Vedaste Uwayigira

Assessment of Communication and Information flow between Trondheim Municipality and international employees

Master's thesis in Globalization-Global politics and Culture

Trondheim, June 2011

07.09.2010 15:23

Assessment of Communication and Information flow between Trondheim Municipality and international employees

VEDASTE UWAYIGIRA

Master's Thesis in Globalization-Global Politics and Culture

Department of Sociology and Political Science

Faculty of Social Sciences and Technology Management

Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU)

Trondheim, 6 June 2011

i

Abstract

This study is an examination of communication channels that are most relevant and appropriate for communication and information flow between Trondheim Municipality as a local authority and international employees who benefit the municipal services as part of its residents. The study seeks to assess the effectiveness of the existing communication channels and suggest possible ways of improving the communication and information flow between the source and the recipient.

The theoretical framework applies two bodies of theories in social science, predominantly emphasizing on globalization and communication theories. These two theories are chosen to illustrate the way in which Trondheim Municipality seeks to provide a reliable means of communication to integrate the foreign employees who stay and work in the community; therefore, the two theories would form the basis of the study.

The study was carried out in Trondheim, Mid-Norway. The eight respondents were selected from five organisations/ companies located in Trondheim which are NTNU, Statoil, SINTEF, ACUSTO and ATMEL Norway. The respondents were professionals from the scientific disciplines of engineering, geology, hydrology, researcher, and geophysicist. They were interviewed using semi-structured interviews. Thus, the current study examines the communication channels which are used by Trondheim Municipality that include internet, electronic mail, face-to-face communication, telephone, postal mails, brochures and booklets. The findings of the study indicated that most of information needed by the respondents was obtained from the internet.

Subsequently, in order to improve communication between Trondheim Municipality and international employees, it was suggested that, the information regarding municipal services should be publicized at the strategic contact points such as police and tax office. The study concludes that generally the communication and information flow between Trondheim Municipality and international employees can be better enhanced using various modern information and communication technologies such as internet and conveyed through major world languages at various points of entry and contact offices providing the essential services that cater for an international workforce at the onset of their arrival in the area.

Acknowledgments

This master's thesis signifies the end of two years as a master's student in Globalization - Global Politics and Culture at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU). It has been a privilege to learn about subjects that I found both inspiring and challenging.

First of all I wish to thank my supervisors Hendrik Spilker and Sheila Khan for their guidance and constructive comments.

To my supervisors during my internship in Trondheim Municipality, Professor Ola Listhaug from the political science department at Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU)-Dragvoll campus and Stein Thue from the Communications Unit in Trondheim Local Authority for their supervision and insightful contributions which were very helpful.

To my fellow globalization students from Ghana to Norway and from the United States to Croatia –the Friday's cake together with you has been enormous. I am especially grateful to Anna Barnwell and Martin Veflen for helping me through data collection and spending endless hours to correct my sentences and spelling, this has been greatly appreciated. To my friends Deus Damian Komba and Lynette Obare, I thank you for continuous support and encouragement throughout my studies.

I also wish to acknowledge my Norwegian host family Anne-Britt and Per Langland for their support in different ways. To all of you who made this thesis possible in one way or another "tusen takk."

Above of all, I wish to thank the all mighty God, through which everything is possible. Thank you for your wisdom and strength.

Trondheim, 6 June 2011

Vedaste Uwayigira

Table of Contents

List of figures

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

The ability and the importance of communication in any community become much more crucial when any organization is on a mission or need to fulfil its goal. Without proper means of communication, the organization will become isolated. There are many ways to convey information from the organization to the people. Whether it is face to face communication, a telephone conversation, electronic mails, letters, social networking on the internet, and so on. In this sense, things can be expressed, ideas can be shared, and thoughts can be joined. Communication is a necessity as we use it to network, spread ideas, and coordinate. In order to communicate effectively, the choice of the right communication channels is very significant. The importance of efficient communication is vital to the responsibility of local authority such as Trondheim Municipality to reach its residents and foreigners as well.

The concept of globalization has become one of the most popular words used almost everywhere; in public discussion, on television news, in newspapers, in political debates, and so forth. It is very well used by many authors by describing its driving forces. In this matter, Friedman (1994:199) asserts that globalization refers to processes that are usually designated as cultural, that are, concerned with the attribution of meaning in the global arena. The global arena is the precondition for globalization. It is, for example, the precondition for the formation of local identities such as nation states, third and fourth worlds, ethnicities and the religious movements. One can add that the nation-state is a state that self-identifies as deriving its political legitimacy from serving as a sovereign entity for a country as a sovereign territorial unit, the state is a political and geopolitical entity; the nation is a cultural and/or ethnic entity.

This study intends to investigate the communication channels that are most relevant and appropriate for communication between Trondheim Municipality as an authoritative unity in

Trondheim and international employees who benefit the municipal services as bona fide residents. The general objective of this study is to assess the effectiveness of the existing communication channels and suggest possible ways of improving the communication between these two parties.

In this study therefore, communication can be understood as a process of transferring information from one person to another. It can be also envisaged as the practice of producing meanings, and the ways in which systems of meanings are negotiated by participants in a certain culture (Schirato and Yell 2000:1). The way people communicate varies from place to place and widely between and even within cultures. The choices of right communication style and channels have always been perceived as a catalyst for connecting people all over the world regardless their cultural background. Beyond that it is impossible to connect people for a common goal. Therefore, smooth communication between cultures, which may not share the same language or values, requires an adaptation of standard ways and channels to convey a message.

1.2 Statement of the problem

In general view, the city of Trondheim was founded in 997 AD by the Viking King Olav Tryggvason and became the first capital city of Norway. In 1838 the city of Trondheim was established as a municipality (Nuttall 2005). The Local Authority in Trondheim offers several services to its residents in the city including international employees. Trondheim Municipality offers vital services such as home care, social services, health care services, nursing homes, day care centres, rehabilitation centres, kindergarten, elementary schools, as well as recreation services. Norway and other Nordic countries have traditionally been seen as taking a lead through their universal welfare policies in the post-war era. Norway has the highest human development index value according to the latest Human Development Report (United Nations 2010).

It is known, however, that due to internationalization and globalization, the Nordic welfare systems cannot and have not remained unaltered. These transformations have taken place within the sphere of social welfare and health care, and are seen as being connected to geography and territory (McEwen and Moreno 2005). To maintain this, Trondheim Municipality has designed and make use of several communication channels, to provide full information; consult and involve all residents including international employees and other foreigners on how social welfare services can be accessed for the wellbeing of the individuals and community in general. Obviously, communication between two agents is basically a sense-making process where the social is constructed (Fredriksson et al. 2009).

Therefore, it has been identified that, international employees are from different cultural settings and this presents a challenge to the Local Authority in Trondheim on how to effectively communicate and maintain the flow of information regardless their different cultural backgrounds during communication. In this context, a focus on the use of information and communications technology was deemed necessary in making the foreign employees to be aware of the role of the municipality. Thus, it is worth bearing in mind that to facilitate communication between two parties, Trondheim Municipality has a website whereby its main public as well as international employees can get most of information concerning kindergartens, schools, building extension to house, cultural events, and downloading some forms for instance relating to kindergartens and submitting them. The municipality has recently created a facebook page where people can get in touch with municipality staff.

In order to suggest effective means of communication and possible ways of improving communication channels between Trondheim Municipality and international employees in Trondheim. This research study is framed as follows:

1.3 Main objective

The main objective of this study is to investigate and assess the communication channels in use between Trondheim Municipality (as an authoritative unity in Trondheim) and international employees (who benefit from the services of the Municipality as part of its residents) and suggest possible means and ways of improving them.

1.4 Specific objectives

The thesis seeks to identify the most preferable channels used by international employees to reach Trondheim Municipality. This study will also assess the effectiveness of available means of communication used by Trondheim Municipality to reach foreign employees, and finally evaluate existing means and ways of improving the communication and information flow between Trondheim Municipality and international employees.

1.5 Research questions

In order to achieve the purpose of the research, the following guiding questions or lines of inquiry are devised in three main questions:

Which kind of communication channel/s is/are mostly and easily used by international employees to know or communicate to Trondheim Municipality?

How does Trondheim Municipality interact and transfer information to foreign employees?

Are there some possibilities of improving the available means and ways of communication for effective and smooth interaction between Trondheim Municipality and international employees?

1.6 Organization of the study

This thesis comprises seven chapters, chapter one is an introduction which consists the background of the problem, the objectives and research questions of the study. Chapter two comprises of the theoretical perspectives of the study. Chapter three outlines the methodology and procedures used for design, sampling, and data collection. Chapter four examines the preferable communication channels used by international employees to reach Trondheim Municipality. Chapter five considers the effectiveness of the available channels used by Trondheim Municipality to reach international employees. Chapter six illustrates possible ways to improve communications between international employees and Trondheim Municipality. Chapter seven presents the conclusions and recommendations of the study.

2 Theories

This study will apply two bodies of theories in social sciences, predominantly emphasizing on Globalisation Theory and Communication Theory. Theories form the basis for knowledge creation and advancement as they enable us to examine worldviews, motivations, and current realities and make sense of situations.

This study is an "Assessment of communication and information flow between Trondheim Municipality and international employees." It aims at investigating and assessing the communication channels in use between Trondheim Municipality and international employees. Specifically, it seeks to investigate and identify the most preferable channels used by international employees to reach Trondheim Municipality. It also assesses the effectiveness of available means of communication used by Trondheim Municipality to communicate with foreign employees and subsequently provide a possible means and ways of enhancing the communication and information flow between Trondheim Municipality and international employees.

2.1 Globalization theory

Held and McGrew (2002) define globalization as the expanding scale, growing magnitude, speeding up and deepening impact of transcontinental flows and patterns of social interaction. Thus depicting spatial phenomena that incorporate the regional and global level in one dimension and the local and national level in another. In the process there is a multiplication of links, softening of distance and time, as well deepening interdependence as the world becomes a global village.

Strong globalization theories (the globalists) advance that globalization has resulted in a radical shift in societies that the analytical categories which have guided social analysis such as the nation-state, society, national economies and national cultures are becoming less and

less applicable with the increasing importance of social, economic, and ecological issues. On the other hand, weak globalization theories (skeptics) argue that globalization is just another extension of imperialism and that the discourse of globalization helps justify and legitimize the neo-liberal global project such as the creation of global free market and the consolidation of Anglo-American capitalism. This perpetuating a North-South divide resulting to continued divergence of power and interests, reemergence of historical struggles, and an enduring reliance in state power to tackle contemporary issues (Held and McGrew 2002).

A third wave merged in which globalization was perceived as a powerful transformative force, which is responsible for a massive shake-out of societies, economies, institutions of governance and world order (ibid.7). It is the effect of a range of processes such as cross-border interconnection and interdependence, a trend which is reversible by counter-trend (Marsh and Hay 2000).

Robertson (1992:8), a Sociologist considered a key founder of the concept of globalization, defined it as, "the compression of the world and intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole." An overview of the historical development of globalization by Robertson (1992) observes that it emanated from division between sociology, which dealt with societies comparatively, and international relations and political science, which dealt with societies interactively. Consequently, it was pursued by new academic fields such as communication and cultural studies.

Additionally, globalization can be perceived as a process which results in the spread of ideas, values, practices, perspectives, outlooks, etc. throughout the world or much of it. This process has not just begun, and it is not a phenomenon or feature of recent times, though it could be said that over the past few decades the process has reached an unprecedented level. But this novelty of the term "globalization" has given the impression that the process is something new. The term itself is, indeed, new, but not the process or phenomenon it is used to describe. Globalization as well as culture has been with us for centuries. Today, there is a strong focus on globalization, on the one hand the world is becoming more and more homogeneous and on the other one there is an increasing gap between rich and poor countries.

However, defining globalization is challenging but the most important aspect to grasp is that globalization may be seen as a process that results in the spread of ideas, values, norms, practices, perspectives, etc. all over the world and globalization has more than one meaning. Therefore, Scholte (2005: 49) notes that definition is not everything, but everything involves definition. Knowledge of globalization is substantially a function of how the word is defined. Thus every study of globalization should include a careful and critical examination of the term itself. A muddled or misguided core concept compromises our overall comprehension of the phenomenon. In contrast, a sharp and revealing definition promotes insightful, interesting and empowering knowledge, an understanding that helps people to shape their destiny in directions of their choosing.

Scholte (2005) points out some main definitions of globalization as follows:

Globalization as internationalization: It refers to growth of transactions and interdependence between countries. From this perspective, a more global world is one where more messages, ideas, merchandise, money, investments, pollutants and people cross borders between national-state-territorial units. In this sense, globalization makes it easier for Norway and the rest of the world to do businesses and it has to go hand by hand with better policy of financial institutions such as International Monetary Fund, World Trade Organization, World Bank, etc. to ensure greater flexibility and efficiency.

