

The German-Norwegian working climate

- include a field study to test the nature of the German-Norwegian working relationship:

A perfect match or a cultural clash?

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Abstract

Germany and Norway are two countries of close geographical proximity. In addition to the physical dimension, Germany and Norway have partly a shared history, and today the two countries are important trading partners. The goal of this thesis was to identify and evaluate if there exist significant cultural differences between the two countries and if any of the discovered differences were of such character that they would represent significant challenges, for cooperation between Germans and Norwegians. The major finding is that there are quite some dimensions where the preferences among, and the behavior of, respectively Germans and Norwegians, are differing. On the other hand are the findings of such character that they should not prevent a fruitful cooperation, in particular if both nationalities spend some time in order to understand the behavior and expectation of the counterpart. If this is ignored, then various dimensions like organizational traditions, roles of managers, use of informal and formal language and the attitude towards risk in decision-making processes and other situations, might create significant problems and contribute to prevent win-win situations and a profitable cooperation.

Dedication

By completing this thesis, I am completing my degree as Siviløkonom and CEMS MIM at NHH. This also marks the end of 12 years of school and in total five years of studying. There are many who have supported me since I started school the fall of 1989, but while some have supported me in particular phases throughout my time as pupil and student, there are two people who have supported me more than anyone else. I will dedicate this thesis to my parents Anne Berit Steen Borgund and Arve Borgund. Their endless love, faith and support have been crucial in my development as human being, but also as student all the way upon graduation.

Regarding the work with this thesis I would like to thank my good friend Mina Hjelde for her patient and detailed feedback on the presentation of the material. Hannelore Mauritz and Einar O. Haugen also deserve a thank you after having provided me useful help in the organization of this thesis.

Jørn Rognes has been very structured in his role as academic advisor in spite of the geographical distance between Düsseldorf and Bergen. I really appreciate his support and guidance.

Finally, I would like to thank Kristin for being the one for me. I am deeply grateful for your love and presence in my life.

Dedikasjon

Ved å skrive denne utredningen avslutter jeg Siviløkonomstudiet og CEMS MIM ved NHH. Dette markerer samtidig slutten på 12 års skolegang og totalt fem års studier. Det er mange som har støttet meg i ulike faser i tiden som elev og student etter at jeg begynte på skolen i 1989, men det er to mennesker som har støttet meg mer enn noen andre. Jeg ønsker å dedikere denne utredningen til mine foreldre Anne Berit Steen Borgund og Arve Borgund. Deres endeløse kjærlighet, tro og støtte har vært uvurderlig i min personlige utvikling, men har også vært utrolig viktig i hele min tid som student.

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1 Introduction

Schools, universities and corporate representatives in Norway have been reporting a steep decline in the interest for Germany and the German language among pupils, students and young graduates over the last 10-15 years (Ulven, 2007). The most important partner in foreign trade (together with Sweden) has a low status among Norwegian youth. Germany is not only the most important country in Europe in terms of trade, the German history and the German political and cultural influence on the rest of Europe is unique. However, Norwegian youths seem to find it less interesting.

On German side, the Nordic model, the liberal and modern feminist (Hofstede 1980) society in the Nordic countries, is something that attracts Germans. The untouched nature, the fresh air and a more balanced work-life balance have drawn thousands of Germans away from their local roots in Germany to start a new life, often in remote villages and municipalities in Norway.

By writing this Siviløkonom thesis, I have no ambition to answer the BIG question;

Why Germans seem to love Norway and Norwegians have lost their interest for Germany?

That is indeed a very interesting task, but well outside the frame of this work. By writing this Siviløkonom thesis I wish to “research the degree of difference between Norwegian and Germans” in particular when it comes to working culture and explore how both nationalities are being perceived by the opposite culture during German-Norwegian interaction.

