many others have also said that it seems a bit like that, different and maybe a bit too much..... But then the more one join in and spend time there, everything

²⁹ Interview, Stavanger 27.11.2017

starts to make sense, the more I think about I realize how awesome the church is.³⁰

For Isabell, the sense of belonging and feeling «at home» was a steady process of getting accustomed to a different type of church than what she was used to. But the more time she invested in church, the more she learned and appreciated this distinctive way of doing church. Today she said that she was proud of her church and found it easy to invite friends that were not necessary used to church or to Christianity:

I came with two girlfriends of mine last Sunday, and the people meeting us in the door, were so good at receiving people, and that's when I thought that this right here, this good and safe including environment I am so lucky to be a part of. I want to be a part of creating this for others in a way, that needs to be part of a larger community.³¹

Relations were a frequently mentioned dimension by the informants and expressed in many ways. Relations is one of the most important core values of Hillsong Church. It relates to dynamics of culture, a key concept, their aim, vision and focus. It is their focus to have a relationship with Jesus and with sisters and brothers in Christ. The relational aspect is central throughout all interviews and it is a devoted theme in the heart of the church. Similarly, is the contact/relation emphasized as the vital core of being together as a family.

When putting the notion of belonging in a translocal context, it is interesting to hear that some informants say when they visit other Hillsong churches in Norway, they experience the same sense of belonging and ownership to the church. Not only on a national scale, but also across borders, when for example attending Hillsong conference or color conference, they are met with familiarity and that this is “their church”, with the same songs they sing back home, the same style of worship, the same atmosphere and liveliness that they are used to. The overall difference, that has practically been mentioned by all my informants concern the scale and

³⁰ Interview, Oslo 4.1.2018

³¹ *ibid.*

size. How global Hillsong is an entirely different dimension than the local Hillsong Churches in Norway.

Gro, from Stavanger was one of the informants who called Hillsong for her home and family. She had grown up in church, but had never thought of church as her home and family before. Being a student at Intro Academy, and a youth leader for over six years, Hillsong had become her life. I asked Gro what made her think of Hillsong as her “family”:

For example, before my husband and I got married, we were together with Jostein and Brit once a month for a year just to learn from how long that they have been married and what things we should or should not do. So, in a way it's a bit like family, because you have people younger than you, just like a little sister or brother “Haha”. You have people who are my age, and people who are older than me... It all comes down to what you decide to prioritize. Like for me and my husband, we have chosen that this[church] is one of the most important things we do, and then it becomes natural that we get to know these people, as we spend a lot of time together, like a family.³²

5.2 Embodiment of Grace

With a modern element, Hillsong preaches the gospel, and presents its beliefs and practices in an understandable and adaptable way. When asking the informants about what they thought were reason for the church growth in Hillsong Norway, and why more and more people, especially young adults, are drawn to Hillsong Church, among the different suggestions were the following factors most prominent:

“It a new thing”

“It is a hip church, and it can seem cool to go there”

“It is attractive in style, worship and modern, young people”

³² Interview, Stavanger, 1.12.2017.

“It looks fun, and it is. You can sing and dance, feel free and be hundred percent yourself”

“Because Hillsong is a well-known and popular church with the best worship in the world”

Another respondent thought it may be a matter that it is a new thing, and drew a comparative note back to the older generation of Pentecostals. Thinking that the second generation before “us” (young adults) was more about oneself, what one accomplished or achieved, how good he or she was. In one way, being a part of this “older” Pentecostal tradition, one needed to deserve grace. As a result of this, many people, non-Christians, who were not used to going to church or a congregation had a great risk of feeling judged by others who were Christians. Today, as several of the informants agreed, church is different, there is something new happening, and there is another focus. One informant stated that the previous generation who lived with a judgmental attitude, had not affected their kids too much, because they had grown up with a totally different image of church and grace.

Anita, who had a background in a small, local Pentecostal congregation in Oslo when she highlighted her main appreciation about Hillsong church and why she continued to go there. She responded very quickly and was very reflective about what mattered to her, the aspect of grace. For her, she was used to a very different attitude toward the aspect of grace. Her previous experience and understanding of grace had a different view on humanity, judging and looking at humans only as sinners. She told me how attending Hillsong had affected her own understanding of self:

I am a sinner and I know it, and excuse me that I am like I am, I wish and try to be more perfect. You have a more apologetic attitude toward grace. You are grateful for it, but you feel very “small” in a way. While in Hillsong, it was like jumping and dancing, and you were grateful for it, celebrating grace and thanking God for what he had done for you. I felt a whole lot more freedom than I had previously experienced. And just in this period, I was in a phase in my life, where I knew that I did very much trying to deserve the

grace of God, and for Him to love me, and that I strived to give enough back to God to earn and deserve his mercy.³³

Moreover, Anita continued telling how that she had a period in her life where she needed some free time, not doing anything for the sake of deserving grace or to please the church, but having time just to be her, away from responsibilities. She explained how appreciative she felt, after she had deciphered that she needed some time where she only spent time with God, and just wanted to attend church without having responsibility; she never felt guilty for not doing anything, people respected and supported her and her choice, and no one nagged her about coming back to join and participate on a ministry team, to contribute in the church community. When she felt ready again, they were eager to get her back on board, and people wanted her to join so that she could become an even stronger part of the environment. She explained how it was a very nice situation because she felt they respected her at the same time they made her feel wanted and stood there with open arms.

Anita's point of view regarding grace seemed to reflect an essential aspect relating to the growth and attraction to Hillsong. As in the case of Anita, with its open doors, Hillsong was experienced as a living example of the gospel and grace of God in contrast to church traditions where people associated church with a pointing finger and judgment day. The latter focus was, in other words, not likely to attract too many young people living in a challenging enough society.

Hillsong can also be called "Come as you are" culture. No matter how one's season of life is, what struggles one may be going to, one should not stop going to church. As often said from the pulpit, Hillsong Church "wants you to come to church on your best days, but also, maybe especially on your worst." "Come as you are" signals the "openness" of Hillsong church, welcoming everyone as they are to church. It does not matter what one's past is, or how one's present situation is like, everyone is equally welcome.

³³ Interview, Stavanger 27.11.2017

5.3 The importance of music

Since 1992, Hillsong Worship has created 46 albums with more than 300 songs. Each week, Hillsong Worship songs are sung by an estimated 50 million people in 60 languages.³⁴

On Hillsong's own website under the location "Norway" it is announced:

Every Sunday we celebrate worship. You are welcome to 90 festive minutes with everyday Bible teaching, praise and encouraging environment".³⁵

Two of whom I interviewed were a part of the worship team in Hillsong in different locations. One of them was Isabell who I introduced earlier in the chapter, had moved to the city of Stavanger about six years ago together with her husband. They had both visited Intro church from time to time, but then Isabell decided to attend Bible school for two years. The school took most of her weekends, so she did not have much time to get involved. Today, Isabell and her husband have been members in Intro/Hillsong around two-three years, they are both passionate for music and take part in their own worship teams in the church.

During the interview, I told her that I have never experienced a Sunday service where they sang anything but Hillsong songs. Isabell, who was part of the worship team in a different location than where I did most of my research, responded by saying:

But it may be that they feel that it is the best option they have, and one wants to have a modern twist on the song of praise, and Hillsong has very, very good alternatives. Very good lyrics and songs to sing for most people.³⁸

³⁴ <https://hillsong.com/it/media/> Accessed 16.4.2018.

³⁵ <https://hillsong.com/no/norway/sandnes> *Søndager, Bli med oss i kirka!* Accessed 2.4.2018. ³⁸ Interview, Oslo, 4.1.2018.