Globalization as liberalization: It denotes a process of removing officially imposed constraints on movements of resources between countries in order to form an 'open' and 'borderless' world economy. On this understanding, globalization occurs as authorities reduce or abolish regulatory measures like trade barriers, foreign-exchange restrictions, capital controls, and visa requirements. For instance, Volvo could produce its cars wherever it is cheapest for example in China or India while shareholders continue to live happily back home in Sweden.

Globalization as Universalization: In this context, globalization is used in the sense of being "worldwide" and it is the process of spreading various objects and experiences to people at all corners of the world. A classic example of this would be the spread of English as a global language, computers, internet, television, mobile phones, etc. These new communication and transport technologies connect people locally and internationally.

Globalization as Westernization or Modernization: It is regarded as a particular type of universalisation, one in which social structures of modernity (capitalism, industrialism, rationalism, urbanism, individualism, and so forth) are spread across all of humanity, in the process destroying pre-existent cultures and local autonomy.

There is a widespread assumption that the global circulation of ideas is increasing cultural homogeneity, but, as Appadurai (1996:7) suggests, global ideas circulated through the mass media also spark resistance, selectivity, and agency, creating vernacular forms of globalization. Scholars emphasize the global circulation of ideas and images but rarely examine how transnational ideas and discourses become localized. The female inheritance movement offers an opportunity to examine a vernacular form of globalization and to think about how global ideas are reinterpreted in terms of local categories of meaning (Rosaldo and Inda 2008:374).

According to Beck and Camiller (2000:42), globalization of economic activity is accompanied by waves of cultural transformation, by a process that is called "cultural globalization". Centrally involved here, of course, is also the manufacturing of cultural symbols-a process which, to be sure, has long been observed. Both in the social sciences and among the wider public, a number of writers have adopted what may be called the convergence of global culture thesis.

Clearly, cultural questions are central and pressing in discussions of globalization: as Tomlinson (1999:1) argues, 'Globalization lies at the heart of modern culture; cultural practices lie at the heart of globalization.' In this sense, there is an ever greater homogeneity of lifestyles, cultural symbols and globalized modes of behavior.

Scholte (2005:255) emphasizes that the significance of globalization has lain not in eliminating nationhood, but in substantially complicating the construction of identity. Globalization has facilitated an upsurge of multiple identities that has in past decades eroded the position of nation-state as the pre-eminent structure of self-definition and collective solidarity. In the result process of hybridization, constructions of collective identities have tended to become more multidimensional, fluid and uncertain.

It is widely believed today that the globalization of culture will lead to greater global understanding. It will make people aware of difference, lead to rich cultural intermixing, and might even reduce the likelihood of cultural misunderstanding and conflict (El-Ojeili and Hayden 2006:139).

Moreover, one can state that globalization can be described as a process of blending or homogenization by which the people of the world are unified into a single society and function together. This process is a combination of economic, technological, socio-cultural and political forces. Globalization has harmonized and unified, often crushing traditional ways of life when they have deviated from the dominant western pattern. As a result, cultural diversity has had its day. Globalization is diffusing a single world culture-centered on consumerism, mass media, and on the English as a global language. Depending on one's perspective, this homogenization entails either progressive universalism or oppressive imperialism.

This process of globalization has speeded up dramatically in the last two decades as technological advances make it easier for people to travel and new media technologies such as internet, televisions and cell phones have been used to unify distant people and help them to universalize vital values such as human rights and democracy.

Globalization theory emerged in the 80s with an emphasis on the globalization of economy, politics and culture and diminishing the significance of territorial boundaries and national economies, states and cultures (Martell 2007). Globalization theory stands as a base of knowledge to justify the role and need of Trondheim Municipality in today's globalized world to implement effective and reliable means of communication to localise the international employees who stay and work in the community. This will enable them to budget for the distribution and allocation of resources, to demographically sense the population and impose control of their norms and values.

In this study specifically, globalisation theory holds that, the integration of foreigners in a community is one of the nation-state roles or authorities of that particular nation in which foreigners are residing. These can be social integrations, political integrations or economic

integrations. Foreigners are those persons who having migrated from one nation-state to another live their lives across borders, participating simultaneously in social relations that embed them in more than one nation-state. The nation-state is a state that self-identifies as deriving its political legitimacy from serving as a sovereign entity in a country as a sovereign territorial unit, the state is a political and geopolitical entity; the nation is a cultural and/or ethnic entity.

Therefore this theory has a base that, a political unit such as Trondheim Municipality consists of an autonomous state inhabited predominantly by people sharing a common culture, history, and language. There is a mutual relationship between nation-state all over the world, this include transfer of people and their rights to integrations and identity. The transfer of knowledge, values, traditions, language, ethics, rules, regulations and norms is part of the autonomy of the nation- state. It is the right and obligation of nation-state to publicize and expose its culture, norms and values by integrating nationals and internationals as one people in that particular community.

To conclude, globalization can be perceived as a phenomenon that is being driven by global developments in several spheres of life. These include movement of different people of diverse cultures of the world in which people are unified into a single society and function together. This has been made relatively easy due to a combination of economy, advancement in new technology and in the transport industry. Technological advancement in the telecommunications world has promoted the exchange of information and better exposure to global development. Yet, many people continue to find out whether globalization makes people more homogeneous or more heterogeneous, or both of them. In this case, everyone can give his/her own meaning accordingly to his /her own understanding and practices of globalization.

2.2 Communication theory

Communication theory is very broad in nature; in order to make it explicit, two communication models, the linear model and transactional model, are used to frame the applied forms of communication. The main focus based on communication theory is one of the early attempts to extend the applicability of information theory beyond its engineering base into human communication in general. It models communication on a process in which a source encodes and then transmits a message along a channel. This is received and decoded at its destination upon which it produces an effect (O'Sullivan 1994:51). Shannon and Weaver's theory was aimed to account for how a unit of information which is produced by a sender at one end of a communication channel is able to be faithfully reproduced at the other end by a receiver (Holmes 2005). According to Fiske (1982) in O'Sullivan (1994), Shannon and Weaver (1949) were the first to articulate the theory and produced their basic model (See model below):
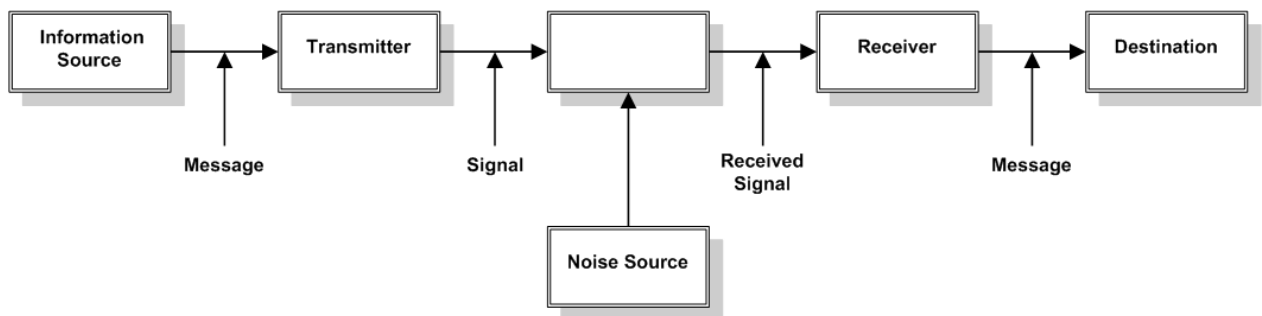

Source: Adapted from Shannon and Weaver (1949:7)

Figure 1 Shannon and weaver's basic model of communication

Shannon described communication as mechanism system, as shown in Figure 1. Shannon introduced four components to the system mostly the information source that selects a desired message out of a set of possible messages; the transmitter which changes this message into the signal through the communication channels; the received signal, and a noise source which could be anything that affects the signal as it travels through the channel (Shannon and Weaver 1949:7).

However, the concept of communication is a slippery one, and it is difficult to have a precise definition that is satisfying to everyone and to communication scholars themselves. Fiske and Jenkins (2011) state that communication is one of those human activities that everyone recognizes but few can define satisfactorily. Nevertheless, the main inspiration to grab is that communication consists of transmitting information from one person to another. Actually, many scholars of communication consider this as an operational definition. Andrews et al. (1996) identify a similar challenge, and make the assessment, that theorists have defined communication in diverse ways. Regardless of the perspective taken, however, each theorist acknowledges and incorporates several common components. Among these are messages that each communicator conveys to the other. Senders and receivers are also involved. Communication, thus, it is the activity of conveying meaningful information by use of signs and symbols that must be learned and shared. In this perspective, Jandt (2007) emphasizes that communication is derived from the Latin communicare, meaning to share with or to make common, as in giving to another a part or share of your thoughts, hopes, and knowledge.

2.2.1 Models of communication

Several scholars, as mentioned earlier, hold different views as to what the process of communication really holds, but they acknowledge that this process is difficult to analyze. Therefore, they have devised two major communication models namely linear and transactional to facilitate them in analyzing the key elements in the communication process. As discussed below:

2.2.1.1 A linear model of communication

Linear model emphasizes on one way communication whereby the source sending a message through a channel to the receiver in the presence of noise without displaying feedback from the receiver. Andrews et al. (1996) note that the earliest and simplest models of communication were linear. They conceptualized communication as a largely one-way process characterized by the flow of information from a source to a receiver. For instance, the information about garbage collection, brochures, booklets and all kind of information from Trondheim Municipality to international employees are considered as a linear model of communication. O'Sullivan (1994) adds that broadly speaking, the key points at the beginning and end of the linear process model of communication are sender and receiver.
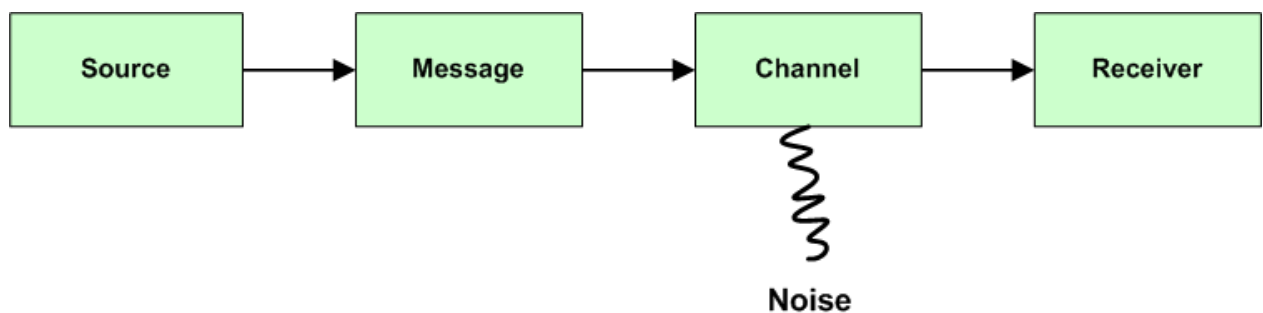
Source: Andrews et.al 1996:11

Figure 2 Linear model of communication

2.2.1.2 A transactional model of communication

According to Andrews et al. (1996) the transactional model of communication is modern model that sees communication as a two-way, reciprocal process of mutual message exchange. Sender and receiver roles are shared, feedback is also crucial, and the receiver plays a key role in constructing the message's meaning. This is, in one way or another, a

useful model that helps communication between Trondheim Municipality and foreign employees to be more effective. Taking the benefits from this model, communication process involves two parties whereby both sender (Trondheim Municipality) and receiver (international employees) can create and consume messages all together. Therefore, this model is appropriate in enhancing communication between two parties. Wenberg and Wilmot (1973) in Andrews et al. (1996) have observed that all persons are engaged in sending (encoding) and receiving (decoding) messages simultaneously. Each person is constantly sharing in the encoding and decoding process and each person is affecting the other. The transactional perspective makes no sharp distinction between source and receiver roles, since one person plays both, and often at the same time. Besides, feedback is central to the transactional model. The component of the transactional view focuses on how meaning in a communication transaction is constructed. Baran and Davis (2009) note that people send out messages, obtain feedback, and then adjust to it. In everyday life, people are constantly adjusting to one another. The overall social milieu can be understood as something that is created by ongoing negotiation between actors.
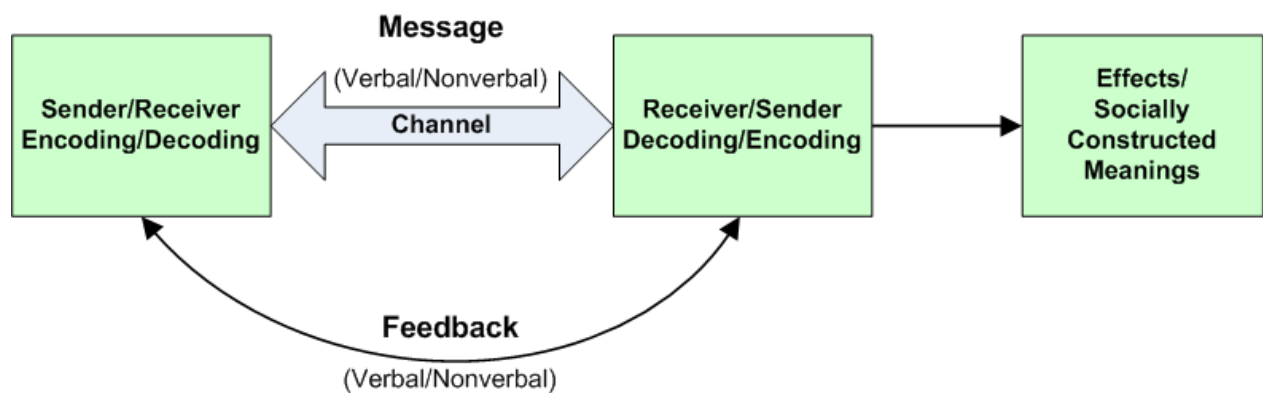
Source: Andrews et.al 1996:12