The concrete research questions I would like to explore are the following:

- I. What cultural differences and similarities are there between Germans and Norwegians?*
- II. Are the cultural differences between Germans and Norwegians creating significant challenges in cooperation between the two nationalities?*

As a follow-up dimension to the second research question, I would like to discuss if the degree of cultural differences can explain the topic presented initially; why Norwegians seem to lose their interest for Germany, while Germans seem to find Norway more interesting than ever before.

The main reason for the topic of this thesis is my own close personal relationship with Germany. After I spent a year in Heidelberg as an exchange student, I have developed a very strong interest for Germany and the German culture. When provided the opportunity to start working for Statkraft's continental headquarters in Düsseldorf I decided to leave Norway and start my professional life in Germany. By working in an environment with about 70 % Germans, the interaction with German mentality and German culture is a part of my everyday life. In addition to this, also my personal life is closely linked to Germany and since I have no plan of returning to Norway, the German-Norwegian dimension will remain an important part for the rest of my life. By writing this Siviløkonom thesis I hope to develop my own in-depth knowledge of the similarities and differences between Germans and Norwegians. In addition, I hope that the academic background of this paper, combined with the personal experiences, both my own and the interviewees', will make this thesis an interesting paper for everyone with interest in the German-Norwegian dimension.

This Siviløkonom thesis has incorporated a methodology based on traditional sources like research papers and books on cross-cultural behavior, in order to provide a thorough theoretical background based on accepted theories and existing research findings. In addition this thesis is based on a field study where ten interviewees have been interviewed, all with decades of experience from living and working in Germany and Norway.

A cross-cultural study of two countries is challenging if there is limited knowledge on the countries compared. Chapter two will briefly describe a selection of shared historical events and developments between Germany and Norway. This will hopefully create a general understanding of the common background of the two Northern European countries.

In the third chapter the framework by Geert Hofstede (1980) will introduce the most accepted, but also debated, dimensions of cultural similarities and differences. This chapter will also describe the theory of country clustering by Ronen and Shenkar (1985), and together these two frameworks make up the foundation for the next chapters.

The fourth chapter will introduce the reader to two very thorough articles. Based on an in-depth literature analysis of research papers in the cross-cultural field, these two articles are found to present the cultural differences and similarities between Germany and Norway in a very good way. Following processing of the most interesting findings of the two articles, the main dimensions will be summed up and create a natural link to the fifth chapter.

Chapter five will summarize and compare the findings of both chapter three and four.

Following the theoretical part in chapter three to five, the sixth chapter will present the field study. This chapter will guide the reader through how the field study was carried out, present the characteristics of the interviewees, unveil the relevant findings and naturally also discuss the findings.

Chapter seven will summarize the theoretical part (chapter three to five) and the field study (chapter six). The main findings will also in this chapter be compared and discussed.

Chapter eight consists of the implication of this Siviløkonom thesis and suggests further research questions that might be of interest to future students or researchers in the field of cross-cultural studies. In addition will chapter eight present the limitations of this thesis and strengths and weaknesses will be introduced and deliberated over.

2 TIMELINE: German – Norwegian interaction

This Siviløkonom thesis will present theoretical framework on intercultural interaction, the latest research and the results from a field study. The field study was undertaken in order to test if existing research is supported by the experiences of ten Germans and Norwegians, accumulated over decades of interaction. Based on the literature and the personal experiences, this thesis will present the degree of similarity and difference between Germans and Norwegians.

A thorough overview of the relationship between Germany and Norway in an historical context is not necessary in order to understand the main dimensions and findings presented in this thesis. On the other hand can such an overview always be a useful background to fully understand the background for at least some of the findings of both similarities and differences in the mindset and behavior of Germans and Norwegians. The following pages will introduce the timeline from the first clear link between Germany and Norway was created and up until today. Since numerous books already have been written on the history of the two countries respectively, this summary will only briefly describe the main events in the common history of these countries.

About 2000 BC: Historical events about four thousand years ago are difficult to describe in detail, but archeologists and historians seem to have agreed that the southern areas of Scandinavia and the coastline of today's Germany is where the first Germanic tribes are said to have settled. From there the Germani language developed into an individual branch on the so-called Indo-European language tree.