Here is an example of how the worship music is a great reason why Hillsong church has become a global church movement. Isabell shared a beautiful moment she had when attending a Hillsong conference in London:

It had been a great experience for me together with a group of very good friends. We had been singing all these new, popular songs two days in a row, which was very nice. Especially when you learn them well enough and you do not need to look at the screen anymore. I just love the part of worshipping, when I can just stay in the presence with God and put everything else away... It was close to the end of the last meeting on the last day of the conference, when the worshippers on stage starts to sing: "How great is our God", which is very old classic. It brought me back to my younger days and I had this amazing, nostalgic experience.³⁶

Christopher was another informant, who was part of the local worship team. He started attending Hillsong because of good friends and because he found the music and worship attractive. He later decided to plant his life there, because he found his place there, and there were room for him to be himself one hundred percent. In addition, Christopher liked how he could participate, involve himself and contribute with the things he was good at, music:

There is a "job" for everyone, so everyone can contribute. If you do not want to do worship, you can join children and youth work, or the "welcome-home" team that welcomes everyone in the entrance with a cup of coffee and a snack, every Sunday.³⁷

Hillsong's attention to worship is not just about show and entertainment, but an act of praising God, thanking and show one's appreciation to God. The paragraph below shows how in worship one connects with God, giving a sense of purpose for one's life in a greater perspective. One of my informants, here called Gro, announced how Hillsong was a church

³⁶ Interview, Oslo, 4.1.2018

³⁷ Interview, Stavanger 16.2.2018

that put a lot of emphasize on production, spending much time on how a Sunday services would look and appear. With this focus, Gro said that one can easily forget what the church and the vision is about and why they are really doing what they do. Gro shares:

I often feel that many thinks that those who go to Hillsong often are very “happy clappy”. And I understand that if they come in from the outside and don’t know anyone Like one Sunday, we had the whole youth group in the front, jumping and cheering toward the stage, then I realize you may think like: "these people here, they are pretty superficial." While some think that this is the case, the difference for me is that I know those people who stand in the front jumping, and many of their stories are not really “happy clappy”. Many of them who stand in front every Sunday, have been through some really harsh things in life, but is still jumping and praising God. And for me, it very real, to see that people despite the pain and darkness, stand there and worship God for the life they have been given.

5.4 Being part of something bigger than yourself

When I asked my informants, what changed when what used to be Intro church became a Hillsong church, most informants agreed there was some differences, although there was nothing vital in the “name-changing.”

One respondent, Anita, said that for her time in Intro the church had always been a part of Hillsong Family, so they had always been very similar. She did not think that much had changed, however she said that they had developed an even bigger perspective in what they were doing in church, and that they always thought that people deserved the very best. In her understanding, it was tied to the concept of culture, involving quality on what they do for God and his children. Although, they had always tried to do that also when they were Intro, they now had more access to resources and materials that Hillsong had spent years to develop, and where they now could follow their guidelines to make it easier to succeed and do things even better than before:

I know the pastors appreciate that there are some proficient leaders who lead them as well, that they are not alone and that they have someone else to lean on in a way. It seems like they are very grateful for that³⁸

Another respondent, Isabell, also indicated that there had not been any significant change going from Intro to Hillsong. Like many of the respondents she stated that as long as she had been a part of Intro church, they had been a member of the Hillsong Family-network. She also added that:

It was not like that "woooooow, I'd never see that coming" sort of. So yes, it was somewhat natural. It has been a fierce one... Or there has been a.. A long process that the management team made the final decision. For us as a church, it will be... As it has always been, the purpose is always to win people for Jesus. And if the decision we make will attract more people, then the conclusion was that "yes, this is the right thing to do". Because it is, it's like a church, that many have heard about, which means that you will get some boost out of that. That maybe even more will come to church, and yes ... get more people saved. And that's what we want. That people are coming together as a community as well,³⁹

Therefore, it was not shocking news to any of the participants when the church announced their transition from Intro to Hillsong Norway. Isabell's insider-perspective was that:

Intro has always been very inspired by Hillsong all along, and has always sung many of Hillsong's songs. And concerning the expression, Intro has had one and the same phrase that Hillsong has always had, which means that it has not been a very big transition. Now it's a bit more like a system behind

³⁸ Interview, Stavanger 27.11.2017

³⁹ Interview, Oslo 4.1.2018

the scenes and such things. It's sort of the way it's always been directed. So, in one sense it has been in the direction it was always on ...⁴⁰

When I asked her what she thought about the transition from Intro to Hillsong she had to think for a while, before she replied,

For me, it's not so much about the logo. It's of course a bit exciting being a part of such a big global church. And one gets a lot more resources and a lot of access to material as well as both sermons and in relation to the music as well as such things. One gets songs, one gets lyrics, one gets tracks as one can use and such things. So as long as it's like a healthy church with good people, with Jesus in the center! And I also experience there was a lot of that in Intro as I now experience it when it's become Hillsong.⁴¹

5.5 A part of something bigger

During the “Vision Sunday” in 2018 and the annual event of vision Sunday was taken place in Norway for the first time. However, vision Sunday have been a concept of Intro church before the name-changing, but then on a national scale. In Intros vision film in 2012, pastor Jostein Krogedal present their vision: “We see a large expanding church full of power and energy, making God visible in its surroundings.” The film ended “Welcome home.” This is a clear example how former Intro Church always have been impacted and inspired by the global phenomenon of Hillsong, further, it illustrates the work of globalization as spread of ideas beyond time and space.⁴²

During the event, the global senior pastor, Brian Houston, appeared on the wide, big screen, followed by the Lead pastors of Norway, Jostein and Brit Krogedal they are communicating to all the local Hillsong churches in Norway. Vision Sunday is where the pastor presents dreams and aims for the local Hillsong in Norway as well as Global Hillsong for the year

⁴⁰ Interview, Oslo 4.1.2018

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Intro Vision film, 2012.

ahead. The vision and theme of 2018 is called “There is more” and will (is) already the focus in all areas of Hillsong church. The vision “There is more” will simply be the theme of the conferences this year, the worship album, books and literature of Brian Houston and the preaching throughout the year. In a local perspective, this means that Hillsong Norway will also follow the same theme in the preaching.

5.6 Identity

One of my informants, Gro, shared how creativity was part of everything she did. In her previous church, she had played as big role as she did now in Hillsong so she was used to having responsibility and be involved in church. One of the reasons why Gro became a part of Hillsong started with a friend introducing her to the church and the people there. She attended a few services, but because of traveling, she did not settle down in her home region until years later. In her traveling, she had gone in different directions trying to find the path that God had planned for her. It took some years, and one decision making to give all of her life to God. She started to attend Intro when she came back home from her many adventures. Most faces were new to her, but it did not take long before she developed many good friendships. She soon started to involve herself more as she found Hillsong to be freer than her previous church, in their expressive ways, she felt that she could contribute with her creative skills and grow into the person she believed God had created her to be.

Another informant, Sven, also came to know Hillsong through Intro Academy, a Bible school focusing on leadership. Before starting in Hillsong/Intro he had no plans for what he wanted to do next, what to study, or where to live. One thing he was certain of after he completed Intro Academy is described below:

I have certainly decided that building church is something I want to contribute to throughout my life. I also think now that the church is the world's hope, and it is worth taking part. How my role will look in the future I do not know and where I am or which church I'm in, only time can show.

How much commitment I have the opportunity to do will also vary. But at least I'm building a church where I am now.⁴³

Sven also emphasized how his year at Academy challenged him to grow and develop. Before Intro and Hillsong, Sven spent much of his time in the Pentecostal congregation where he lived, and church had always played a great part of his life. Although Sven described his time in church as the best childhood memories he had, Sven placed great value upon Hillsong's focus on leadership and leader training.