Figure 3 Transactional model of communication

2.2.2 Components of communication

Jandt (2007) identifies the main components of communication process and indicates ten elements that function together for fully process; they are particularly useful in guiding the study of communication. De Vito (1986) in Jandt (2007) states that people are better able to understand communication when they understand the components of the process.
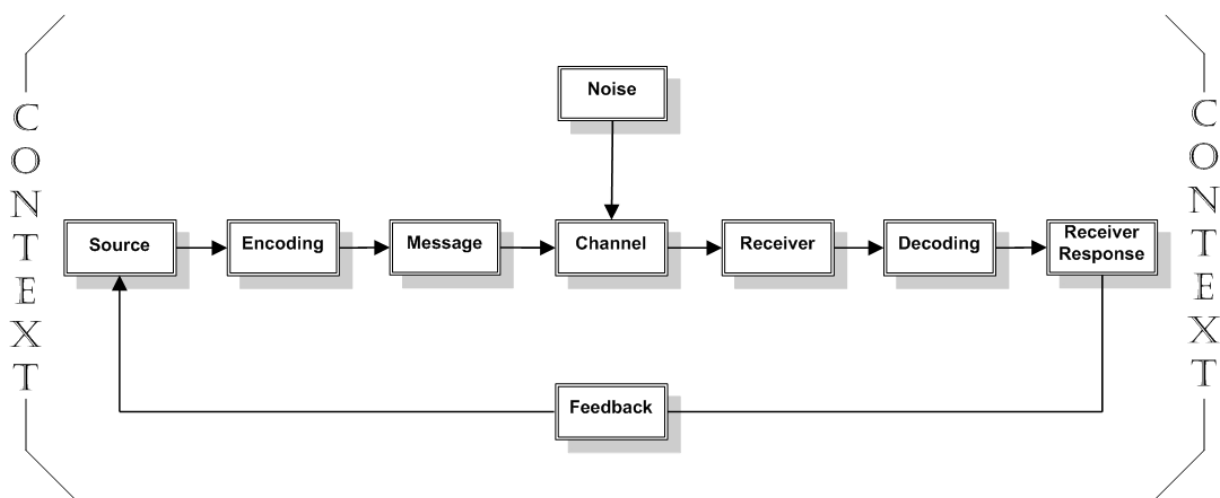
Source: Jandt, 2007:33

Source: Presumably a person who creates a message with a desire to communicate it. In this study, Trondheim Municipality is a source of information processing.

Encoding: It is the process of putting an idea into a symbol. As individuals are not able to share thoughts directly, the communication is put in the form of symbols that represent the idea people want to communicate.

Message: It is a key idea that sender wants to communicate. In other words, the message is information which is sent from the municipality to the general public as well as to foreigners. That information can be for example the availability of electronic kindergarten application form on the municipal website.

16

Channel: The term channel is used technically to refer to the means used to transmit the message. The most commonly communication channels used by the municipality to reach international employees include internet, face to face communication, telephone, letters, emails, and so forth.

Noise: The term noise refers to problems associated with effective listening. It occurs especially during a telephone conversation.

Receiver: The receiver is the person who attends to the message. In this sense, receivers are international employees for whom the message is intended.

Decoding: It is the opposite process of encoding and just as much an active process. In this situation, the receivers are actively involved in the communication process by assigning received messages into words.

Receiver response: It refers to anything the receiver does after having attended to and interprets the message. That response can range from doing nothing to take some action that may or may not desire by the source.

Feedback: It is the one of the main components of communication process as it permits the sender to analyze the efficacy of the message sent before. Feedback makes communication a two-way in helping the sender in confirming the correct interpretation of message by the recipient. Feedback is also the key component in the transactional model of communication. It can be an oral or written message, an action or just silence.

Context: It is the last component of communication that can be defined as the environment in which the communication takes place and which helps define the communication. Every message, whether oral or written, begins with context.

2. 2.3 Communication channels

Communication channels can be simply defined as the transfer of information between two parties (Krauss and Morsella 2000). In this sense, communication channels can be understood as the means of communication through which Trondheim Municipality and foreign employees communicate. As population grows and technology evolves, these means of communication evolve as well. In this new era, thus, Trondheim Municipality was not left behind in communicating with its residents. It draws upon several communication channels such as internet, face-to-face communication, telephone, letters, emails, facebook, etc. to transmit information to its intended audience including international employees.

2.2.3.1 Internet

Internet stands out as a worldwide network of computer systems that connects organizations, government, individuals, and so on. It connects people through computer-based communication exchanges, including consultation of databases, websites and homepages, conversational interactions, e-mail, and many kinds of exchange of information. The Internet is gradually taking over many functions of traditional mass media such as advertising, news and information (McQuail 2010). The literature on communication generally acknowledges that in the last decade the internet has grown so fast that people can find practically the most information they wish to access on the world's fastest growing communication channel. Moreover, what makes the internet especially interesting and attractive to people is its accessibility to a worldwide audience and the facility with which an organization can maintain and change product information made available to internet users (Andrews et al. 1996).

Communication theory continues to indicate that in today's society, at the level of interaction and to the fact that empirically it is true that the internet is mainly an interaction (Holmes 2005:52). In this sense, it is possible to argue that internet is a very valuable resource when it comes to gather information and get in touch with others who are far away. As Poster (1995)

in Holmes (2005) explains the phenomena of communicating at a distance through one's computer, of sending and receiving digitally encoded messages, of being 'interactive', has been the most popular application of the internet. Apart from obtaining information electronically, communicating by computer claims the intense interest of countless thousands.

2.2.3.2 Face-to-face communication

As far as Holmes (2005) is concerned the face to face interaction is an important mode of connection in information societies. One can add that face to face communication is more effective and persuasive than other types of communication such as telephone or email. The argument in favour of this channel is that it provides the warmth and emotion that helps people understand each other better. Since, over a telephone or email people cannot see each other and there is sometimes the trust and doubt aspect.

2.2.3.3 Electronic mail

Andrews et al. (1996) assert that the most popular feature of the internet is electronic mail. Today, email is an enormously popular form of communication in many communication landscapes, but it can also lead to major problems of privacy at one end. Nevertheless, the most organizations have computer systems that provide email capabilities, and the use of the internet helps them to send emails to its staff as internal communication and to communicate with other organizations and the public.

2.2.3.4 Magazines and newspapers

Jandt (2007) notes that a communication channel can be print media such as magazines and newspapers. As McQuail (2010) points out traditionally newspaper has referred to a print media form appearing regularly and containing reliable news of recent or ongoing events of general interest and offered for public sale.

2.2.3.5 Advertising

It is not generally wanted by its receivers; it has a propagandist character and is suspected of deception and manipulation; it has a distorting effect on the relation between media and audience; its content is stereotyped and misleading; the presence of advertising influences other non-advertising content (McQuail 2010). The general effectiveness of advertising for its purposes is more or less accepted, but certain evidence of success or of the reasons for success is hard to come by.

Socially, theory of communication holds that, in order to convey a message several aspects and forms of communication are used (Miller 2005). This can be *as a symbolic organization, as a message production, as a discourse and interaction, and as a device to develop relationship*.

Communication a*s a symbolic organization* is a means in which language portrays the identity of the society, for instance Norsk symbolizes Norwegian community and it is reserved as the cultural property to represent their way of communication; *as a message production* in which communication is perceived as a process of transmitting information, and this process varies depending on the technological advancement of a particular society, for instance, in developed countries such as Norway, communication channels like internet facilities and other electronic devices are mostly used, while in developing countries where technological advancement is low, newspapers and other manual posters are greatly in use; *as a discourse and interaction* this implies that communication is transactional process in which

individuals regardless their background interact by a standard channel or language, for instance, English and Internet represent a standard and common international aspect of social relationship all over the world, *as a device to develop a relationship*, in this aspect communication is regarded as a gesture to influence the relationship, actions symbolizes the intention and this is deep communication process, for instance, a gift or aid or present symbolizes positive communication between individuals and it facilitates the growth of social relationship between two parties in communication .

Therefore these forms of communication theory are used in this study as a base of knowledge in identifying and understanding the necessity of Norsk (Norwegian symbol) and English (international device) to be used in communication process especially in Trondheim where there is a complex intermingling of a big number of foreign employees who possess different cultural backgrounds. These forms provide an explanation on the need of keeping Norsk in Norwegian community as their symbol and identity of their culture. The forms also justify the need of Trondheim Municipality to integrate English language as a standard device to cheaply convey a message to foreigners who demand their services. The forms of communication theory identify the importance of Trondheim Municipality to apply several channels of communication in order to accommodate foreigners with different background of communication channels living in Trondheim; and also the need of Trondheim Municipality as a local government to present its gesture welcome to foreigners for the sake of promoting a good relationship with foreigners in their community.

2.3 Interconnectedness between globalization and communication theories

Globalization and communication are deeply intertwined as noted by McLuhan (1964), an early theorist, who made the connection between media and globalization by combining the two concepts of the medium as the message and the global village. Numerous scholars have studied the link between globalization and media and the most theorists agree that there is practically no globalization without media and communications (Rantanen 2005).

Additionally, the role of media and communications in globalization is clarified by Rantanen (2005) through defining globalization as a process in which worldwide economic, political, cultural and social relations have become increasingly mediated across time and space. Flew (2007) stipulates that media has a central place of globalization due to three reasons: first, that media corporations have increasingly globalized their operations; secondly that the global communication infrastructure facilitates global information flows; and finally that global media play a key role in how we view events across the world in developing shared systems of meaning.

Movius (2010) highlights the relationships between globalization and communication by observing that global media governance is increasing of interest to scholars, but also significantly important to the general public considering the essential role that communication plays in our lives. Furthermore, Castells (2009) reiterates that perhaps the most decisive social movements of our age are precisely those aimed at preserving a free internet ...carving a space of communication autonomy that constitutes the foundation of the new public space of the information age.

In support for Rantanen (2005) on the premise that there is no globalization without media and communications, Movius (2010) advocates that the need for other fields to consider media and communications as integral to the analysis of globalization as it has often received minimal attention from scholars outside communication studies. Reyes (2001) adds that the theory of globalization emerges from the global mechanisms of greater integration with particular emphasis on the sphere of communications and economic transactions. Therefore the global theory and communication theory are interconnected in the way that they examine the interaction of people, goods and services over space and time to give meaning to this interconnectedness with technology becoming a means of enabling the connectivity to happen.

This research therefore explores the science of globalization as a discipline that promotes economic, political, cultural and social relations mediated across time and space through means of communication. The two theoretical underpinnings advanced in the study also influenced the research methodology that was qualitative in nature as it engaged both the researcher and researched with a view of discerning their realities based on day to day

occurrences as well as interactions (Limb and Dwyer 2001) with Trondheim Municipality and the subsequent gaps experienced by the international employees in accessing the services provided by the municipality.

To sum up, this research applies both the globalization theory and the communication theory to analyze the way in which social interactions occur between Trondheim Municipality and international employees as they integrate in the community with a view of recommending enhanced ways of service provision and effective communication strategies as well as flow of information.