500 BC - 1000 AD: The development of more advanced weaponry and goods made the Germanic tribes more trade- and conquer-oriented and this gradually opened for more interaction with the surrounding areas. This period meant deepened interaction between the ancestors of today's Germans and Norwegians.

Around 1000 AD: The Viking-domination of the Northern European coastal areas faces a new threat from the expanding Christian Church. Monks and other representatives from the Continental (Roman) Church are in increasing numbers visiting Norway in order to convert the "barbaric" Vikings into Christians. The impact of the continental clergymen is so strong that it leads to a forced Christianization of Norway by the King Olaf Haraldson (St. Olav) around year 1030.

1000 - 1300: This period stands out as end of the Viking era with the defeat against the English in the "Battle of Stamford Bridge" in 1066. In spite of the defeat Norway continued to pursue Atlantic ambitions, but in a more peaceful manner than in the Viking era. The relationship to Germany did not develop significantly during this period due to lack of interaction.

1300 - 1550: The Hanseatic League established one of its four "Kontore" (most influential type of trade offices) in Bergen. This office secured monopoly rights for trade with dried fish from the Northern and Western coastline of Norway. The strong and dominant presence of German merchants in this era still has a strong cultural impact on the Western coast of Norway and in particular the city of Bergen.

Another link to today's Germany was the introduction of Protestantism in Norway in 1537; 21 years after Martin Luther had announced his 95 Theses on the door of the Wittenberg Castle Church.

Following the graduate fall of the Hanseatic League, from around 1536 when German merchants were forced to become Norwegian citizens or return home, the official Norwegian

policy (mainly decided by the Danish monarchs ruling Norway), oriented towards Great Britain and France (in various periods) and less towards Germany.

1814 - 1930: Norway declared independency from Denmark in 1814 and adopted a liberal constitution based on the French and American models. However Norway was forced into a personal union with Sweden the same year. During the time of this personal union, Norwegian romantic nationalism flourished. This led to a wide range of artists, authors, composers and painters leaving Norway in order to develop their skills and bring useful knowledge back to Norway. Among those who spent significant time in Germany were; Edvard Grieg, Ole Bull, Edvard Munch, Theodor Kittelsen, Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, Henrik Ibsen and Jonas Lie.

1940 - 1945: World War II is a rather special chapter in the relationship between Germany and Norway. For five years, from April 9, 1940, to May 8, 1945, German forces occupied Norway. Norway was one of the most important strongholds of Nazi-Germany, due to the strategic position in the North Atlantic Ocean. Even though most of the Norwegian post war history writing has focused on the heroic resistance, both during the days of invasion and the armed- and civil resistance during the war, the relationship has another dimension; More than 15 000 Norwegians volunteered to fight on German side during World War 2. These men served in all theatres of the war and in most German divisions.

Norway's total number of casualties mounted up to 10 000 during world war two. Among these were 3000 military deaths, of which 1000 died fighting on German side. One third of the fallen Norwegian soldiers believed in the German "mission" and gave their lives for it.

1945 - today: A more peaceful relationship developed immediately after World War II. 50 000 Norwegian young conscripts (males only) participated in "The Independent Norwegian Brigade Group in Germany" from 1947 to 1953. The aim of this Brigade Group

was to ensure stability in post-war Germany by arresting war criminals, monitor and help in the introduction of a democratic system of government in Germany.

The experiences young Norwegian men brought home to Norway after having spent at least six months in Germany can be seen as an important contribution for the good relationship between West Germany and Norway that continued to develop in the following decades:

POLITICAL: On the political level West Germany and Norway established a good working relationship and in particular did this relationship blossom when Willy Brandt, West-German Chancellor from 1969-1974 was in office. He was married to two Norwegian women (the first one from 1941-48 and the second from 1948-1980), he spoke Norwegian fluently and as a social democratic politician he had a natural political link to the Norwegian Labor Party that ruled Norway for about forty years between 1945 and 2000.