...So... there is also something Hillsong means to me... That I can constantly develop myself as a leader and as a person. I am surrounded by people who support me and who want the best for me and that encourages me and want me to succeed. They stretch me and challenge me, and they are there for me when I do not get it. It is a pretty good feeling...⁴⁴

At the end of my interview with Sven, I asked him if he would like to add something. He thought for a while before he gave me an answer:

Well...Occasionally when I talk very much about church this way, it may sound like it is very "much". But it is important to know that in the end...it is not about "how good" we are, or about everything that we do, or about me for that matter. It is about God and what He has done. And it is only when you have that foundation and when you manage to "rest" in that ... Everything else can come "out of it"... If that made sense. Something like it says in John 4,10: "In this is love, not that we have loved God, but that He has loved us." It is primarily about what God has done, and what we can do as a result of that.⁴⁵

⁴³ Interview, Sandnes 10.1.2018

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

Back to my interviewee, Isabell, she believed that her whole life had become marked by her faith in Jesus Christ. In that, she also believed that God has a plan for all human beings. A plan and a purpose for our life on earth, and with the fellowship that Hillsong has, one has the ability to get to know God, and his purpose for one's life and the society we live in, our local community. One could say for Isabell and others, that Hillsong functioned as an arena for developing oneself and one's relationship with God in line with what Brian Houston has said: "Every believer needs to be planted in a local church where they can thrive in their gifts and talents, and where there is plenty of encouragement and room for growth".⁴⁶

5.7 A Culture of Inclusion and Excellence

On their website Hillsong defines themselves as a "Contemporary Christian church, a global movement positioned at the intersection of Christianity and culture."⁴⁷ I believe this statement well sums up what several of my findings evolved around. In Hillsong there is a significant focus on culture, and there seems to be clarity with regard to what type of culture they are striving for create. For one, Hillsong can be defined as a greeting culture. Coming to church on a Sunday the first that often meets one's eye is a person or a poster saying, "Welcome home." Usually one is greeted by two persons by the entrance of the church offer some fruit or snack. When inside the building, one meets another smile and welcome by a different person. Now, one might have a lookout for the next "greeter", or one can walk towards the smell of coffee and pour oneself a cup before the service starts. Going into the sanctuary, one may again be met by a friendly face in the door before another set of eyes directing one to available seats. After a time of initial worship, the service continues with a session where everyone in the room has 60 seconds to turn around and say "Hi" to those and around, introduce oneself or ask 'endorsed' questions initiated by the one in charge of the service.

To the common observer, as well as to some of my informants, this emphasis on greeting seemed rather atypical to Norwegian culture. According to Gro, Hillsong culture is a type of culture that one does not see too often in Norway. One might think that greetings should only

⁴⁶ Brian Houston, 2013, p. 95.

⁴⁷ <https://hillsong.com/no/media/> accessed 1.5.2018

be between friends and people one knows well, since most Norwegians would likely not stop to greet someone on the street unless it was a neighbor one knew well. Some might point to that known stereotype that Norwegian culture is not known to be particularly including, open and warm. Thomas Uglevik (2011) talks about the cold and selfish Norwegians and that the Norwegian culture inhibits social life (Uglevik, 2011, p 134). In contrast to this, Hillsong believes in a culture that is inclusive, open and relevant.

Informant Gro pointed out an important notion of Hillsong culture, being: "If I had to describe the culture of Hillsong with two words, it would be inclusive and home. We hope that Hillsong will be a natural place for people to come regardless on their position of faith. That in our church, the threshold is super low and that it's safe to come whatever place you are in life."⁴⁸

Hillsong therefore seems to create its own culture that is recognizable by those who attend.

5.7.1 Excellence

Another aspect my informants pointed out and which is often heard when people speak about Hillsong is that church services seem to be very attractive to many because of the quality in worship. Moreover, it is a church that is easily available for many, especially for people that are not used to go to church. Intro and now Hillsong, have always aimed to build a church for people that are not used to church. Sven, who has been referred to previously, stated that he experienced Hillsong to exhibit:

Lots of energy, lots of joy. But some of what I really appreciate is simply how serious they are. Things are not just left to the coincidences, and it's not just "go with the flow" or emotionally controlled. They have focus on culture-building and leadership training. And they really mean it and believe it when they say that Church is the Hope of the World. And it infects.⁴⁹

He also talked about openness and that Hillsong is a church that is open about what they do, and one can easily follow them on social media and be up to date on what is going on.

⁴⁸ Interview, Stavanger 16.2.2018.

⁴⁹ Interview, Sandnes 10.1.2018

Additionally, Sven believed that it was important that they were an open community because it enables people from the outside to see the joy and engagement that they have in their church. To have a culture that is both open and welcoming to new people can positively be a factor of attraction towards Hillsong:

...I think it can infect people, the fact that people in Hillsong are so enthusiastic and open about what's happening. It is not a closed thing, but an open community that want more people to be part of it. I also think it makes people curious. That it is not just the weird outsider Per and Kari who goes to church, but it is actually very ordinary people who you and I go to school with.

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Along the same lines, Isabell told me that one focus point of Hillsong Church is related to quality and development. In other words, it is a church in progress, a growing and changing church that adapts the modern culture and society:

It is a church that has always been very keen to grow and reach new people and include people along the way, right? One is concerned with quality, one is concerned that things should be done in the best possible way for those who come in and maybe have a completely different picture and understanding of church.⁵¹

The focus Hillsong has on excellence or quality is very much connected with their ambition in reaching new people. Quality is always an attractive feature, and with a church concept like Hillsong that moves and changes in time, adapting to the modern culture of the youth, is a well-thought through tactic to attract people that are not used to go to church. Isabell continued to elaborate further with an inspiring voice indicating that this was something that she really cared about and believed in. She said that she hoped that new people and

⁵⁰ Interview, Sandnes 10.1.2018

⁵¹ Interview, Oslo 4.1.2018

nonChristians that come to Hillsong would think something like: «Wow, this is brand new!». She strongly hoped and believed that:

It can have a new wrapping/cover than what most people and non- Christians in Norway are used to, right? They associate church with being so rigid that one can hardly breathe or cough. Must stand up, but not move or do anything, because things are so formal and stiff. While here, one is very keen to... take it down a notch, a little more down to earth in a way. Simply, do it a little more easy or understandable, so that people can understand who Jesus is in the time that we live in today, right? If the expression and appearance is different from what most people associate with church, then it's a bit like a gate opener for people. For some people, they might be surprised, thinking “oh, but these are just ordinary, normal people who go here.... Or, this is a good thing to do and it’s fun as well.” There is much “happy”, positive and true to Hillsong.⁵²

Linking this with my focus on the relationship between the global and local, the concept of culture becomes of great importance. First, it is important to note that Hillsong culture is nothing but arbitrary or coincidental, but a decisive culture which is distinctively the same whether one visits Hillsong in Stavanger, London or Amsterdam. Hillsong’s cultural bond is a strong culture carrying the same values and ideals for God’s church regardless of what continent or country one may be located. In short, there are many translocal and transnational factors like a welcoming and open culture, a certain spiritual mood, common structures, style, and worship. As a case in point, one can, for instance, watch the worldwide Hillsong church news displayed on the big screens on Sunday on every Hillsong campus in the world.

5.8 An Everyday Lifestyle

When I asked Nikolai whether Hillsong was a part of his everyday life, he was one of a few to hesitate whether that was the case for him. Nikolai had spent a year at Intro Academy together with his wife and for that reason been very integrated in the church in the sense of having a

⁵² Interview, Oslo 4.1.2018

commitment, a role and a place to be challenged and grow into the potential they believed God has given them. In that year Intro church played a significant role in his everyday life and most things in life revolved around the church. Nikolai is convinced that everyone should have a year like he did, is now in a different stage in life. He answered the above question whether Hillsong is a part of his everyday life:

No, I can't say that it is ...It's more. It's my church, but ... for somebody, it definitely is ... They are very active with everything around Hillsong, but for me it's more about who Jesus is in my every day, than the name of the church sort of ...⁵³

Here, Nikolai stated that it was not Hillsong church that was important in his everyday life. Considering that Hillsong was the church he attended, it is more focus on his relationship with Jesus. This does not mean that Hillsong was not important to him, in fact, Nikolai told me how the focus on leadership and personal growth has got him where he is today.