3 Methodology

This chapter explains and details the methods used to collect and analyse data of the present study "*Assessment of communication and information flow between Trondheim Municipality and international employees.*" This includes the research method, sampling procedure, sampling techniques, types of data, validity and reliability of data, ethical considerations and the analysis and interpretation of primary data. This study is grounded on the opinions given by international employees living and working in Trondheim. The research questions I want to answer are as follows:

Which kind of communication channel/s is/are mostly and easily used by international employees to know or communicate to Trondheim Municipality?

How does Trondheim Municipality interact and transfer information to international employees?

Are there some possibilities of improving the available means and ways of communication for effective and smooth interaction between Trondheim Municipality and international employees?

3.1 Research method

The methodology and procedure for data collection employed in this study was mainly qualitative. Limb and Dwyer (2001) note that a qualitative research methodology covers a number of alternative techniques, including interviews, participant observation and focus group discussions. Qualitative methodology enables the understanding of life experiences and to reflect on the understandings and shared meaning of peoples' everyday social life and realities. Denzin and Lincoln (2003:626) add that qualitative methodology is highly relevant to gather information.

According to Limb and Dwyer (2001), the researcher and researched should be central to the research process, stressing the need to understand the life world of individuals and the taken for granted dimensions of experiences, the unquestioned meanings and routines. The interviews enable me to discover what international employees believe to be the most appropriate way of getting information from Trondheim Municipality.

Flick (1998) argues that qualitative research is of specific relevance to the study of social relations, due to the pluralisation of life which results in a common culture within multicultural society. Dissolution of old social inequalities transfer into the new diversity of milieus, substructures, lifestyles and ways of living. In this study, the focus is on foreign employees living and working in Trondheim.

Polonsky and Waller (2011:134) state that qualitative research methods are techniques involving small number of respondents who provide information about their thoughts and ideas from which some conclusions can be drawn. Therefore, in this study, the qualitative approach was used to collect the primary source of data through semi-structured interviews with international employees who work at NTNU, Statoil, SINTEF, ACUSTO and Atmel Norway.

3.2 Sampling procedure

A non-probability sampling was used to select a sample of respondents. Non-probability sampling is a technique that relies on the personal judgment of the researcher to decide who will be included in the sample (Polonsky and Waller 2005:116). In this study, therefore, I rely on my own judgment to decide those international employees who will be included in the sample. It is important to realize that with this approach, the sample in this study is not representative of the international employees who work and live in Trondheim. This is because, not every foreign worker had the same chance of being selected in this sample, for a number of reasons. In particular, certain foreign employees especially from Statoil (three

informants out of eight) are overrepresented. However, McQueen and Knussen (2002) argue that a sample drawn through non-probability procedure does not necessarily be representative.

Since the purpose of this study is to investigate and assess the communication channels in use between Trondheim Municipality and the international employees and suggest possible means and ways of improving them; I chose my sample with a purpose in m mind and thinking about the participants who would be appropriate for this study. Bryman (2008:458) emphasizes that purposive sampling is essentially strategic and entails an attempt to establish a good correspondence between research questions and sampling. In addition, I selected the sample on the basis of wanting to interview these particular employees as they   are relevant to my research questions. In other words, I followed certain characteristics by selecting few to be interviewed. With this in mind, eight participants were purposively chosen out. There are two general approaches to purposive sampling that include snowball sampling and theoretical sampling (Ibid.). In this study, snowball sampling technique was used accordingly to get contact with the participants.

3.2.1 Sample size

The sample size is very important when performing a research and it is highly dependent on the shape and form of the data the researcher wants to collect, and the goals of the analysis at issue (O'Leary 2010). The sample size for this study was made up of eight international employees who work for NTNU, Statoil, SINTEF, ACUSTO and ATMEL Norway. The sample was undertaken based on the availability and interest of the respondents to participate in this study. Bryman (2008) argues that, there is no accurate reasonable sample size of the sample, what determines the reasonable sample is time factor, availability of respondents, resources in terms of cost, and information saturation point when no new data is obtained as the information emanating from the interviewees begins to be similar. In the case of this study, I had barely two months for the data collection and due to the time constraint, a sample of eight people was considered reasonable and viable for this research project, and its goals.

26

3.2.2 Location

This study was done in Trondheim, Norway. The respondents were picked from five organisations/ companies located in Trondheim. The first company was Statoil. Statoil is the biggest Norwegian oil company and it employs experts from different countries. In Norwegian: *Stiftelsen for industriell og teknisk forskning* (SINTEF) is the largest independent research institution in Scandinavian countries and it is headquartered in Trondheim, Norway. The Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) located in Trondheim and as its name suggests, it has the main national mandate for higher education in engineering and technology. In addition, NTNU has a variety of professionals, experts, and researchers from different parts of the world. ACUSTO is one of the leading suppliers in Norway of building furniture for public and private buildings. Its head office is located in Oslo, Norway. ATMEL Norway is located at Heimdal, Trondheim, Norway. ATMEL Corporation is a worldwide leader in the design and manufacture of microcontrollers, and it has its corporate headquarters in San Jose, California, United States of America. All respondents picked from these companies reside in Trondheim; therefore, they are under the jurisdiction of local authority in Trondheim municipal council.

3.3 Sampling techniques

Snowballing technique was used to locate and identify respondents in this study. According to Bryman (2008) snowballing technique makes initial contacts with a small group of people who are relevant to the research topic and then uses this to establish contacts with others. Based on that, I visited several international companies to identify international employees and eventually referred to their based location. To avoid biasness of sample, gender imbalance, nationality and their availability were some of the important factors considered in a selection. Eight respondents consisting of four men and four women from six different countries which were the United States, Germany, France, Poland, Italy and Portugal were

chosen. I used my social network to get first two participants and then I asked them to refer me other foreign workers, who were willing to be interviewed and fit my study requirements.

3.4 Types of data

There are two types of data in this study, the primary data source and secondary data source. The primary data were collected or obtained by using semi-structured interviews and secondary data were obtained from reference books, articles and internet.

3.4.1 Semi-structured interviews (Primary source)

According to Flick (2002:74), a semi-structured interview is flexible, and it allows the respondents to express their opinions in a relatively openly designed interview situation. This method helped me to explore participants' views in detail. I frequently adopted a flexible approach as I had to formulate impromptu questions with the intention of getting appropriate information from respondents during the interviews. Yet at the same time there was an openness to change of sequence and forms of questions in order to follow up the answers given and the stories told by participants (Kvale 1996:124). An interview guide (see Appendix1) was used in order to focus the topic of the interview.

3.4.2 Documents as source of data (Secondary data)

The term 'documents' covers a very wide range of different kinds of sources (Bryman 2008). In this regard, I used the books, articles and some internet resources as secondary data to complement commentary the primary sources (interviews). McQueen and Knussen (2002:14)

assert that most researchers rely to some extent on secondary data. Whenever we review the findings of previous research as part of literature review, or read a chapter in a textbook .In this study, combination of both primary and secondary data were used in the context of assessment of communication and information flow between two parties that are under the present examination. Thus, it is clearly tempting to assume that documents reveal information about the underlying social reality, and provides crucial information about what goes on in an organization as well as to assist in unfolding such things as its culture or ethos (Bryman 2008:526).

3.5 Validity and Reliability

According to Bryman (2008) , the terms 'validity and 'reliability' seem to be almost synonymous, and they are related to each other although they have quite different meanings in relation to the evaluation of measures of concepts.

3.5.1 Validity

Validity refers to a relationship of accuracy between the responses and the reality the responses were intended to capture (Gomm 2004:152). In this study, the respondents were skilled enough and quite competent to provide the information. It was observed that, most of the respondents had enough experience and exposure to assess and reflect the reality within which they lived. The selection of common and right language to them (English) is another criterion which allows for me to believe that the meaning intended was indeed expressed.

In another context, validity refers to how research premises adhered. In this study two perspectives were taken into considerations, one is about the ethics in terms of procedures and second in terms of the quality of the information to be obtained; several aspects were, thus, taken into account:

Content validity: The questions that were asked in this study covered all three specific objectives: to investigate and identify the most preferable channels used by international employees to reach Trondheim Municipality, to assess the effectiveness of available means of communication used by Trondheim Municipality to reach the international employees and finally to provide the possible means and ways of improving the communication between Trondheim Municipality and foreign workers.

Construct validity: The questions in this study are closely linked to deal with theory of this research topic. This refers to the degree to which inferences can legitimately be made from the operationalizations in this study to the theoretical constructs on which those operationalizations were based; and

Face validity: The positive way that key informants accepted the instrument and comments on the questions serve as proof of face validity.

3.5.2 Reliability

Reliability refers to how consistent a set of measurements are (Bryman, 2008). In this research, reliability of information was ensured by well designed research questions which were accompanied by the detailed interview guide to avoid omission of other important points, the interview guide was very exploitative and consistence, respondents were equally given or ask the same questions to portray the intended meaning.

3.6 Ethical considerations

Ethical issues such as informed consent, assurance of confidentiality and privacy for the participants, ensuring that the research did not cause the respondents any harm were taken into account as required in qualitative (see interview guide). Ethical issues go through the entire process of an interview investigation, and potential ethical concerns should be taken

into consideration from the very start of an investigation to the final report (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009). At the beginning of each interview, I assured the respondents that there was no ulterior motive of the study and I mentioned that it was it was solely an academic interview, and I promised them that the information they provided would be treated as confidential and it would be secure. McQueen and Knussen (2002:205) add that it is essential that ethical issues, are addressed at the planning stage of a qualitative study and that ethical guidelines are adhered to. Generally speaking, potential participants received the information about the study before the interview took place since I had been in touch with all of them either through e-mail or phone. This meant that they were aware of the topic of this study and the time the interview may take.

3.6.1 Informed consent

At the start of the study, the respondents were informed straight away of the intention of the study which was empirical data collection of my master's thesis and the topic was mentioned. I revealed to them that they had been selected to participate in this activity as resource persons and therefore they are requested to voluntarily participate in this study and they had the right to withdraw their participating at any time if they so wished. Boeije (2010:45) explains that informed consent is one important general ethical requirement for the researcher's introduction to the field. It is an obligation to outline fully the nature of the data collection and the purpose for which the data will be used to the people or community being studied in a style and language that they can understand.

3.6.2 Confidentiality

In addition to informed consent, there is the related issue of confidentiality that involves protecting the identity of those providing research data (O'Leary 2010:42). Before each

interview I informed the participants of their right to expect that any information that I collect about them will remain confidential and their names would not appear in any report or any publication. Moreover, in this study, I gave each respondent a fictitious name in order to render the content of findings to be more human and realistic.

3.6.3 Privacy

Regarding the issue of privacy that refers to the protection of the right of participants whereas they decide to whom they give information about themselves and that researcher may not disclose such information to others (Boeije 2010). I revealed that the information they give will be secure and remain solely between me and my supervisors. In addition to this, I assured them that the recordings of interviews, extended notes, transcripts, and the like would be deleted as soon as the thesis was finished in order to ensure their privacy.

3.7 Data analysis and interpretation

Analysis covers the assembling and the examining of the data under specific criteria, whereas interpretation focuses on giving meaning to the data that the researcher has collected (Polonsky and Waller 2005). In this study, the data analysis process was done after transcription of interview. The transcription itself was a long process, for instance a one hour and twenty five minutes long interview took me seven hours to fully transcribe. During interviews, I used a tape recorder that made a transcription precise although there were some people who did not wish our conversion to be recorded, in which case I took with me one of my classmates to help me with note taking and both of us wrote down the main points and gestures. According to May (2001), at an interactional level, some people may find the tape recorder inhibiting and not wish their conversations to be recorded. Nevertheless, tape

recording can assist interpretation as it allows the interviewer to concentrate on the conversation and record the non-verbal gestures of the interviewee during the interview.

In this research, the data analysis and interpretation were both based on the flow of the questions associated with the interview guidelines. During this process both the notes taken and tape recordings were used to analyze and interpret the data. It helped me to relate the findings to my research questions and also to my theoretical framework.

Besides, the thesis findings and analysis were divided in three chapters which means chapter four whereas the used and preferable communication channels by foreign employees were discussed, into chapter five, the effectiveness of available means of communication used by the municipality to reach international employees are assessed and chapter six dealt with the possibilities of improving the available communication channels and smooth interaction between two parties.

4 The preferable communication channels

First, this chapter explains and details the respondents' awareness about Trondheim Municipality. According to Jandt (2007), presumably an individual who creates a message with a desire to communicate it is a source of information. In this sense, Trondheim Municipality is a source of information. Second, the chapter aims to look closely at the Trondheim Municipality's communication with international employees; third, it explores the types of communication channels used by international employees and fourth it investigates and identifies the most preferable channels used by foreign employees to communicate with Trondheim Municipality. Thus, in this chapter, there are four questions that were asked to respondents and each question was addressed separately because each one served a different purpose during the study process, and therefore was analyzed independently.