ACADEMIC: In addition to political cooperation, many young Norwegian students chose Germany for their studies abroad. Norwegian students were particular numerous in the fields of medicine, technology and economics and business and in the most numerous years, Norway had as many as 4000 full-time students in Germany.

TRADE: Germany is (together with Sweden) Norway's most important trade partner and has been so since Germany developed its post war industry in the 1950-ies and 1960-ies. Germany accounts for about 20 % of the accumulated Norwegian import, and import about 12 % of the total Norwegian export value (petroleum, ships and oil platforms not included). In addition to this, Norway is Germany's second largest supplier of gas and one of their most important suppliers of crude oil.

All in all it is fair to say that Germany and Norway have had a lot in common throughout the history and that the relationship has developed significantly over the last decades. Germany is, due to its size, less dependent on Norway than the other way around, but the importance of sustainable supply of oil and gas makes Norway an important trading partner for Germany. Germans make in addition up the most numerous group of tourists visiting Norway and are therefore contributing to both the central and the more geographically dispersed tourism businesses.

This summary was to provide a very general overview of the German-Norwegian relationship over the last four thousand years. Many important events have not been included since they do not belong in a paper such as this thesis. For additional reading on the historical relationship between Germany and Norway, the sources used for this summary can be recommended as a point of departure:

- <http://www.wikipedia.org> - keywords: “Germany”, “Norway”, “Germanic language”, “hanseatic league”, “Vikings”
- <http://norwegen.ahk.de/index.php>
- <http://www.tysklandsbrigaden.no>
- <http://www.frontkjemper.info>
- <http://www.ssb.no>

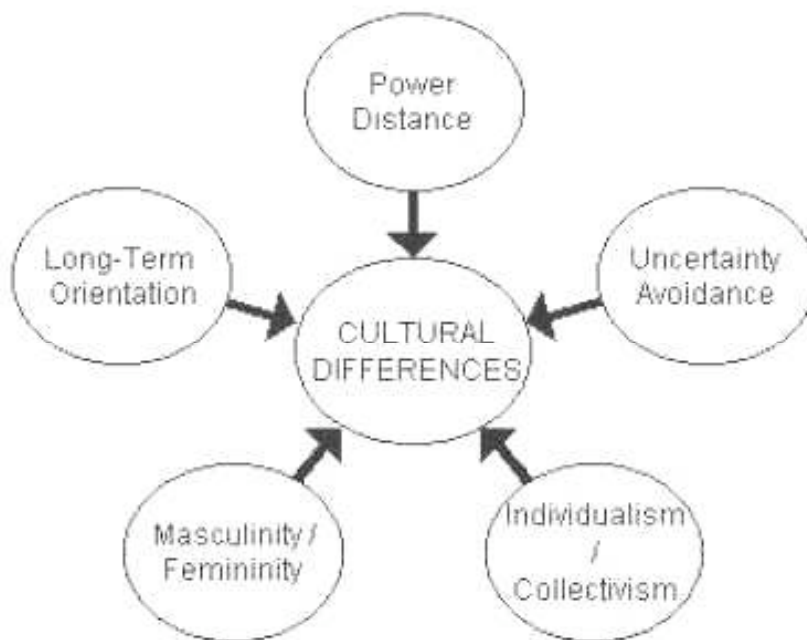
3 Theoretical framework

As presented in the introduction, this chapter will introduce two important frameworks. These frameworks by Hofstede (1980) and Ronen and Shenkar (1985) are important in order to get a thorough understanding of various cross cultural dimensions, but also for the understanding of how countries have been grouped, according to cultural particularities such as language, common history and common cultural references. At the end of the chapter a conclusion will be presented relating the findings of the chapter to the research questions (r.q.) introduced in the introduction.