I am very glad I went. I didn't go to Intro or Hillsong before I started Bible school. It has probably helped me to ... put focus on where I want to go in life, you become aware about things that you may not think about, who one is, and what one wants, and what matters to me as well. So, I think it has been a good thing for me.⁵⁴

Continuing the conversation, I asked him whether the year at Intro Academy had shaped him or changed him in any way. In a serious tone, he answered:

Yes, Hillsong Academy, (or Intro back then) has affected me a lot I have, there are many things that I do today that come as a result of that year.

When asking him to give an example, he answered:

⁵³ Interview, Sandnes 26.11.2017

⁵⁴ Interview, Sandnes 26.11.2017⁵⁸
Ibid.

Well, I am coaching the football team that I also play for. Here, the focus is on building culture and relationships and sort of using football as a means to do that In the stead of ... just focusing on football, there is also an effort towards creating a healthy team culture... That is one thing that comes as a result of my year at Academy. Everything about leadership, culture building, being a leader and leading/meeting people in other places than in church.⁵⁸ Today, Hillsong Academy has to date been in operation for about five years from 2013. In an interview with the Christian weekly paper, *Norge idag* (Bondli, 2018), the principal, Cathrine Fuglestad told the Academy places great importance on missionary movement and make people followers of Jesus. Fuglestad further said that the Hillsong movement has a great tradition in planting new churches. In this regard, Fuglestad noted that this also involves a great responsibility to follow up and care for new believers. Hillsong Academy writes on their website that it is in their DNA to train leaders, and one of Academy's roles is to provide a nutritious foundation for personal growth as a leader and as fellow human, as exemplified in its aims:

What drives us and is the goal of the school is three things: To get a good foundation in relation to the Word of God. Having faith in yourself and being able to lead others. And to have a vision and dream that will guide you to life.⁵⁵

Further it reads:

Hillsong Academy train leaders to plant new churches locally, nationally and globally. This is part of our call and mandate, something that you as a student can benefit greatly from; especially if you carry on any of this in your dreams.⁵⁶

I asked Nikolai what he thought was so important about leadership?

It is about being able to lead yourself in order to lead others. If you do not know what you want, who you are or how things work, you're not going to be

⁵⁵ Cathrine Fuglestad, 22.2.2018

⁵⁶ <https://hillsong.com/it/norway/academy/om-skolen/>

able to lead yourself or you will not have the ability to be a leader for others.⁵⁷

Anita shared some of her very first thoughts coming inside the church family.

I remember about two or three years ago, just before I married my husband. Then, I remember looking at the pastors who were in our local Hillsong Church and thought to myself: I do not understand their life, I do not get why they bother to live life as they do... I mean...They do not travel to the cabin for the weekend, and the kids...Do they get to see them enough? ... And... I became very critical in the way they lived. So, that they devoted their whole life to church I could not understand.⁵⁸

After many interviews and conversations with people in Hillsong church, I realized that this is not an ordinary Sunday-style church since 'church' in the context of Hillsong is a church which beyond Sunday services includes, for instance, after-church events, midweek Connect groups (small groups), ministry team planning meetings, leaders' meeting, periodic internal church 'family gathering' such as "Heart & Soul" and "DNA," Hillsong conferences, as well as more outreach oriented programs such as City Care projects, and the annual "A walk for freedom", a public event taking part in bringing awareness of modern day slavery. In other words, Sunday is only a part of what Hillsong church is about. It is a church where religion and faith are integrated in everyday life. Though life circumstances and levels of involvement varied from person to person, for the majority of my informants were much involved in the church beyond attending Sunday services but involved as volunteers in various activities. For one who was involved in Hillsong's City Care program,⁵⁹ the person would spend considerable time planning and realizing projects for the local community and having a life that was very much evolved around Hillsong-related matters.

Here, it is clear that Hillsong wants to be more than just a church, where the Sunday service is not the only ingredient in the church life. Instead, the intention is for people to "live church"

⁵⁷ Interview, Sandnes 26.11.2017

⁵⁸ Interview, Stavanger 27.11.2017

⁵⁹ Hillsong City Care is volunteering to serve the local community in various ways.

every day from Monday to Sunday. Calling it a “full-service” church, Conell (2005) understands Hillsong as a church that can become “all-encompassing” for the church goers (Connell, 2005, p.323). Once being integrated, there is a chance that Hillsong church becomes “home” and “family”. Once, being integrated within Hillsong church’s network, it might end up being an all encompassing life for those involved at this level.

5.9 Summary

In this chapter we have seen that most of the informants were not surprised by the transition from Intro to Hillsong. It is described as a natural direction and there have not been any dramatic changes that one can notice. We have seen that many informants share their understanding of church as “family” and “home”. In this regard, the notion of belonging seems to be an important aspect of attraction toward the church. Further, Music and worship are essential in the informant’s presentation of their church as it is both a theme of attraction that brings joy and entertainment to the services, and provide a spiritual mood, where one can connect with God. Although Hillsong style is hip and modern, the true word of God and the teaching of Jesus is above all else. The message of God is constant, but the “wrapping” is changing and dynamic, as it follows the time we live in.

6 DISCUSSION

Before taking the discussion of Hillsong Norway further, I believe it is useful to revisit the key research questions of the thesis: Why are young people attracted to the Hillsong Churches in Norway? And, how does it feel to be a part of a global network like Hillsong? In attempting to answer this empirically, the categories presented in the previous chapter (Chapter 5) aimed at giving an in-depth understanding of central themes and issues according to my informants and observations for why they were attracted to Hillsong. In this chapter I will further discuss some of these key findings in light of the theoretical frameworks presented in Chapter three.

6.1 Belonging to the family

6.1.1 «Welcome Home»: Creating a sense of family

Perhaps the most prominent and frequently addressed notion referred to and observed in my study was the notion of “family” and “home.” Though words, smiles and confirmation might not be that important for everyone, as in the case of one of the informants, Anita, the “welcoming-factor” was significant for her coming back to Hillsong. For her it was important to be seen and welcomed when she first visited the church. It made her feel relaxed and comfortable, and after some time “homie”, like one does at one’s home. In other words, the church seemed to motivate and build people up. For Anita the banners and posters saying: “You are welcomed,” “Come as you are” or “Welcome home” were positive reminders that she has a home and a family in Christ, and that she was a part of something greater than herself. The slogans functioned as cheering, motivating and caring for those joining in the family but also those who were curious and looking in. Here, Hillsong church provided an arena for providing love and acceptance for those coming. ‘Home’ and ‘family’ are therefore metaphors describing the church as a large family. The posters wishing “Welcome home” are not just graphic art and images exemplifying a modern and hip style, but words with deeper meaning behind. The church wants to be an including church, for everyone in the church including for those who are not used to going to church.

Relating this to the metaphor of home, hospitality, serving and caring are dimensions to highlight. Hillsong has, for instance, their own host-team, and, in my own observation,

hosting can be very home-related in making ones' guest feel welcome in one's home, because in a sense that is what hospitality is about. From the moment, I step out of my car and walking towards the entrance of Hillsong Sandnes, I often see a banner/sign with "welcome home", and before I even set my foot inside, one person is welcoming me and offers me a snack or a cup of coffee as I enter the building. I am inside, I have been welcomed and I have been given a cup of coffee. That first part feels like you are coming to someone's home, they have open doors and welcome you in, now it is up to "you" ... In my fieldwork observation, I challenged myself a couple of times when I attended the first Sunday services. I wanted to see the outcome of being an outsider to the church, I put myself in the awkward position that one really likes, I am coming alone, I say Hi, accept a cup of coffee and say thank you. Everything went smoothly in the door, got to smile and say hi, even a warm cup of coffee, who can complain? This coincides with Karl Inge Tangen's findings from his study of Hillsong London, emphasizing Hillsong as a "Community and friendship with family qualities" [Tangen 2012, pp.189-192]. Here, Tangen describes the importance of being a part of a community that offers friendship with "family qualities", where the church (Hillsong) provide the sense of "Including love, friendliness, hospitality, and serving love" (Tangen, 2012, p. 312).