4.1 Participants' level of awareness about Trondheim Municipality

In order to get to know to the extent to which international employees are aware about Trondheim municipality, I started asking participants what they knew about Trondheim Municipality as a local authority. Most respondents confirmed the demographic, political and administrative status of the Trondheim Municipality as having a population size of about 170, 000 inhabitants and is the third largest city in Norway with the sitting mayor being Ms Rita Ottervik from the labor party.

In general, the participants had some knowledge about Trondheim Municipality; however, they were often confused about whether services were provided at the national level, or whether they were offered by Trondheim Municipality. Few were able to differentiate between the national affairs and the local affairs. For instance some participants were not sure whether the police, the tax office were part of Trondheim. Eric, a Geophysicist articulated:

> "It is all about administrative unit governing Trondheim Municipality, a function of the welfare state that Norway is, but I am not sure which structures are under Trondheim Municipality maybe registration of residents, tax issues, and oversee health issues, it also provides social services and deals

with unemployment issues. I am not sure if the police is an arm of the municipality, at least they collaborate. Immigration services, maintenance of roads as well, street lights, electricity, heating houses, and so forth."

On the other hand, Fabiana, a Reservoir Engineer who has been in Trondheim for over a period of ten years could name a list of services offered by the municipality as follows:

"I can tell you that the mayor is from AP (labor party) which is the leading party in Norway at the moment. We have been in touch with Trondheim Municipality in connection with education services for our kids; place in the kindergarten as well as in the school. Also with respect to house projects, you need to send applications to them when you want to modify your house. Trondheim Municipality is in charge of parking places and administering fines to violating motorists. I have been to both of their offices: City hall that is in Munkegata 1 and another one for Public services in Midtbyen. I have been to the DORA office where the archive is. I can also participate as a foreigner to the local elections (but not national ones) – one of the few things we can do. I have sent the election card and can affirm that it is possible for a foreigner to participate to the democracy in a way. Also it is through municipality you get personal doctor."

Several interviewees felt that they need to be better included in the municipal affairs and they would be 'grateful' to receive more information about the services provided by the municipality, the events taking place in the city and other useful information. But there was still a confusion of responsibilities of Trondheim Municipality and South Trondelag County according to Geoffrey, an Engineer who mentioned that:

"What I know from living here is that they supervise the kindergarten and the education systems. They remove the garbage everywhere in the city; they are responsible of water supply and testing. If you want to do some work on your house you have to go through the municipality. I also know a little bit about what they are doing politically – the environmental package. They are trying to portray themselves as environmentally sensitive by promoting the use of busses and public transportation in general. They take care of the ski tracks, outdoor activities, taking care of that area, so we can go skiing and hiking in Vassfjellet and Bymarka; road constructions and maintenance, the cultural life as well."

Herbert, an Associate Professor was quite willing to give information and animatedly noted that:

"It might be somewhat special because I used to collaborate with them in my work and that will be my main source of information as I haven't contacted them so much as a private person. However, I have participated in local elections once (after three-year residents). That is my main contact points. I think that I know quite a lot about their operations since I am a researcher and have collaborated with them several times."

Other respondents continued to point out that Trondheim Municipality is responsible for firefighters and adding that it has between twelve and thirteen thousand employees. They know a bit about the way it is organized, the departments, ombudsman, and so on. Some

participants know that the municipality offer funding opportunities to different countries for cultural events. Another service provided by Trondheim Municipality which was greatly emphasized is Trondheim Public Library that was considered extremely crucial. Nevertheless, there were different views from some participants particularly those who had not been in Trondheim for a long time and who are single. They recounted that nobody had received any welcome package that provided all the information about Trondheim Municipality and the services they offer. Ricardo described:

> "I have read a little bit about the ancient history of Trondheim. I do not really know a lot about Trondheim Municipality. I know very well that it exists. I see cars with logo, and only administration stuff for getting the tax card and personal visa otherwise I didn't have any contacts or where to get general information on the municipality."

4.2 Communication with the municipality

When respondents asked if they have ever been in communication with Trondheim Municipality for whatever reason, some said "maybe yes, maybe no." A common trend observed during interviews was that participants shifted their answers at the end of the discussion. Here are some responses that illustrate the aforementioned:

> "I don't think so but I have interacted with staff from different institutions like the tax office and the police but Trondheim Municipality specifically I am not sure. Apparently, they have data about me because I have a work permit and I also live in a house from SINTEF so I have had a simple path in that way. They can filter everything for me."

The two departments that were mentioned several times during the interviews were the tax office and the police. Whenever Trondheim Municipality is mentioned, these two come immediately to their minds even though the municipality is not directly connected to police or tax office.

Natasha, a Research Scientist had a different view on her experiences with the municipality:

> "No, I wouldn't think so except that I receive the bills that I have to pay. One thing that is administered by the municipality, I think the Expert mid Norway, funded by the Trondheim Municipality is a kind of organization that is helping foreigners when they arrive, and informs them about services available.

Unfortunately, I have not really used it because when I got to learn about this service I had already been in Trondheim for 2 years."

However, there are some of the interviewees who have been in communication with the municipality for any reasons such as looking for places for their kids in kindergarten, or filling out forms for child benefit, and so forth. Herbert from Germany stressed: "My wife has interacted with them on various occasions. She came to Trondheim four years ago and she has had more contact with the municipality in a way that I became involved too."

As depicted in the findings, married people are more in touch with the municipality than the single ones. This is attributed to accessing maternal and child health care services. When a woman gets pregnant she is likely to visit her personal doctor frequently, and later on she will require and obtain the municipality's services such as child benefit, nursery school, to mention but a few.

4.3 Types of communication channels used by international employees

According to respondents, a comparison of the familiar communication channels that were used by Trondheim Municipality in comparison to their home countries revealed that the systems were similar. In opinion of Jandt (2007), communication channel is a means used to transmit the message. Respondents emphasize that Norway is excellent at being in touch with its inhabitants. Herbert noted that: "They are almost the same but the difference would be that the Trondheim Municipality is more professional through their internet and in Germany they are lagging behind on this. The system is more advanced here."

Many of international employees observed that in their home countries they were able to go straight to their municipalities to ask for what they want since there is no language barrier which is considered to be a key to communication and additionally they know very well how the system works. Therefore, language is an impediment to some of the international

employees. However, the administrative system is otherwise well organized for the general public convenience. Eric made an assessment and noted that:

> "In France, I would probably never use the internet system first. When I arrived here the simplest way of getting information was through the internet. In France when I needed something regarding administrative stuff, then I had to go to the office and get additional information from the reception desk or booklets."

Moreover, new information and communication technologies such as mobile phones, television, computer networks, internet and its constant evolution allows for connection throughout the world. Fabiana affirmed:

> "Yes, I must admit that if I needed information in Italy, the website of the municipality would be the easiest and the most appropriate tool. I live in a small municipality in Italy with about twenty thousand people and they can't afford to broadcast anything on television. Newspapers and newsletters are preferred. My municipality also sends by postal mail every six months or annually a journal saying what's happening and what the administration has achieved. It is in a way a political newsletter but on the other hand also a space for creating visibility to the ruling party. There is a bias in presenting what the administration did and not what it did not. I usually had a look at it. Radio is used by chance even less that television. Internet is gaining popularity."

International employees in Trondheim used a variety of channels to communicate with the municipality. These included internet, electronic mail, the short message service (SMS), and so on. These channels sometimes differed from the channels used in their home countries whereby face to face is most used because there is no problem of the language, others include newspapers and newsletters.

4.4 Communication channels preferred by international employees to reach Trondheim Municipality

The participants were requested to talk about the way they access information about Trondheim Municipality and a majority of them indicated that they access most of information about the municipal services on the internet. This proved to be useful to help them to search for anything they need regarding Trondheim Municipality. The majority of participants does not watch television or listen to Norwegian radios. Occasionally, they make

some enquiries through their colleagues at work, if there is something that is urgently required. Only few interviewees have put forward the use of telephone, postal mails, newspapers, brochures and municipal receptions as a possible means of information to international employees. Fabiana noted:

> "I don't think I ever called the municipality [.......] maybe when I was looking for a place in the kindergarten for the kids. Eventually, I called to push them. I think that it was the only [.......] time. If not, I go there, and that is because of the communication problem. I don't get the same kind of understanding on the phone. If I don't get what I want on the net, I either call or go there. It's better to talk straight to the people because it is often complicated on the phone."

In regard to receiving information from friends and/or neighbors, there are very few international employees who indicated that they received some information through this communication channel. Furthermore, this was not an official channel even though its usage is not prohibited and varied from one person to the next. This channel is mainly by people who have been staying in Trondheim for a long time and they know exactly whom to ask between their friends or neighbors.

Eric highlighted that:

> "Sometimes we discuss things [.......] for example; politicians are discussing the possibility of removing the sports hall in our neighborhood and building houses for people instead. If the Trondheim Municipality were to ask us to give our opinion, then I would consult with my neighbors on this issue."

For international employees, the most preferable communication channel was identified to be the use of internet. When internet didn't manage to provide sufficient information, the use of telephone, mail letters, and face to face communication were considered the best alternatives. Otherwise radio, television, and newspapers were considered to be not relevant channels.

5 The effectiveness of available communication channels

This chapter aims to explain and assess the effectiveness of available means of communication used by Trondheim Municipality to reach the international employees. As Krauss and Morsella (2000) note, communication channels can be plainly defined as the transfer of information between two parties. The assessment is based on a variety of issues related to the need and demand of establishing communication between the two sides. This involves the interests of the services, demanded services, and satisfaction with services. This chapter will contain four parts of analysis: Part one is about respondents' interests in Trondheim municipal services; part two is concerned with the satisfaction of the services; part three deals with the effectiveness of the available communication channels and part four discovers the satisfaction with communication level of Trondheim Municipality.

5.1 Respondents' interests in Trondheim municipal services

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of communication channels, we must first understand and describe the services provided by Trondheim Municipality. For instance welfare services such as health services, kindergarten, basic education, public library, and so on.

When participants were asked to mention the Municipal services which they are interested in as foreign employees, a number of respondents expressed their interest in kindergarten and elementary schools even though some take their kids to private school such as Birralee International School. International employees who work at SINTEF have a privilege of taking their kids to kindergarten provided by SINTEF.

A few cases as indicated during the interviews, Trondheim Municipality needs to review their policy in health service delivery to international employees as it takes long for personal doctor to effect appointments. Although the municipality provides services for the personal

doctor and emergency medical services, none of the informants were aware of the former prior to the interviews.

In regards to Adult Education Center (SEVO), a majority of international employees learned Norwegian through their companies. Nevertheless, Ricardo was there at the very beginning and gave up just after two lessons. He confirms the following:

> "Indeed, I have been in contact with them for two lessons, but I found the classes so inappropriate that I stopped. You know I learned English when I moved to London, and I learned Italian when I moved to Italy. At Adult Education Center, the classes were set up for six year olds. It seems like their main target group is refugees who come to Norway and they put them there in the corner. I came here to work and cannot stop working to go to classes. Unfortunately, at the time they did not have night classes."

Nearly all respondents expressed great interest in the Trondheim Public Library whose services were popular. In this respect, Verena, a Geologist said:

> "I am using the Trondheim Public Library, it is really good, and it is very useful to me since I use it often for borrowing movies and music compact discs. I am not used to such a service before, because in Germany, you have to pay for the card. I really like the public library system where you can order something from one library, and bring it back to any library which is around you, this is a remarkable service."

Almost every respondent had a library card and they greatly appreciated the service. There is even one family with four cards, and they use the library very often for their children and for themselves. In the same vein, Eric reiterated that:

> "I have been there several times and I have a card. I love this place. It is very complete. I was happy to find a whole shelf of books in French. They have a lot of things, compact discs (CDs), digital video discs (DVDs), and the like. They have also internet booking as well and it's working very well! You just have not to forget giving back the book otherwise the fine will come quickly [laughs]. And the place is nice and I know on Sundays they often organize concerts. It is even a good place to work during the weekend."

Other services that foreign employees seem to be interested in but are not sure if Trondheim Municipality is responsible for are theatre, symphony orchestra, ski tracks, parking place, public transport, and so on. In regards to parking spaces, Geoffrey observed that:

> "One of the other services is the parking place because I am using this service. There is a lot to improvement required with zonal parking. I had to wait up for between six and eight months to get the parking place when I moved into this apartment. The municipality could try to improve also the farmers

market where you can go and buy fresh vegetables, it is really something that I miss. Another thing the municipality is organizing is all the great festivals, and I actually like this. When you arrive here and you are shy to go to the theatre as an alternative you have many concerts in the city that is pleasant."