3.1 Geert Hofstede`s five dimensions

One of the most thorough works on classification and grouping of different cultural dimensions is done by Geert Hofstede (1980).

Figure 1: Hofstede`s five dimensions (in Frank & Totland, 2001)



Hofstede found that five cultural dimensions are adequate to measure national cultures against each other and also to rank countries based on absolute scores along these dimensions.

The source for Hofstede`s initial research was the gathering and analysis of a database consisting of employee values at IBM worldwide between 1967 and 1973. In later versions of his research Hofstede has used replications and extensions of his IBM study on different international populations. Hofstede`s five dimensions are being presented below. The description of the five dimensions are quoted from Hofstede`s own website (www.geert-hofstede.com):

Power distance (PDI) - is the extent to which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions (like the family) accept and expect that power is distributed unequally. This represents inequality (more versus less), but defined from below, not from above. It suggests that a society's level of inequality is endorsed by the followers as much as by the leaders. Power and inequality, of course, are extremely fundamental facts of any society and anybody with some international experience will be aware that 'all societies are unequal, but some are more unequal than others'.

Individuality (IDV) - on the one side versus its opposite, collectivism, that is the degree to which individuals are inte-grated into groups. On the individualist side we find societies in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after him/herself and his/her immediate family. On the collectivist side, we find societies in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, often extended families (with uncles, aunts and grandparents) which continue protecting them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty. The word

'collectivism' in this sense has no political meaning: it refers to the group, not to the state. Again, the issue addressed by this dimension is an extremely fundamental one, regarding all societies in the world.

Masculinity (MAS) - versus its opposite, femininity, refers to the distribution of roles between the genders which is another fundamental issue for any society to which a range of solutions are found. The IBM studies revealed that (a) women's values differ less among societies than men's values; (b) men's values from one country to another contain a dimension from very assertive and competitive and maximally different from women's values on the one side, to modest and caring and similar to women's values on the other. The assertive pole has been called 'masculine' and the modest, caring pole 'feminine'. The women in feminine countries have the same modest, caring values as the men; in the masculine countries they are somewhat assertive and competitive, but not as much as the men, so that these countries show a gap between men's values and women's values.

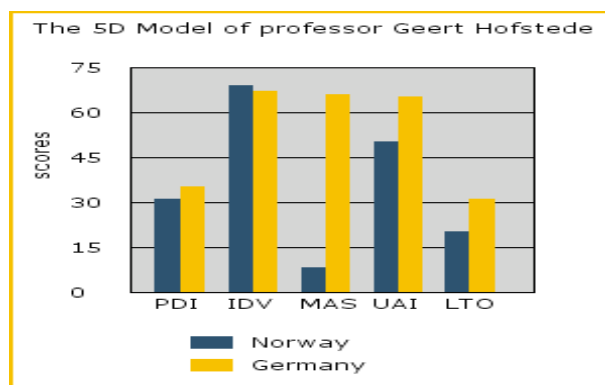
Uncertainty avoidance (UAI) - deals with a society's tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity; it ultimately refers to man's search for Truth. It indicates to what extent a culture programs its members to feel either uncomfortable or comfortable in unstructured situations. Unstructured situations are novel, unknown, surprising, and different from usual. Uncertainty avoiding cultures try to minimize the possibility of such situations by strict laws and rules, safety and security measures, and on the philosophical and religious level by a belief in absolute Truth; 'there can only be one Truth and we have it'. People in uncertainty avoiding countries are also more emotional, and motivated by inner nervous energy. The opposite type, uncertainty accepting cultures, are more tolerant of opinions different from what they are used to; they try to have as few rules as possible, and on the philosophical and religious

level they are relativist and allow many currents to flow side by side. People within these cultures are more phlegmatic and contemplative, and not expected by their environment to express emotions.