If one wants to become a part of the Hillsong family, it is a good thing to first visit the church, and even though it does not feel like it is your "home" yet, nothing is home or a family before one gives of oneself and shares life together. This might be the reason why there is more emphasis on the small groups during the week than on Sunday services. As Anita shared, she is still making an effort and is never "done" getting to know new people. It demands effort, family relations, or every relation needs nurturing and caring to grow and be healthy. The same metaphor counts here, in Hillsong church's connect groups, where the members are sharing life together with other members of Hillsong. A result from this is a group of wellconnected people, spending time together, with their "sisters" and "brothers" and God. The category "Living church" is also an important piece of the Hillsong family puzzle, meaning Being a part of a big church family is one story, but being a part of a smaller connect group within the church where one can open up to one another and build relationship on a deeper level is most appreciated within the church/being a part of the church. Hillsong connect groups gives the possibility to connect on a more personal and private level, and it is a safe place to share all aspects of life, struggles, conflicts and challenges. It is a group of "family members" sharing and living life together.

In the case of living life together or living church together, this can be counted in relation to the common phrase: “We want our church to be a place where you can come on your worst days as well as your best”. This expression of what church is can also be linked to the image of church as “home”. Here church is like home because there you are free to be whoever you are, no matter what mood you are in, home is where you can throw away the mask or the happy face that you sometimes are hiding behind. In your home come as you are, no matter how you feel, because life is full of “crappy days” or sad or disappointing days, but home is a place where one does not need to put on a brave face. As one of my informants, Nils said, “Home is, where you can put your feet on the table and just chill out”.⁶⁰ I will suggest that the small-groups are the glue of the Hillsong- family, the interconnected and deep relations that can grow in a healthy environment. The small-groups may also be understood as a small community within a larger network. The community can be understood as a: “pleasant place to be which precedes all argument and reflection. In this place times may be difficult, but one can always find a solution in the end” (Bauman, 2013b, p.31). Further, Small-groups can provide safety and stability, when everything around seems to be insecure and unstable, or what Bauman calls “liquid modernity”.

6.1.2 A relational church: The importance of community and fellowship and to take part ... (the importance on Connect groups (small groups) and Teams (ministry teams) and not on ‘membership’

Along the same lines, relations were one theme that appeared frequently throughout all interviews. What was the meaning with relations in this context? In addition to “relations”, other words with similar meaning were also used, including friends, family and community were most frequent. Relations in this sense included social engagement, social interaction and socio-spiritual relationships and communication. (Tangen, 2012, p. 191). This can help shed light on the important observation that Hillsong is a relational church that places much emphasis on community and fellowship. In particular the church consistently places key emphasis on encouraging people to be part of Connect groups (small groups) and be part of Teams (ministry teams) in the church in contrast to a focus on membership. In all my interviews, the relational aspect of church played a significant role. The relational qualities

⁶⁰ Interview, Sandnes 14.12.2017.

acted as an attractive factor when first coming to Hillsong Church, but played of a more distinct role in the question of why people stayed there, and planted their lives there. Tangen (2012) uses “relational qualities” to describe an important theme and reason for identifying with the church. I find this theme also relevant for my investigation on “themes of attraction” for Hillsong Norway.

For example, relationships with friends, leaders and pastors were very important for all my informants. In this sense, the church gave a sense of community, commitment and belonging. Most of the informants shared that their closest relations in life were in Hillsong church, and to many it made them a part of a big church family which is the most important in their life. One of the informants, Gro, shared how she found Hillsong church to be her family, which included close relations to people your own age, younger people, kids that you played with, babysat and had close to your heart, but also people older than yourself, people with more life experience, who gently care about you and want the best for you. With emphasis on the pastoral couple being as mother and father figure, the acted both as mentors and role models for Gro and her fiancé/spouse. I was curious whether Gro found it natural to compare her Hillsong family with her biological one, knowing that her biological family lived in the same city.

Relationship with the pastors and leaders also seemed to be of importance for several. For instance, the pastoral couple gave guidance, advice, to the engaged couple for a year before Gro and her fiancé were married. In this case, Gro had someone there for guidance and support through the important journey towards marriage and personal growth as well as growing as a couple. It is worth noticing that in this story where couple identifies with and is mentored by couple, most cases mentoring happens more on an individual level on a general basis, more than just a one-period thing like pre-marriage period. Both scenarios were present, but it was also a fact that couples who were leaders tended to have couple models and leaders to follow. This illustrates how it seems to set a standard for couples (especially married couples) to lead together. This was the case for the majority of my informants who were married. Out of 10 interviews, seven were married, two were in a relationship and one single. Of the seven informants who were married, six of them were in the same leader position or team as their spouse. In Gro’s situation, her pastoral leaders seemed to have close connection

to members of the church, but while this was the case for my informants in Hillsong Norway, the story might be a total different one for others in, for instance, Hillsong London or Hillsong Sydney, for obviously more structural reasons (Tangen, 2012, p.197). In his study of Hillsong London, Tangen discovered the importance of “caring growth models and trustworthy pathfinders” [Tangen, 2012, pp.192-195].

The fellowship is essential for sharing life, be and stay connected and share a bond. There is a description of support as a result of sharing both good and bad sides of life. One informant told me that he had been injured over a couple of months, he had to stay in bedrest and not leave his apartment. The quote below applies to the support and care he received from the church. It is possible to see the church in light of Hillsong playing a caring role as families are supposed to do. This exemplifies the characteristics of family-relation within the church, and it highlights the value family members put on other family-members. Secondly this situation is also an image of Hillsong being a church taking part in every aspect in life, and being a church who is not just acting within the church building, but outside as well. It is a church affecting every dimension in life, taking part in both emotional and practical spheres (Tangen, 2012, p. 194).

6.1.3 A global family? Belonging to something greater (Hillsong global) (a common vision, global conferences, themes, resources)

In chapter three, I asked why globalization theory is relevant in the study of Hillsong Norway. For instance, globalization perspectives can help us see how Intro Church – before becoming Hillsong – was influenced by global impulses from Hillsong as founding pastor Jostein Krogedal many times has shared his story of how Brian Houston always had been his biggest inspiration and role model for building church. Through a flow of ideas, technology and marketing, globalization has even been intensified with closer global bonds after the establishing of Hillsong Norway. Here, we can argue that the collapse of space and time work in favor (Schirato & Webb 2003 for such processes. From a global and transnational perspective, one can also argue that Hillsong is a “global family.”

In this view, one can many different elements of globalization at play in Hillsong. As we have seen briefly through the interviews the extensive use of the English language, social media, Hillsong TV, Hillsong conferences, global church news, worship, and globally shared collective prayer themes are some of them. For instance, with regard to prayer themes, it happens sporadically that there is need for prayer for hunger or need in other parts of the world. One Sunday service at the local Hillsong Church Sandnes, in the midst of February 2018 the South Africa water restriction aid was presented as a prayer theme and was announced on the large screen by pastor Phil Dooley in Hillsong Cape Town.⁶¹ How this message from pastor Phil Dooley in South Africa connects to everyone visiting Fredheim Arena that Sunday service becomes more understandable if we involve globalization perspectives. Here, globalization provides a way to understand how communication and connection takes place beyond borders, time and space. Or to speak in terms of Scholte's 'transplanetary connectivity.' (Scholte, 2005, p.61).