5.2 International employees' satisfaction with Trondheim municipal services

On reflecting on what transpired during the interviews, when the respondents were asked the following question: "How satisfied are you with Trondheim Municipal services that you are using now?" Most of them appear to be satisfied with the municipal services but there were some complains on personal doctor, schools and public transport albeit the former is not the responsibility of Trondheim Municipality alone. Natasha describes this situation as follows:

> "I am pretty satisfied with the library and I like that it is open also on Saturdays and Sundays although the opening hours are not long for those days. I am also satisfied with the tourist information office. These are the only services that I have used. I am very satisfied, I cannot actually complain."

Most respondents appear satisfied with snow removal services. One negative point is still with the nursery schools that seem to be difficult to be on waiting for some time especially those who do not have the advantage from their working places. It also appears complex for some who come here with children because the kindergarten system is different from country to country. Otherwise they are to a larger extent pleased with the municipal services. Ricardo appears to be neither satisfied nor unsatisfied with some of the services:

> "It depends; using the swimming pool is okay. But when we were trying to get our son into the classes, it was very confusing and it didn't seem clear. Then I was supposed to choose which level he should go in but I couldn't understand their system. The same thing was for gymnastics because it wasn't a place he felt comfortable as he didn't speak Norwegian. You arrive in a country, and you need time to catch up in order to be able to even use the services. Then, you kind of get dropped behind and suddenly you live your life without the services of the municipal. But I mean, the city is clean, so that is good."

Some interviewees revealed their concerns about how the public transport is organized saying that the bus ticket is too high, the connection is too bad and there are some places if you miss one bus to get another one you have to wait from forty five minutes to one hour. Eric expressed his disapproval as follows:

> "Another service that is visible and that I use quite often is public transportation and one sometimes gets inconvenienced by how it is run. I think the reason why not so many people are using the buses is because there are not enough and the network is not good enough. Before you could use T-Kort on the train as well on the bus [.....] And they are increasing the price of the traffic tolls in order to discourage people to use their own cars maybe this is a tactic to make us use the public transport more! It is of course a big difference compared to Paris where I lived before. The environmental package (in Norwegian: Miljøpakken) makes you think that Trondheim is the most modern city in the world. They exaggerate too much about the modernity and environmental sensitivity."

However, many respondents were not certain if it is either Trondheim Municipality or County Council that is responsible for public transport.

5. 3 Effectiveness of available communication channels

When asked how they get information about the services provided by the municipality, most of the respondents confirmed that they get all the information needed from the internet. As claimed by Castells (2009), the most decisive social movements of our age are precisely those aimed at preserving a free internet ...carving a space of communication autonomy that constitutes the foundation of the new public space of the information age. Trondheim Municipal website seems to have acknowledged positively by the respondents. They reiterated that the internet is today a mode of interaction with a wide range of possibilities; therefore, the municipality should put more focus on its website, as stressed by Amandine, a Hydrologist:

> "Actually for all of the things I need from Trondheim Municipality, I use the website most of the time. To get the forms you need to fill out for school, kindergarten, SFO (school day-care), to get a personal doctor, for all kinds of things. For specific questions I would prefer to go straight to the office in person and speak to the people there without any scheduled appointments. But, if I get all the information through the internet, I would not visit the municipality offices that are only open during working hours when I am supposed to be at my work, so if I can avoid going there personally then it is a better alternative."

The majority of interviewees shared the sentiments about getting most of information needed from the internet. Municipal homepage received a great recognition as a source of information and communication channel. Other communication channels which are used include electronic mail, face-to-face communication, telephone, postal mails, brochures and booklets. In the following sections the most essential communication channels will be briefly discussed.

5. 3 .1 Internet

In addition to what was mentioned during the interviews, it is evident that the internet which includes the use of the World Wide Web (WWW) is increasingly being used by international employees to access the information about the municipal services of their interest. It is preferable because one can access it whenever s/he wants, and because it is always available for the public. With Trondheim Municipality, the potential for access and exchange of information via the internet is enormous. Indeed, the introduction of internet as a tool for communication between the municipality and its residents together with foreign employees is an effective means of communication. Moreover, the Trondheim municipal website also represents information on its website in English as well.

As Jandt (2007) asserts, the message is a key idea that sender wants to communicate. The municipal website includes a wide variety of information about its services that are available for its residents. Therefore, the municipality puts information on its website in order to convey the message to its general public as well as to international employees.

Those services include health and welfare services, elderly care, building permits, culture and leisure, school and education, and more. Foreign employees use the internet as a key communication tool to access the information that is convenient for them. What is more, Trondheim Municipality has two facebook pages, one in Norwegian and another one English to communicate with its residents and visitors. The municipality communication department invites people to share their ideas and ask any questions related to municipal services. Despite the success of facebook, international employees are not interested in this communication channel.

5.3.2 Electronic mail

Moreover, there is the opportunity for Trondheim Municipality to communicate with the general public as well as foreign employees by means of electronic mail at any time. This helps save time for both parties. Through electronic mail, anyone who wants to contact Trondheim Municipality for any enquiry regarding its services can do that .This provides new opportunities for quick and better exchange of information between the two sides. International employees would not use this channel.

5.3.3 Face-to-face communication

Face to face communication is found to be the most straightforward form of communication used by the municipality. Thus, foreign employees asserts that face to face communication is the most basic channel through which the receive information from the municipality. These findings collaborate with Holmes' (2005) assertion that face to face interaction is an essential mode of connection in information societies. People regularly visit the municipal offices during working hours to request diverse application forms and to make enquiries about services provided by the municipality. Trondheim Municipality is committed to provide excellent services to all residents as well as foreigners. The public reception of Trondheim municipal administration building is located the city centre. It is open to all public from 08:00 to 15:30 (Monday to Friday). At the municipal reception desk, there are several reception staff that have the main job of serving the general public. They guide and inform people in the service area responsible according to people's enquiries, and provide information and answer questions.

This communication channel was considered helpful among foreign employees. The reason is that through face to face communication people discuss things and having a discussion builds trust and minimizes misinterpretation and misunderstanding between two parties. Also, people can get an immediate response and understanding of body language which is an

important part of communication. In summary, personal connection is crucial in communication between Trondheim Municipality and foreign employees.

5.3.4 Telephone

Trondheim Municipality provides its contact information for its residents and foreign employees, anyone who wants to contact the municipality can call anytime during working hours. On top of this, the municipality provides the telephone number that can be used in case of emergency medical services required. Everyone who is in need can contact the Emergency Department if need be; it operates all the time. Furthermore, Trondheim Municipality provides the use of short message service (SMS) in case it has special information to convey to its residents and foreigners, for instance when there is a water leakage in a particular place. Text messaging is a dominant form of communication used by Trondheim public library in reminding people to deliver books back in the library. The public library users, including foreign employees, consider this service to be very practical. One of the most significant and positive aspects of this means of communication is that Trondheim public library can effectively and successfully communicate with library users wherever they are and text message reaches within few seconds. The short message service (SMS) is considered very practical by international employees.

5.3.5 Postal mail (Letters)

Trondheim Municipality uses letters, documents, brochures, and the like for communication about garbage collection and other matters to maintain its effectiveness of swift message delivery to foreign employees. This is a linear model of communication , and it is confirmed by Andrews et al. (1996) conceptualizing communication as a one way process that characterized by the information flow from a source to a recipient. All respondents were

pleased to receive the information about the plan for collection of waste by postal mail. Foreign employees can as well send letters, documents, and application forms through this communication channel. It is efficient and it works thoroughly since it is identified as an official channel. It contains the full address of both parties, thus, it can be documented and used as reference for other services. Also, it is a more official channel compared to the others.

5.3.6 Brochures and/or Booklets

The municipality is committed to keeping its residents and foreign employees informed through several means of communication. Concerning brochures and booklets, Trondheim Municipality produces several of them and they are available at the municipal reception. Brochures and booklets are also the easiest and exceptional way to send messages to the general public. Some interviewees like this type of information since they can take them home and read at their leisure time. Those brochures produced by Trondheim Municipality contain information about its services. This includes the municipality performance plan, energy efficient, a guide to recycling, environmental package, action for collection of waste, and so forth. Although there is only one brochure in English namely Trondheim –A City to Remember with full of information such as Trondheim facts and figures.

5.4 Satisfaction with communication level of Trondheim Municipality

The most respondents who had lived in Trondheim for a relatively long time are satisfied with the way communication is going on between them and the municipality while others that have recently arrived seem to be neither satisfied nor unsatisfied. Geoffrey offered:

> "I am not sure if they are communicating with me, I think it is me who communicates with them. Even though everything is on the website, you don't go there unless you need information. First when I arrived I had to stand in the queue at the police station like a dog, and then when I got home I wondered what was to happen next. I should have been given a folder; here is the information, for this and that [.....] When I arrived, I received a message from my employer saying that go to the tax office, and the

police station. But they did not say: have a short walk to the municipality where you can learn about the services they offer. These are the things you should be informed about. Statoil provides this information for us, but it is the company that does it, not Trondheim Municipality."

Ricardo too stressed that the website alone is not enough to get all kind of information needed from the municipality. The language barrier is probably the most significant and prevalent problem for international employees who do not speak Norwegian since the most essential information on the municipal website is in Norwegian. This quote reflects this point:

"It is a bit strange, how can I say [.....] I think the website doesn't give me a picture of the municipality, because that is the only communication I have had and I still don't know about any of their services. They do not communicate with me. They put a passive page on the internet, but it is for me to access. And everything is in Norwegian. I feel that they should be more proactive in communicating with foreigners."

On the other side of the coin, Natasha said that even though it seems difficult to genuinely express any satisfaction, she describes the level of communication between two parties in this way:

"I would rather call it neutral, as long as I am able to find information needed relatively somehow easy, but perhaps they could do more to increase the level of communication because as you know, I don't know too much about Trondheim Municipality and I think they should have more public relations services and increased advertising about up-coming cultural activities would be welcome."

Those who had been in Trondheim for over ten years were rather satisfied with the level of communication provided by the municipality. They emphasized that there is no language barrier at all in their communication. As Herbert noted:

"I must answer to this question that I am quite satisfied. I speak Norwegian now so there is no longer a problem and I know exactly where to get information. After ten years you don't feel that much like a foreigner anymore, the language barrier is not there any longer. There are of course different categories depending on how long people have been here."

To go over the main point, the most effective communication channels found in this study for international employees was the use of the internet. This is confirmed by Poster (1995) in Holmes (2005), the phenomena of communicating at a distance through computers, of sending and receiving digitally encoded messages, of being 'interactive', has been the most popular application of the internet. Other channels such as face to face communication,

telephone, postal mail, electronic mail, facebook, and so on were relatively effective but not for foreign employees.

6 Enhancement of communication channels

This chapter intends to suggest the possibilities of improving the available means of communication for effective and smooth interaction between Trondheim Municipality and international employees. First, it outlines the communication challenges between Trondheim Municipality and foreign employees, identification of used channels and its effectiveness; second, it highlights the preferable communication channels that can be effectively used to facilitate the acquisition of the information from Trondheim Municipality in the future and lastly it deals with the improvement of communication and information flow.

6.1 Communication challenges

Respondents hold the perception that obviously in today's multiculturalism society Trondheim Municipality as well as other administration offices have a big task to communicate with foreigners because they are from different countries with different backgrounds. They are aware that the municipality cannot accommodate every single person's diverse needs. For that reason, those people coming have to adjust to the system. They continue to highlight that here people know how to speak English which makes it easy for integration into this country. Nevertheless, they recognize that it is a big challenge for people who are not familiar with English, let alone Norwegian. Foreign employees cannot adopt everything immediately so misunderstanding can easily occur between two parties. Ricardo is very candid in his critic by stating that:

> "I don't get precisely the role of Trondheim municipality. Maybe if you are a Norwegian, you grow up here and know the system. In England the doctors are separated from the city council, so how can you know from place to place? If they are really concerned about welcoming foreigners [.....] we arrive like parachutes coming down and they start sending letters, and I am supposed to understand them. They asked me which language I speak, and I checked English, Spanish, Portuguese, and so forth. And still they keep speaking to me in Norwegian. If they are really concerned about foreigners in Trondheim, then they should see from the perspective of the foreigners [.....] I thought the Kommune was a kibbutz from Israel [laughs]!"

However, other respondents had different opinions. Some informants expressed that there is no such communication problem that is so alarming. Natasha from Poland explains:

> "I think the Trondheim Municipality is doing a great job. One can use their English website in the very least. Before I lived in Scotland and the Netherlands, but here it is much better. The Norwegian website has a lot of information, and what is in English it is enough for what I need. I don't expect them to communicate in English because we are in Norway. For instance I have had the experience in the Netherlands with writing a letter in English and they replied me in Dutch. So, Trondheim does better."