Long term orientation (LTO) - versus short-term orientation: this fifth dimension was found in a study among students in 23 countries around the world, using a questionnaire designed by Chinese scholars it can be said to deal with Virtue regardless of Truth. Values associated with Long Term Orientation are thrift and perseverance; values associated with Short Term Orientation are respect for tradition, fulfilling social obligations, and protecting one's 'face'. Both the positively and the negatively rated values of this dimension are found in the teachings of Confucius, the most influential Chinese philosopher who lived around 500 B.C.; however, the dimension also applies to countries without a Confucian heritage.

3.1.1 Hofstede`s Five Dimensions on Germany and Norway

On the relationship between Germany and Norway, Hofstede presents the following comparison (figure 2¹):



As the model shows there is one dimension that stands out, showing a very high degree of difference between Germany and Norway. According to Hofstede`s findings, Germany is a country where the traditional distribution of roles between genders is very strong. Norway is,

¹ http://www.geert-hofstede.com/hofstede_dimensions.php?culture1=65&culture2=34#

compared to Germany, very different. In Norway, men and women are to a larger degree performing the same tasks and are sharing the responsibilities. The German mentality, both among men and women, is very competitive and a strong assertive attitude is typical for German males. In Norway, females, but males in particular, are to a stronger degree caring and there is a general acceptance for showing emotions and care for others. Along this dimension, the two countries represent two extremes compared to the other countries ranked, based on absolute scores: Norway is the second most feminine country, only Sweden is slightly ahead, while Germany only has 8 countries with a more masculine rating (out of the 66 countries in the study)².

The second dimension where the model suggests a moderate difference is the “Uncertainty avoidance”. The finding states that Germans to a larger degree than Norwegians are concerned with being in control of as many uncertainty factors as possible. As described above, Germans, more than Norwegians would be of the opinion that there is only one truth, one superior way to solve a problem or one single right thing to do in every situation. Norwegians would, compared to Germans, most likely show a larger degree of independency and be more open to the chance of multiple ways to reach a goal. Compared to the other 65 countries, Germany is ranked as the 28th country of high uncertainty avoidance, while Norway is on 46th place, with 20 countries with lower aversion against uncertainty.

The “Long-Term Orientation” is the third dimension where there is a certain difference. A correlation between this dimension and the previous one seems to exist: Germans are somewhat more oriented towards the distant future than Norwegians are. It is plausible that this has a connection to the preference of avoiding uncertainty. Having said that, both countries are among the countries with the lowest score with respectively twelfth and fourth lowest score. This supports Hofstede`s finding that Western and Central Europe and North

² http://www.geert-hofstede.com/hofstede_dimensions.php.

America are the countries with least focus on the very long run. The cultures in Asia show a totally different attitude, with a very long perspective.

Hofstede`s model and theories have since they were published, received both support and criticism. In spite the criticism, the theories are still perceived to be of high relevance and Hofstede is still one of the most quoted researchers in the field of cross-cultural studies. In this thesis Hofstede`s conclusions point out interesting dimensions that will be analyzed in the following chapters. Although the ten interviewees of the field study are not comparable to the many thousands respondents used in Hofstede`s studies, they will give a qualitative perspective on the conclusions in Hofstede`s work.

3.2 The Theory of Country Clusters

Before further research is being presented, there is a need to introduce the theory of country clusters by Ronen and Shenkar (1985). The assembling of countries into groups might be seen as a simplistic way of stating that countries with the same or similar language and somewhat shared history and tradition are sharing important cultural dimensions, but is still believed to be of high relevance when comparing national cultures:



Figure 3: Country cluster (In Hilb, 2007)

Four countries are being defined as unique cultures without belonging to any specific cluster:

- Brazil
- Japan
- Israel
- India

3.2.1 Norway compared to Hofstede`s Nordic cluster

The two article used as base for the research presented in chapter four have one weakness seen from a Norwegian perspective: Both articles are describing Germany Denmark, Finland (one of the articles) and Sweden, but not Norway in particular. For this reason some of the findings (similarities and differences between Germany and Norway) will have to be deducted from the findings related to Denmark, Finland and Sweden. Based on the intuitive knowledge that Norway indeed has a lot in common with Danes, Finns and Swedes together

with findings of Ronan and Shenkar (1985), this approach is useful, but at the same time not ideal.