Another theme highlighted in this regard and with regard to creating a sense of global community is the common reference to "we". Here, it is possible to draw a parallel to Bauman's theory on community, where he states that there is no need for physical presence to be a part of a community, people can live in different places in the world and still be a community, or a common "we". (Bauman, 2013b, p.32)

As mentioned previously, the common "Vision Sunday" is an illustration of Hillsong churches' common 'DNA,' where everything starts and evolve around a common vision. This was also the case before Intro church changed to Hillsong, but as Hillsong the vision is relatively wider and goes beyond territorial lines. The connection to Hillsong Australia has become a connection of "family relations" rather than as a large growing church one always looked up to at a distance. Hillsong's mission illustrates the notion of global transformation in its desire to influence the world by creating a growing, Jesus-centered church based on bible teachings. Moreover, it wants to reach people and empower them in their privilege to become leaders in all aspects of life. According to Tom Wagner (2014, p. 50-51), Hillsong commit to their mission in creating a global network of local churches. Taking two local churches like Hillsong Sandnes, or Hillsong Amsterdam and fronting the banner with "Welcome Home",

⁶¹ Field notes from observation, Sunday service 4.2.2018.

results in a glocalization strategy which allows Hillsong churches not only to be transnational, but also linguistically and culturally diverse. This diversity is most noticeable in larger venues like Hillsong Stockholm or Hillsong London where 8000 worshippers attend every week and have the services translated in seven different languages (Wagner, 2013, p. 51). In Norway, this is not the case, yet. Although the English language both oral and written seem to take more room than earlier days. Also, Hillsong covers every sphere of life and to build churches. reach their potential in leading and reach the people who are not used to go to church (Wagner 2014, p, 50). The common global “we” was also notable when Brian Houston as global pastor visited Norway, which was mentioned previously.

The global family aspect is also notable in the various global ‘family gatherings’ within the global Hillsong network. To mention some of the key conferences, these are the Hillsong Conference and the Color Conference. With regard to the Hillsong Conference, the Hillsong website describes that “Since 1986, Hillsong in Australia has hosted its annual conferences where thousands of people gather to hear about church leadership, worship, and community engagement from Hillsong’s key team members and other renowned Christian leaders.»⁶² Another conference is the Color Conference for women: “The Color Conference was started by Bobbie Houston many years ago out of a deep desire place value on women and encourage them to be all that God’s called them to be. Hillsong hosts this annual conference across five countries internationally each year”.⁶⁷ These conferences show how ideas and resources are shared across borders and are part in creating a global community with a shared culture and values.

This also relates to some of my respondent’s answers concerning pull factors towards Hillsong Church. Hillsong conference, or the women’s conference “Color conference” was one of those factors that draw attention to the church and congregation behind it. Many who recognize the name Hillsong may connect it with conference or worship. This is also the case in Norway, where Nikolai, who used to a member of The Norwegian church visited London together with a group of youth from the church. Having no previous knowledge about Hillsong other than some songs, their experience of the conference as a whole worked in favor of Hillsong church. Nikolai, who was a youth leader in the local church organized a new

⁶² <https://hillsong.com/it/media/>. Accessed: 7.2.2018. ⁶⁷ [ibid.](#)

trip to London the year after, bringing together 40 girls and boys to experience Hillsong Conference in London. For Nikolai, the conference was the first step getting to know the church, that is also now “his.”

6.2 Music

6.2.1 The centrality and importance of worship

Studying and observing Hillsong it is unavoidable not to notice the emphasis on music in the services and as a global brand. "*Nobody has characterized modern music songs in the world over the last 15 years like Hillsong,*" says David André Østby, a Norwegian artist and songwriter. Hillsong music is probably known to most Christian music fan in the world. In addition, Hillsong is very up to date when it comes to the social media and the media industry in general. On this note, one might have heard that Hillsong Young & Free being Grammy nominated. On 31st of January 2018, the Norwegian Christian newspaper *Dagen* published an article “Hillsong won Grammy” notifying that the song “‘What a beautiful name it is’ was voted the best Christian song of the year” (Hammerstad, 2018).

6.2.2 Common resources: songs, albums, style

The worship song has the last year taken Norwegian congregations with storm. In the article, Østby who has sung the song uncountable times in different churches and festivals in Norway since it was released said he was certain the first time he heard it, that it was going to be a classic, He was also surprised Hillsong has not won Grammy awards earlier (ibid). This also relates back to the observation presented in the previous chapter that during my fieldwork, and by previously attended services, I saw a pattern in their selected worship songs. I observed little variation concerning the song choices, I had noticed that the church always seemed to play the latest songs on ‘s newest released albums. Another impression I got concerning the songs in worship was that it was rarely played or sung worship songs from other artists or congregations.

6.2.3 A global impact

Linking this to globalization, Hillsong's more recent Worship & Creative Conference may help illustrate how resources are shared across the Hillsong networks and beyond. As the Hillsong website says, the Worship & Creative Conference is "a brand new conference for worship leaders, songwriters, artists and designers, production teams, editors, filmmakers, dancers, vocalists, musicians, pastors, writers and creatives across all disciplines to steal away from the ordinary and create space to encounter Jesus."⁶³.

6.3 A Culture of inclusion and excellence

6.3.1 The Welcome factor: Creating an open and inclusive culture

This helps to illustrate the point that because of globalization, transplanetary and supraterritorial connections, the Hillsong-culture can appear the same, whether one visits Hillsong in London, Oslo or in Amsterdam. Wherever visiting Hillsong, one will always see the banners and posters with "Welcome Home", or "You belong here." One will always be greeted at the entrance and offered a snack or something to drink (unless the "welcoming team" is inattentive the moment you walk in the door). One will experience a "free" style and dressing code, because Hillsong visitors do "come as they are." One will most likely be met by someone who shows interest in one and makes an effort to include and invite to connect groups or DNA gatherings.⁶⁴

Hillsong contributes to make church interesting with breaking the barrier with the image many young people have of church as boring, rigid and stiff in style. In various ways Hillsong have made church new and attractive to youngsters and adults. Or to quote one of the youth leaders I interviewed:

It is sort of, like the kids see Hillsong as a cool and hip church to be a part of. I get the impression that many of the kids are quite popular outside of church too, like being Christian for them doesn't occur as a challenge or a burden

⁶³ <https://hillsong.com/it/media/>. Accessed: 6.1.2018.

⁶⁴ DNA gatherings aims to introduce new people to Hillsong church, to talk about the church, its belief and vision, and people.

they need to worry about or deal with. In my teens it was not a cool thing going to church or be a Christian, so I experienced feeling left outside and being ashamed of what I believed in, and try my best to avoid the subject of Christianity in class. I think about how lucky they are, to share their faith with each other, say the name “Jesus” without embarrassment or ashamed.⁶⁵

6.3.2 A non-judgmental spiritual emphasis

The culture of Hillsong was also marked by the emphasis on grace as outlined in the previous chapter, focusing on a non-judgmental spiritual atmosphere for visitors and members alike. This emphasis also helps explain the kind of church that Hillsong is and wants to be, and how people identify with this kind of church (Tangen, 2012, p. 175), perhaps in contrast to other kinds of doing church as shown in the previous chapter.

As we have seen, the focus on belonging has been seen mostly in terms of each individual member of the church, but I also would like to bring the attention towards something that I choose to call “collective belonging”. In this field, a collective belonging would mean a sense of belonging in a greater dimension as a group of people, being in the same community or church, and together as a church family they are a part of and belong to an even greater church family, a global one. To give an example from my fieldwork, I attended what was reckoned to be one of the most important Sundays in the year, vision Sunday.

This shows how the local church and community has a belonging to a global church and is a part of a global family. In some words, one could say that being a part of Hillsong family you have “family” all over the world. This is also part in establishing the Hillsong culture.

On their website, Hillsong define themselves as a “*Contemporary Christian church, a global movement positioned at the intersection of Christianity and culture*”⁶⁶. I believe the statement

⁶⁵ Interview, Sandnes 4.1.2018.