A similar approach was mentioned by Amandine by revealing that there is no such communication problem concerning services provided to foreigners. Her commentary illustrates this:

> "I don't know because to be honest after twelve years I use the Norwegian website. I don't remember when I was looking for English information as it was so long ago. Now, the language I use for communication is Norwegian. From time to time it can be a challenge since I speak Norwegian with a French accent [laughs]. Sometimes I have the impression that people I was talking to did not have enough competence to answer my question – that is because once I was just talking to the front desk staff but when I was redirected to people inside it was easier. When you are given a name and a telephone number or scheduled appointment then it is okay. Sometimes you have to come back to the front desk and find a different person sits there who can be more helpful. Occasionally some people have a bad day, who cares? [laughs] It can happen in any kind of situation where there is such a big system. I am from France, it is even worse to be a foreigner there. No administrative staff is going to talk to you in English."

Some respondents raised an issue related to the kindergarten arguing that they didn't help them very much. They just tell them how to do the procedure but not how to navigate. Other informants suggested that the municipality has to get people onto language courses just immediately after their arrival, adding that some people have to wait up to three years since not all foreign employees have privileges like those who work at Statoil and/or SINTEF have. Geoffrey discussed:

> "It looks like they are taking steps to retain their foreign workers. The only problem here is the language, better communications on how people can have language courses. If they are trying to get skilled foreign workers they should provide information in English. They have to get people onto language courses straight away. I've heard of people having to wait for up to three years."

A similar issue of language was also raised by a number of participants in an earlier part of the interview. They argued that increasing the effectiveness of communicating municipal services to international employees should be pointed at the use of English such that those

51

who do not speak Norwegian can be able to receive the information available from Trondheim Municipality.

6.2 Communication channels and its assessment

Eight communication channels were assessed as indicators to review the most preferable communication means between Trondheim Municipality and international employees, this was based on the opinion given by respondents.

6.2.1 Magazines and newspapers

According to the respondents, it seems that foreign workers do not prefer to receive information from the municipality through magazines and newspapers. Only a small number of respondents would read them if the municipality can send them by postal mail once a month with full information on the municipality. Nevertheless, foreign employees insisted that it will depend on the cost of newspapers as well.

6.2.2 Information booklets and brochures

With regard to booklets and brochures, the impression is that the interviewees have different varying opinion about them. Some participants stated that this is the type of information that a person can use later and refer to often. Others expressed that there is no need to focus on print media in the future viewing it as a more costly alternative. They emphasized that booklets and brochures are not a cost effective solution.

6.2.3 Municipal staff and/or receptions

A large number of the international employees interviewed appeared to favor the municipal staff and receptions for the future. They noted that it is good to talk with people face-to-face especially the first time when people arrived as there is always confusion about certain things in the beginning for that reason it would be pleasant to go there and get some practical information from them straight away. As Natasha details:

> "I think that it's a good idea not to have a specific person for each language, but to have people who can help with special things. I think English is solving 90% of language problems in this country. For the other ones they are very diverse."

It is notable that foreigners are aware of the existence of English communication supports from the municipality staff side, thus, going there and explain you in English; the inquirer can certainly obtain the most useful information. However, not all respondents have the time to visit the reception. Amandine articulated that it is not appropriate unless the municipality has longer opening hours because most of the people are tied up with work. Thus, extending opening hours would improve this service .She puts her viewpoint in this way:

> "No, if I can avoid it because this is quite demanding on time and conflicts with working hours as you have to take time off work. I like this form of communication but it takes too much time. Maybe they can have one day with expanded opening hours, that can very appropriate to those requiring to drop in."

To conclude, it is important to bear in mind that the municipality reception is still required in the future since it is considered as a simple way to communicate, but it is not used by all international employees because of time consideration.

6.2.4 Through friends and/or neighbors

This communication channel was given both positive and negative view by respondents, most of them declare that this is always the initial step of getting information and this will always be important. They emphasized that the more people are integrated into the

community, the less this channel will be used. It is most likely a preferred channel when people are less integrated. They reiterated that it would be better to get the information straight from the municipality as the source. Others come out absolutely with a different stance stating that the information from friends and/or neighbors is at times misleading as it may be inaccurate. Ricardo was a quite skeptical towards such information:

> "Eventually we always do that but the municipality should not rely on my friends and neighbors as a form of communication to inform me on the key issues. So what happens when you don't have friends? Or when none of them knows anything?"

Although, this communication channel is not official, it is used often, such as asking friends, colleagues in the workplace, and to some extent neighbors. Eric comments on this view optimistically:

> "Yes, for sure I would ask first my friends and colleagues if they are there when I need information […..] For the reason that sometimes you talk to people and you get to know things. They can be more informed than you! It can be alright."

6.2.5 Internet

In regard to the internet, interviews proved that it is the leading communication channel which is the major source whereby foreign workers receive information and they prefer to continue using it in the future. The use of information and communications technology is necessary for the respondents to understand the services the municipality has to offer.

All informants are aware of the municipal website and the majority had been surfing the website looking for information concerning kindergarten, schools, building an extension to house, cultural events, and downloading any forms and submitting them. International employees are satisfied with the website.

When respondents were asked about what kind of information they would like to see on Trondheim municipal website in the future, they suggested information should come in several languages. For example, maybe all documents about political decisions should be

easily accessible on the municipal website for the public and not only in Norwegian. Otherwise the current communication channel "Facebook" introduced by the municipality, most of informants had no idea about Trondheim municipality's facebook page and they express no interest at all in this kind of communication channel. Beyond the use of the website, foreign employees did not utilize the facebook page and were not interested in it.

6.2.6 Mailing list

According to the observation from interviews, most informants would like to subscribe themselves to the municipality's mailing list as long as they have an alternative to unsubscribe from it; moreover it has to be anonymous. Herbert makes it clear:

> "That is probably a good idea but the only thing is that sometimes you are open to this and you go and grab information but after a while you get tired and delete it directly. This kind of communication makes people tired. I would rather have the pull than the push. Rather pulling information out than pushing it on me."

Spam is a common problem disliked by email users, including the respondents surveyed in this study. For this reason, international employees do not wish to receive several emails from the municipality and only emails with extremely valuable information are welcomed.

6.2.7 Television and radio

Radio and television are less preferable communication channels by most participants except Geoffrey who highlights:

> "Everything is fine because people are using different channels so Trondheim Municipality should be stronger in all and not neglect anything. Nothing should be disregarded. They should use every alternative; even if not everything works for me however I am sure it can work for others. They should keep up with the technology and follow up with all the communication channels."

6.2.8 Telephone

With regard to telephone, the answer from all respondents was very clear "no telephone." They argued that the municipality can offer it, but not for calling at private hours. At the same time they added that they can call them in case of emergencies. They prefer to receive short messaging services (SMS) particularly when alerting them of a problem or by reminding them to deliver books back in the library.

6.2.9 Other preferable communication channels

In relation to other communication channels that might be used in the future, the participants recommended that it should be focused on one or two channels therefore the municipality can avoid spreading information through multiple forms of media. It will be better to focus on one or two channels so it is easier just like the World Wide Web (WWW) and/ or citizen's help desk where they can provide information to the general public easily and give guidance as needed. Ricardo gives details:

> "Having something like the tourist information bureau with the reception desk where you can ask your questions as a foreigner is handy. In Portugal, in every town and city they have a "*citizen shop*" (Public information desk) where you get your passport, you get your bus ticket, you complain about your garbage, and all the stuff. These kinds of things are important for them to consider."

6.3 Improvement of communication and information flow

From the interviews, most participants made an interesting proposal by stating that Trondheim Municipality should take an active role in the communication when people arrive in Trondheim. They emphasized that the first contact is very crucial therefore municipality should send newcomers a welcome pack with all information about the services that would be of interest to international employees. They can organize orientation meetings at least once or

twice a year to introduce them to the city; this would enhance the overall experience for the newly arrived foreigners. Fabiana submits a compelling suggestion:

> "At the onset, Trondheim Municipality should provide the most information they can because we require it promptly. Welcome to Norway! We live in this way, and this is how you are supposed to do things. The taxes, the schools, the garbage, and so on .The municipality knows very well when a foreigner is arriving. If I am going to live here I have to register with the local authority. They should give me a welcome package and tell me how everything works, the systems in place and have a contact person(s) who can deal with specific issues of interest. This could be incredibly supportive, and then it becomes easy to make contact. The first contact is very important, seriously."

Another respondent made the same statement by expressing that Trondheim Municipality should offer a welcome address to newcomers with an introduction and overview of all services. Stressing that this is very important when people are new and completely lost, they should not have to wait one month or even longer to get such important information. Foreign workers should feel they are welcome. This is what Amandine has to say:

> "One thing that would have helped when I arrived is a small book explaining to me what services they provide and when and how I am supposed to interact with the municipality. So I would know exactly what services they provide and what is under their jurisdiction. Otherwise, we have make endless enquiries and find out for ourselves as time goes on which is always tricky and many are susceptible to obtaining inaccurate information. A book or a booklet could be helpful. Apart from that I am quite happy. They use internet very well. In France you always have to go there, which is annoying. I have been in Trondheim municipality's office very few times which means that I don't have too. It makes life easier than in France."

Some respondents explained that the effective means of communicating municipality services to   international employees should be focused on the use of English which is the language used by all the respondents. There is a great need for Trondheim Municipality to put more information in English in order to facilitate the effective interaction and this will make easy their integration in the community. Ricardo explicitly points out:

> "One thing for sure, when there is a misunderstanding between two parties I believe that it is the most common language barrier. Subsequently, if the information is in Norwegian, then it doesn't help. Employ people who can speak fluent English at the reception desk. Make a statistic of foreigners that can be used to accommodate most represented foreigners because maybe every ethnic group has different needs and problems. I have been working and living in different places, for example in England you get the information in many different languages, like twenty. Here, I feel that I am not connected to anything; I am not connected to the municipality at all."

Another point of view that was mentioned repeatedly is that since there is no central space where international employees can make contact, they end up contacting different and wrong places. It could be better if they can have a direct access to a particular person. They add that the opening hours are too short, since they are only open when people are at work. The municipality should have extended opening hours at least once or twice a week. Eric suggests:

> "For me it is really a question of increasing the opening hours. When I have an appointment in Trondheim I have to work only half a day because from here to Stjørdal is far. The long opening hours at the municipality are extremely desirable. The role of the communication of the municipality is that you are comfortable with giving feedback if you are satisfied or not. So you coming here, this is really the great communication system for me. If they could send people from time to time to ask us openly that could be a dream. I think the study you are doing is quite nice. They should ask people, this is important."

Many interviewees revealed that Trondheim Municipality should also work closely with the police and the tax office by availing information or distributing practical information pertaining to the municipal services in hard copies such as brochures, leaflets, and the like. This presents a perfect opportunity since these are some of the significant places that are frequented by foreigners when they arrive therefore this will enable employees to get information about Trondheim Municipality without delay. Verena elucidates that:

> "Probably one way would be to publicize a little bit of the services at the police station or tax office because these are two places you have to pass through. When the police give you your residence permit they should also give some booklets. These two are crucial channels. If Trondheim Municipality succeeded in establishing a connection with the police and the tax office, the communication with foreigners would be significantly improved. Clearly, you need a lot of information when you arrive here and the first places you go are the police station and the tax office."

Therefore, in order to improve communication between Trondheim Municipality and international employees, it was suggested that the information regarding municipal services should be offered in English and publicized at the strategic areas such as police and tax office, and so on.

7 Conclusions

The thesis concluded that the internet which plays a vital role in our daily lives, a new and highly developed medium of communication in today's global village, is more than ever becoming the most effective way of connecting people all over the world. Various researchers (McQuail 2010, Andrews et al. 1996, Holmes 2005, Castells 2009) observe that the internet is primarily a communication channel and it helps people to access basically the most information they want. It is important to keep in mind that international employees mostly rely on the internet as their first source of information and considerable means of communication as well between them and Trondheim Municipality getting assimilated in Trondheim. In general, the respondents were satisfied with the content of information available on Trondheim municipal website, this aspect was considered to be valuable for the respondents.

The first research question advanced by this study was; which kind of communication channel(s) is/are mostly and easily used by international employees to know or communicate to Trondheim Municipality? The findings indicated that the most preferable communication channel was the internet followed by the telephone, postal mails, and face to face communication. The former seemed to receive a good rating from some of respondents who suggested that the long opening hours at the municipality offices were a more appealing option besides giving them the personal interaction with the staff who would promptly address their inquiries.