By using Hofstede`s model (1980) and the comparative figures one more time, the presumption above, that most of the cultural dimensions between Norway and the other Nordic countries are similar, seems to be valid:

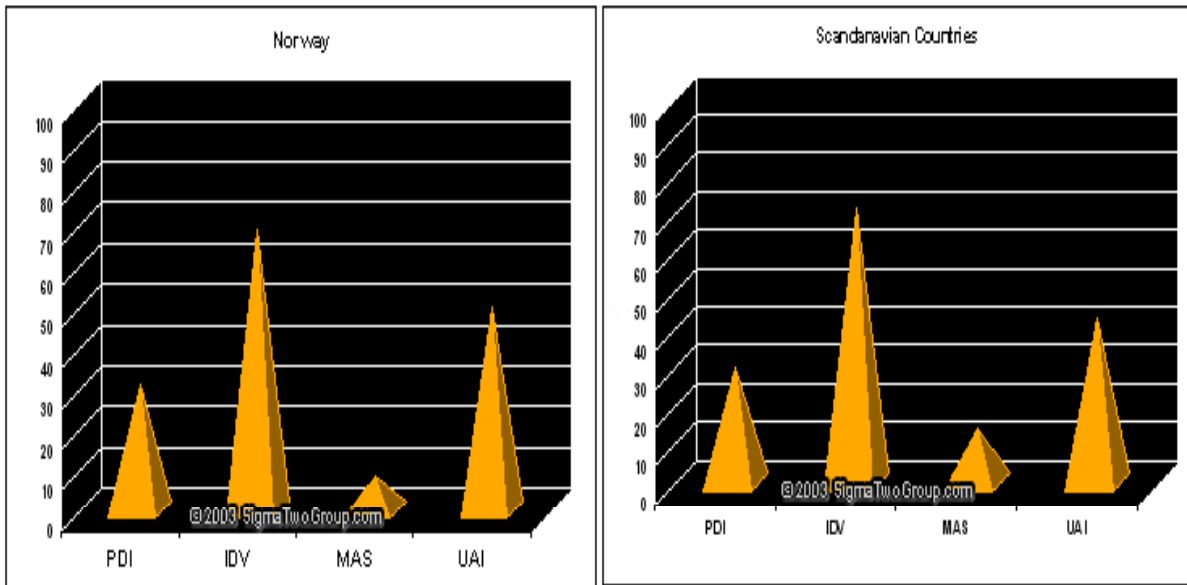


Figure 4 & 5: Hofstede`s four dimensions: Norway compared to Scandinavia

The scores (collected from www.geert-hofstede.com) speak for themselves; the Nordic score for “Power Distance” and for “Individuality” are only differing from the Norwegian scores with a couple of points. The “Masculinity” dimension confirms that the Nordic countries are all having very low scores, but that Norway scores somewhat lower than the average, suggesting that Denmark and Finland are somewhat more masculine than Norway. Sweden is, as already mentioned, the most feminine country in Hofstede`s ranking. The “Uncertainty Avoidance” dimension shows that Norway is scoring somewhat higher on this than the neighboring countries. By looking into the specific scores, Sweden and Denmark are defined with 29 and 23 points respectively, while Norway and Finland have been defined with 50 and 56 respectively. Sweden and Denmark are hereby belonging to the five countries with

the lowest scores, while Finland and Norway are placing themselves in the middle of the ranking.

3.3 Conclusion

R.Q. I: In Hofstede`s study (1980) Germany and Norway are two quite similar countries. Of the five cultural dimensions that were examined, Hofstede (1980) found the greatest difference related to the degree of “masculinity” and “uncertainty avoidance”. The dimension “Long Term Orientation” shows a less significant difference. The dimensions “Power Distance” and “Individuality” show a very similar score for the two countries.