⁶⁶ <https://hillsong.com/it/media/>. Accessed: 6.1.2018.

above sums up very properly what my findings evolved around as exemplified by the following brief presentation from my field diary:

From outside it is just a modern, up to date group of people, following the latest fashion and style. Outside church they do all different activities that non- Christians do, they are not restricted in their hobbies or interest more than anyone else because they go to church. People inside Hillsong are people living in the same, challenging and secular world as everybody else, except they have a God who is present in their life, and has a plan for their life, a purpose. On the inside of the church it is everything else than just a modern group of people. There is a church filled with greatness and emancipation and gratitude. Outside, there is an ordinary grey building of cement, while inside it is open, lively, colorful and God's presence.

Hillsong's emphasis on 'excellence' seems to reflect a decisive way of doing church. To quote Gro: "It is about giving all back to Jesus, and to make the best use of what God has given and put in one's hands". Nothing in this church seems to be done by coincidence, but well thought through in what is set out to do. Here, it is clear that Hillsong church has not by coincidence had such growing success. There is none, or little that is left to the coincidence, but every element of their Sunday service and other events are well thought through. Overall, It is an active decision making process for Hillsong to be the church that it is today. (Riches, Wagner, 2017, p. 126, 134).

6.4 Serving God and others with a purpose

Investing in the family: Creating opportunities for involvement

One of the reasons my informants gave for staying taking part in Hillsong was the opportunities they had to involve themselves in the church at various levels. To 'invest' was a frequently referred-to word in my interview material. Without mentioning the word once myself, I was surprised to find this phenomenon to be of such importance. To invest in something which according to the English Oxford Dictionary means to "Devote (one's time, effort, or energy) to a particular undertaking with the expectation of a worthwhile result." I asked why does investment played such a great important role for the members in Hillsong?

Turning back to Gro, who shared her understanding of Hillsong church as her life and family, provide some leading when she shared how she together with her husband had been invited to the pastor's home for marriage guidance and how sharing life experiences gave a sense of family relation, "caring growth models and trustworthy pathfinders" (Tangen, 2012, pp, 192195). She also said that what she had benefitted from the "mentoring" with the pastor team motivated her to invest more of her time and energy with the group of youngsters in the church. She wanted to "give back", as well as investing her time and effort in the church was only a natural cause for thinking of church "as her home" and something that she felt ownership to.

Gro's personal reflections provided interesting data which poses the connection between investment, home and family. Her motivation for investment and commitment in the church can easily be understood when we know that the church she is referring to has also considered her "home". Thus, spending so much time and effort in a place seem more convenient when it is something of our own, that we have ownership to and are a part of.

An important note of reflection considering the family-relation theme is that a "family-like" relation will not be experienced without concrete effort on establishing and building relationships. First, one need to decide if one wants to become a part of the "church family." Second, one needs to give in order to receive back. This explains the importance of making a commitment and invest in what you believe in and want to be a part of. However, for the informants, Hillsong is a dynamic church, and being a part of a leading church, a growing and influential church, and a church that is moving forward, made them proud of their church and willing to invest their lives in this church.

6.5 Relevance and the socio-cultural context

Though Hillsong Church puts extensive focus on the teaching of the Bible, their aim is to provide relevant teachings that fit today's society, focusing on the applicable topics that relate to the visitors and members in everyday life. It does not necessarily mean that teaching is simplified but made easier to understand especially for people who are not used to going to church. As a reflection grounded in the material from my informants, it can appear that the Bible teaching can for some be a guiding tool for morality, to guide way through everyday life and crossroads. The Bible can thus be a set of biblical glasses to wear in a secular,

challenging society, where one easily can be affected by pressure, lies, false teaching. With these biblical glasses one is prepared for the challenges that will occur from time to time, one will be reminded and aware of God's true word and teaching about oneself and one's unchangeable value. With biblical lenses one will be able to see oneself and others through God's image and not so easily be judged by 'the world.' God's word, the Bible is thus empowering for the individual and for the community at large.

Even though Hillsong is adapting the secular society, representing something attractive, lively and fun, it does not mean that the biblical message is changing. The church still holds that the message from God is constant and never changing, but the expression, method and presentation of God's word is developing and adjusting to what is relevant and applicable for the overall population (Houston, 2015). It is therefore possible to draw parallels with those respondents telling that Hillsong church is a church where one easily can bring a friend to, who may not be used to church life and can be a cool place to belong and be part of. They are modern, hip and trendy, at the same time they are steady in their faith in Jesus and in the word of God. Many of the visitors I had been talking to in the aula, found Hillsong both Jesuscentered and fun. In this. In sum, one can say that Hillsong is attractive because it is relevant and applicable to life outside of the church building (Tangen, 2012, p. 188).

6.6 Summary

In sum, and in view of the various points of discussion in this chapter, the following model attempts at illustrating various themes of attraction to Hillsong among members in Hillsong Norway:



Figur 1: Themes of attraction

7 Concluding remarks and Recommendations for Further Research

7.1 My research

Returning to the initial questions where I asked why people are attracted to Hillsong Norway and how we can understand Hillsong in its global context, the aim of the questions was to highlight the empirical characteristics of the collected data. To gather data material, I conducted qualitative interviews in addition to do participant observation. From this, I derived at a series points of analysis of the collected data. The purpose of the study was to gain knowledge and understanding why so many young people are attracted to Hillsong Norway. As there is no previous research on Hillsong Norway I hope my thesis will contribute with valuable information that can lead to understanding the attraction toward Hillsong.

7.2 Attraction

From the preceding discussion, one might come to an understanding that Hillsong Norway has multiple factors of attraction whereas the one of belonging is most prominent. In particular, was the emphasis on ‘home’ (“Welcome home”), central for many of my informants. They associated church with a sense of home, a warm and safe place, that welcome new people with open arms. As my research has showed, the inclusiveness and openness are only some of the elements of Hillsong culture, but it might be safe to say that the church have put extra time and effort to make visitors feel welcomed. The sense of home can

be illustrated as a contrasting image to what one may consider a typical Norwegian culture. In this sense, Hillsong offers a break with what is often perceived as a ‘cold,’ isolated Norwegian culture.⁶⁷

According to most informants, they characterized Hillsong as a strong unity sharing the same belief. Several identified the church as all-encompassing, being a church family sharing everyday life together, good days and bad days. Highlighting the concept and analogy of family, and describing the church as “home”. Several informants have shared how they experienced Hillsong as a church and community contributing to give a sense of being a part of a family who loves unconditionally. Family are like any other relations, it needs to be nurtured and invested in. This is also the case within Hillsong family, it is not a set of written rules, but more a common understanding that to be more than just a guest, one should contribute and give of oneself. It is about giving, not just receiving.

Hillsong is not just a Sunday Church, it is a church interfering in all aspects of life. Being a part of Hillsong encompasses with Hillsong being a part of one’s life. It is a fellowship in the church, but also a fellowship outside the church building and after the Sunday service is over. During the week, there are connect groups on every or every other Wednesday. Its focus is sharing life, the good as well as the less good. When involving oneself in the church as a leader or participant in a team, one decides to invest in the church, because it provides a sense of “ownership”. Hillsong church in Norway offers leadership-school, Hillsong academy (bible school), evening school, DNA nights four times a year. In case of involvement, there is “Heart for the House” and “City Care” with the purpose of making a change in society. There are various ways where one can offer support for the less fortunate in the local community, but also in the global world.

Hillsong is also about celebrating grace, not judgement and condemnation. Grace is not a doctrine. Grace is what lies deeper than the hip and modern surface, it cannot be seen, it must be experienced and felt. Grace may not be the obvious attraction factor, but it is indeed a significant factor why people stay/or joins the family. Hillsong Churches, whether in Cape

⁶⁷ Stereotypical Norwegian culture.