The second research question examines the way Trondheim Municipality interact and transfer information to foreign employees. Referring to Baran and Davis (2009), people send out messages, obtain feedback, and then adjust to it. It was remarkable that Trondheim Municipality is devoted to convey information regarding its services through different means of communication such as internet, electronic mail, face-to-face communication, telephone, letters, brochures and booklets. Face to face communication is seen as the most prominent form of communication used by the municipality to communicate with its residents and foreigners as well.

The people on a daily basis visit the municipal offices during working hours to enquire about any services or to request any information pertaining to the municipality as a local authority. It has many receptionists who are there to serve the foreign employees. More to this, Trondheim Municipality communicates with foreign employees through internet which is considered as a successful tool for communication between two parties. Municipality conveys some information to international employees by using the short message service (SMS) in some circumstances and this kind of communication is admirable among foreign employees. Other communication channels cited but seemed to have little impact on the participants include a telephone conversation, facebook, electronic mails, letters, brochures and booklets.

The last research question evaluated some possibilities of improving the available means of communication for effective and smooth interaction between Trondheim Municipality and international employees. The analyses show that if Trondheim Municipality is willing to enhance its communication towards a more 'international based design', their expectations would be fulfilled. The opinions expressed alongside their hopes for the future lie with the consistent use of English as the core language for the improved communication strategy. The English is the language spoken by all the respondents, for this reason, more information in English will have to be the main concern in order to facilitate the effective interaction between two parties and this would make it easy to integrate in the community. The same suggestion applies to all communication channels, whether it is face to face communication, internet communication, conversation on the telephone, written communication, and so on. Thus, Trondheim Municipality would have to consider the options to strengthen the information and communication system in English at all levels from the reception desk to its website. Another idea revealed was that Trondheim Municipality should not only rely on the internet alone to reach the international employees, but it should work closely with the police and the tax office by availing information or distributing practical information concerning all municipal services in hard copies such as brochures, leaflets, and the like that would be of interest to the international employees. Lastly, establishing a common conversation platform just like Public Information Desk would be an idea that everyone could benefit from.

To sum up, Trondheim Municipality is communicating well with its residents and to international employees as well but requires improving its communication approach. The

thoughts and opinions of external specialists should be sought in this step. I wish to conclude with one quote that relates to the communication process "Communication is too often taken for granted when it should be taken to pieces" (Fiske 1982).

7.1 Recommendations

This study recommends that Trondheim Municipality should provide more information in English and possibly in other languages that are widely spoken, since language has been identified as one of the main challenges experienced for newcomers. Additionally, the municipality should offer a welcome pack to all foreign employees containing the entire information about the municipal services upon arrival. This would help them get to know how the system works in Trondheim Municipality for the avoidance of misinterpretation of information. There is a great need for Trondheim Municipality to allocate brochures/ booklets at public venues for instance at airport, police station, tax office guiding the arrivals about the municipal services and key areas that would be of interest to newcomers. Furthermore, communication being a process of transferring information between the two sides, Trondheim Municipality should have one or two days in a week with expanded opening hours to facilitate those who are able to drop by. It would be recommended that the municipality establishes a kind of public reception desk devoted particularly to deal with information transfer between both parties. This would facilitate in increasing efficiency of communication and information flow between Trondheim Municipality and international employees.

8 References

Andrews, P. H., J. E. Baird & R.T. Herschel (1996). *Organizational communication: empowerment in a technological society*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Appadurai, A. (1996). *Modernity at large: cultural dimensions of globalization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Baran, S. J. & D. K. Davis (2009). *Mass communication theory: foundations, ferment, and future*. Boston, Mass.: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.

Beck, U. & P. Camiller (2000). *What is globalization?* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Boeije, H. (2010). *Analysis in qualitative research*. Los Angeles: SAGE.

Bryman, A. (2008). *Social research methods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Castells, M. (2009). *Communication power*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Denzin, N. K. & Y. S. Lincoln (2003). *Collecting and interpreting qualitative materials*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage.

DeVito, J. A. (2007). "The communication handbook: a dictionary", in F. E. Jandt, *An introduction to intercultural communication: identities in a global community*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage.

El-Ojeili, C. & P. Hayden (2006). *Critical theories of globalization*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Fiske, J. (1982). *Introduction to communication studies*. London: Methuen.

Fiske, J. (1994). "Introduction to communication studies", in T. O'Sullivan, Key *concepts in communication and cultural studies*. London: Routledge.

Fiske, J. & H. Jenkins (2011). *Introduction to communication studies*. London: Routledge.

Flew, T. (2007). *Understanding global media*. Houndmills: Palgrave MacMillan.

Flick, U. (1998). *An introduction to qualitative research*. London: Sage.

Flick, U. (2002). *An introduction to qualitative research*. London: Sage.

Fredriksson, M., Ø. Ihlen & B. v. Ruler (2009). *Public relations and social theory: key figures and concepts*. New York: Routledge.

Friedman, J. (1994). *Cultural identity and global process*. London: Sage.

Gomm, R. (2004). *Social research methodology: a critical introduction*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Held, D. & A. McGrew (2002). *Globalization/anti-globalization*. Cambridge: Polity.

Holmes, D. (2005). *Communication theory: media, technology, society*. London: Sage.

Jandt, F. E. (2007). *An introduction to intercultural communication: identities in a global community*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage.

Krauss, R. & E. Morsella (2000). "Communication and Conflict", in M. Deutsch and P. Coleman (ed.), *The Handbook of Conflict Resolution: Theory and Practice* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass), 131-143.

Kvale, S. (1996). *Interviews: an introduction to qualitative research interviewing*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage.

Kvale, S. & S. Brinkmann (2009). *Interviews: learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing*. Los Angeles, Calif.: Sage.

Limb, M. & C. Dwyer (2001). *Qualitative methodologies for geographers: issues and debates*. London: Arnold.

Marsh, D. & C. Hay (2000). *Demystifying globalization*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Martell L. (2007). The Third Wave in Globalisation Theory. *International Studies Review*, 9, 2, Summer 2007, pp 173-196.

May, T. (2001). *Social research: issues, methods and process*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

McEwen, N. & L. Moreno (2005). *The Territorial politics of welfare*. London: Routledge.

McLuhan, M. (1964). *Understanding media: the extensions of man*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

McQuail, D. (2010). *McQuail's mass communication theory*. Los Angeles: Sage.

McQueen, R. A. & C. Knussen (2002). *Research methods for social science: a practical introduction*. New York: Prentice Hall.

Miller, K. (2005). *Communication theories: perspectives, processes, and contexts*. Boston: McGraw-Hill.

Movius, L. (2010). Cultural Globalisation and Challenges toTraditional Communication Theories', *PLATFORM: Journal of Media and Communication* 2(1) (January): 6-18. ISSN: 1836-5132 Online.

Nuttall, M. (2005). *Encyclopedia of the Arctic*. New York: Routledge.

O'Leary, Z. (2010). *The essential guide to doing your research project*. London: Sage Publications.

O'Sullivan, T. (1994). *Key concepts in communication and cultural studies*. London: Routledge.

Polonsky, M. J. & D. S. Waller (2005). *Designing and managing a research project: a business student's guide*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications.

Polonsky, M. J. & D. S. Waller (2011). *Designing and managing a research project: a business student's guide*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications.

Poster, M. (2005). "The Second Media Age", in D. Holmes, *Communication theory: media, technology, society*. London: Sage.

Rantanen, T. (2005). *The media and globalization*. London: Sage.

Reyes, G. E. (2001). Theory of Globalization: Fundamental Basis, Sincronía, Primavera, Spring 2001: ISSN 1562-384X. Available online at: http://sincronia.cucsh.udg.mx/globaliz.htm Accessed 25.05.2011

Robertson, R. (1992). *Globalization: social theory and global culture*. London: Sage Publications.

Rosaldo, R. & J. X. Inda (2008). *The Anthropology of globalization: a reader*. Malden, Mass.: Blackwell.

Schirato, T. & S. Yell (2000). *Communication and culture: an introduction*, London.

Scholte, J. A. (2005). *Globalization: a critical introduction*. Basingstoke: Palgrave
    Macmillian.

Shannon, C. E. & W. Weaver (1949). *The mathematical theory of communication*. Urbana:
    University of Illinois Press.

Tomlinson, J. (1999). *Globalization and culture*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

United Nations 2010, *Human Development Index*. Available online at:

http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDR_2010_EN_Complete_reprint.pdf Accessed 20.05.2011

Wenberg, J. & W. Wilmot (1973). "The personal communication process", in P. H. Andrews,
    J. E. Baird & R. T. Herschel (1996). *Organizational communication: empowerment in
    a technological society*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Appendixes

Appendix 1: Interview guide to international employees

First of all I wish to express my sincere thanks for accepting my invitation. My name is Vedaste Uwayigira and I am a second year Masters Student in Globalization - Global Politics and Culture at NTNU-Dragvoll. I am collecting empirical data for my master's thesis and my topic is entitled:

"Assessment of communication and information flow between Trondheim Municipality (a local authority) and foreign employees working and living in Trondheim"

I wish to state that, the information gathered from the interview is solely for academic purposes, and I promise to keep confidentiality of answers that you will provide will be adhered to, will be secure and remain solely between me and my supervisor at NTNU. And your name will not appear in any report or any publication. Kindly ensure then that the names you have given are not real names of the people interviewed and that they just represent the characters. I will give them fictitious names. You have been selected to participate in this activity as a resource person and therefore requested you to voluntarily participate in this study and you may choose to stop participating at any time. I hope this is satisfactory with you? Thank you!

Basic Information

- Name………………………
- Sex………………………...
- Age……………………….
- Marital status……………..
- Country of origin…………
- Religion…………………..
- Position……………………
- Education level……………

Questions

1. How long have you been living in Trondheim?

2. Could you please tell me, what do you know about Trondheim Municipality (as a local authority)?

3. Have you ever been in communication with Trondheim Municipality for whatever reason?

4. Do you have knowledge or means of communication on how to get information about the services provided by Trondheim Municipality?

5. In what form of communication channels, do you normally access most information about Trondheim municipal services?

   a. Is it that by television

   b. radio,

   c. internet

   d. telephone

   e. postal mails

   f. newspapers

   g. brochures/booklets,

   h. municipality receptions

   i. through friends/neighbors

   or other? (please state).

6. Are the communication channels mentioned above similar with those from your home country or from where you lived/worked before? Please elaborate further.

7. Which of the following services offered by Trondheim Municipality are beneficial to you as foreign worker?

   a. Schools
   b. Kindergartens
   c. Emergency doctor (Legevakt: TLFN: 07352)
   d. Personal doctor
   e. Adult education centre

    f. Housing,

    g. Trondheim Public library

    h. Leisure activities e.g. Swimming pool at Pirbadet, etc

(Please provide your reason(s) for the selection you have made)

8. Are you currently satisfied with Trondheim municipal services?

9. Have you ever visited the Trondheim municipal web-site?

    a. If yes, what were you looking for on the web-site?

    b. Did you find what you were looking for?

10. What kind of information would you like to see on Trondheim municipal web site in the future? (Please state)

11. Did your former City Council or Municipality have a web site?

12. Do you find Trondheim municipal web site to be as informative as the web site of the municipality or City Council where you lived before?

13. Did your former City Council or Municipality have a facebook page?

14. Do you know about Trondheim municipal facebook page?

15. How satisfied are you with the level of communication provided by Trondheim Municipality?

16. Can you identify any communication challenges associated with Trondheim Municipality in relation to its services to foreign employees?

17. Which communication channels would you prefer to receive most information from Trondheim Municipality in the future?

    a. Advertise in newspapers and/or Magazines

    b. Information brochures/booklets

c. Municipal staff/receptions
d. Through friends/neighbours
e. Internet
f. Mailing list
g. Television
h. Radio
i. Telephone
j. Other (please state)

18. In your opinion, what should be done, in order to improve communication between Trondheim Municipality and foreign employees?

Thank you for taking your valuable time to respond to the questions.

Appendix 2: Table of Participants

Name	Gender	Age	Citizenship	Marital Status	Professional Expertise	Education Level
Geoffrey	Male	31	American	Single	Program manager Engineer	Msc.
Verena	Female	26	German	Single	Geologist	Msc.
Herbert	Male	42	German	Married	Associate Professor	PhD
Amandine	Female	34	French	Married	Hydrologist	Msc.
Eric	Male	37	French	Single	Geophysicist	PhD
Natasha	Female	43	Polish	Living with her partner	Research Scientist	PhD
Fabiana	Female	42	Italian	Married	Reservoir Engineer	Msc.
Ricardo	Male	38	Portuguese	Divorced	Corporate Training Manager	Msc.