Town or in Stavanger are dynamic, adapting the modern society to be of relevance to the younger generation. One may see Hillsong as one of those churches that have gone “all in” to fit into a secular society. This is a church that is constantly developing and adjusting to the times we live in, trends, style and culture (Wade, 2010). Its ability to adapt, adjust and reshape to fit in to which ever country, nationalities, may lead to some critical questions whether Hillsong is really adjusting to different cultures, or reflecting a "global" culture that crosses but does not necessary address the local variants. As presented earlier, is the increasing use of English language, the common songs in worship, the structure of the service, the common global events and the “unoriginal” elements of greeting. I would like to raise the question: Is the global Hillsong culture adapting to the local uniqueness and customs, or is every local Hillsong Church adapting to the global culture that Hillsong strive for? What about the future?

Modernity, secularism, a perfection-focused society affects people to search for something greater than themselves, a church where you can “come as you are”. With a society that judges one for how one looks and behave, what education or career one has, what type of friends one has, and last but not least how one’s life appear on Instagram and Snap Chat can control young, insecure people’s life in a destructive way. There is certainly need for a place today, where one can be valued, appreciated and challenged in a positive way. And what many might be searching for is in the hands of a church, like Hillsong, hip, modern, encouraging church.

7.3 Purpose and Influence

I believe, Bringing Hillsong to Norway, the local communities will be greatly influenced as Hillsong City care has proven to make a difference. In addition, Hillsong City Care has already put its footprints in groups of refugees on language café’, or in the hearts of alcoholics who “come as they are”, every week, sharing everyday life with people who cares for them.

Together with my informants, I believe Hillsong movement will influence Norway on a greater level than it is today. It will be interesting to see how Norway will be impacted by Hillsong’s “passion to reach a hurting world” in the years to come. One might state that The Hillsong adventure in Norway has just begun.

7.4 Globalization

The coming of Hillsong church to Norway is an evidence illustrating the church's ability to move with the times, and to adapt to the reality of secularization. I believe it is both a touch of excellence and creativity that Hillsong has brought what some think as age-old, ancient, historic Christianity and Bible teaching relevant into the 21st century. On the other hand, reasons for people to join Hillsong are varied. Although a common repeatedly factor of attracting people to Hillsong for the first time might be summed up in three words: social, Jesus, fun. The church has a great advantage with the music and worship, appealing beyond non-Christians.

As Hillsong Church is a part of a global movement, Hillsong Norway is also an elementary part of the growth. As Hillsong Church establishes more churches and campuses, their culture and beliefs will influence the new church locations. In Hillsong Sandnes, where I have spent many Sunday mornings and evenings, I see the direction toward a global Hillsong culture. It is an interesting phenomenon that will only develop larger and more influential, but one may ask if this situation is a little too similar to the concept of manufacturing, corporate branding and growing enterprises taking over the smaller corporations?

7.5 Further research:

As I have noted earlier, there have been no previous research on Hillsong Norway. I have done my qualitative research primarily in two local churches in the same region. I think it would be interesting and relevant to conduct further research on Hillsong Norway in other locations spread around Norway. I am certain this could provide more fulfilling information and a greater understanding.

In short one can say that the reason why so many young people is attracted to Hillsong is because the church provides something that the secular society does not. As a result of my findings, one can conclude that Hillsong covers the most important aspects in life: Family, belonging, purpose and faith.

Of course, the conception of Hillsong Norway elaborated in this thesis is not the last word on this church trend. After all, this church does not stand still, but will continue to grow, both in

number of churches, but also in number of members. If the informants are correct in their vision for the future, Hillsong Norway will be found on numerous other places on the map in the nearest future, more and more Norwegians will know about Hillsong and what they will know what the church do for their local community (City care). As stressed earlier Hillsong Norway is not a brand-new church in Norway, but rather a global church family that has included already existing churches (Intro church) and welcomed them to be a part of the Hillsong movement and the mission to see God's kingdom established across earth. Doing research on a growing global church with a clear vision and statement, I found it highly relevant asking the informants where Hillsong church Norway would be in ten years. One of my informants was, at least quite optimistic in his prognosis, rephrasing Nikolai: "Hillsong will play a larger role in Norway." If the prognosis holds true, this will fit the famous words of Brian Houston who is known for saying, "The best is yet to come."

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Appendix

A Interview guide (English)

- How long have you been a Christian? Can you tell me about your "journey" as a Christian? What does your church background look like?
- Where are you from? What is your church background before you came to this church? What are the reason for you to end up in this church in Sandnes (or Stavanger)? When did you join the church?
- Why did you become a part of Intro/ Hillsong church?
- What has changed with your church after the change from Intro to Hillsong?
- What does Hillsong mean / has meant to you?
- How involved are you in activities in the church, teams, Life group etc?
- Follow up question if the answer mentions the concept of family: - Why do you call Hillsong for your home and family? What is your understanding of the concept family and home?

- How important is it to seek new “family members” and how do you go forth/ do you have a strategy or program to follow?
 - What role should Hillsong church play in society?
 - In a decade, what do you think Hillsong church would look like?
 - Can you tell me about your life before being a part of Hillsong (Intro) what was your situation and “season of life”?
 - What drove you to this specific church/ what took you to this direction?
 - When you talk about Hillsong as “family,” what does that mean practically speaking?
 - Are you aware of any skepticism or negative viewpoints toward Hillsong church? If so, what does this evolve around?
 - What does it involve being a part of Hillsong? Is there any specific action taking place?
 - Can you remember your thoughts about Intro/Hillsong before you became a part of it? -
- What are your dreams/hope for Hillsong church?
- Thank you for all that valuable information, is there anything else you would like to add before we end?

B Information letter and request for participation in the study "Hillsong Norway" Introduction

I am a master student at VID (University of Science and Technology), and will write a master's thesis in global studies. In this study, I want to find out more about the Hillsong movement in Norway, with a focus on Rogaland. I would particularly like to look at what is happening in the shift when Intro 21th of 2017 officially changed its name to Hillsong Norway.

Purpose of the study

The reason I want to do this study, is that the worldwide Hillsong movement, with strong global growth, now have come to Norway. Intro church became the first Hillsong church in Norway, and the purpose in this study is to explore similarities and differences between the Global Hillsong Church and the Norwegian version of Hillsong Church. In the study, I seek to understand the process and development of Hillsong since it started South up in Australia and ended up in Norway in the north. What driving forces are behind the great growth and success that has attracted so many people from all over the world's nations?

I will explore how guests, members and leaders of the congregation experience the change from Intro to Hillsong Norway.

What is it that enables them to engage all types of people from all generations, including the youngsters and adults the church has traditionally had difficulties to reach?

In addition to studying Hillsong Norway in particular, the purpose of the study is to contribute knowledge that may have transfer value and be useful in other contexts than the one in which the study was conducted.

The interviews will normally take about 45-60 minutes, and the interviews will be recorded. The recordings will be deleted at the end of the project.

It is optional to participate in the study and you can withdraw at any time without explaining yourself. All data and information will be treated confidentially and it will not be possible to recognize individuals. Personal data, as well as recordings, will be kept separate from informant numbers and stored in lockable drawers / cabinets, and it will therefore not be possible to link material with personal identification. The recordings will be deleted when the study is completed by December 2018.

If you have any questions, please contact me on phone (+47) 98 66 28 76 or email sk8e_silje@hotmail.com. You can also contact my supervisor Stian Sørli Eriksen at VID, University of Stavanger, Stavanger on + 51 51 62 38 38 or (+47) 95 73 24 29.

By participation, please sign the attached certificate of consent.

The study has been reported to the Data Protection Officer for Research, Norwegian Social Science Data Service A / S (NSD).

Consent Statement

I have received information about the study of Hillsong Norway and wish to participate in the study.

Signature Phone Number -----

----- Location _____, ____ / ____ 2017 You will receive a copy of the consent statement

With best regards, Silje Sævareid Kleiveland Masters Degree in Global Studies, at VID, University of Science