R.Q. II: A consequence of the discrepancy along the dimension masculinity can lead to several challenging situations for cooperation between Germans and Norwegians. It should be obvious that when a person, caring and sensitive for the needs of others, cooperates with a very competitive and assertive person, tensions might occur. Since Germany and Norway represent two extremes along this dimension, both parties should be aware of the culture of the other. Otherwise a German will frequently find Norwegians very introvert and difficult to get an understanding of. A Norwegian will find Germans extremely impatient, feel hurt by the direct way of communication, especially with regard to negative feedback.

This dimension also says something about the distributions of roles between the genders. Germany is a more traditional country in terms of roles and expectations for men and women. A consequence is that women are less active in the professional life and are to a larger degree than in Norway, staying home being traditional “housewives”. There should be no surprise that this leads to less icons or models for young women wanting to make a career outside of the home.

These findings alone can most likely not answer why Germans seem to have an increasingly interest in exploring and/or even move to Norway. Neither can the findings explain why Norwegian youths seem to lose their interest for Germany. However, since Germany still represents a very traditional view on males/females, a view that in general was abandoned thirty to forty years ago in Norway, this might be an explanation for both of the trends described above.

When it comes to the degree of assertiveness, it might be understandable that Germans prefer a country where there is a more calm and relaxed atmosphere and not the same pace and pressure to constantly perform. For Norwegians this might be a negative dimension with Germany. When used to a society where everyone who wants, is granted access to university or a decent paid job, the German reality with hard competition to attend university (due to selection already at the age of ten) a significant unemployment around 8-10 %, many Norwegians will find Germany uncomfortable and prefer the stable and “caring” Norway.

4 Research findings

This chapter will, as described in the introduction, present a selection of two papers that in a thorough and informative manner have identified and analyzed multiple dimensions of similarity and difference between Germans and Danes, Finns and Swedes. Due to the lack of specified papers on Norway, the other Nordic countries have been used as a reference. The findings by Hofstede (1980) and Ronen & Shenkar (1985) confirm the adequateness of using the other Nordic countries as references for Norway.

4.1 “Management and Communication Styles in Europe”

The goal of Maud Tixier`s work (1994) was: “To study how executives coped with management styles and modes of communication, different from their own”. The comparative study involved 15 countries, of them the entire Germanic cluster (Austria, Germany and Switzerland) and Denmark and Sweden as representatives from the Nordic cluster. In particular the following topics were examined:

- The degree of employee participation
- The innovation potential of management staff
- The insistence on performance and on obtaining results
- Pragmatism in problem solving
- Attitudes towards conflict and risk

The Extent of Employee Participation

The main overall finding is that Northern Europe (Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, the UK, Ireland, Austria, Switzerland, Sweden and Luxembourg) can be distinguished from Southern Europe (France, Belgium, Portugal, Italy, Spain and Greece). The hierarchical distance was shown to be greater in the Southern Europe than in Northern Europe. The basic reason for this difference is the centralized authority and more autocratic management (Tixier, 1994).

At the other end of the spectrum, the German model is referred to as a system based on co-management and co-determination. Employees are both consulted and decisions are being made collectively, based on an “industrial democracy model”.

Even though the hierarchy is lower than in the case of e.g. France, German companies are characterized by very clear job descriptions and definition of responsibilities at all levels. The employee involvement is therefore much formalized, and the role of every manager is to make sure every subordinate is following the concrete job description. A decision made from a management level is also considered permanent, since it already is supposed to have had the necessary involvement of employee representatives. Sweden goes even further than Germany. The Swedish management style is decentralized and democratic. The organizational charts are in general having a horizontal structure and as a consequence there are very little distance between the individuals in the organization. French companies have for example three to four times more hierarchical levels than the Swedish average. The obligation to spread information is an accepted fact and is also prescribed by Swedish law (MBL - the law of concerted decision). Consequently, the communication of management intentions becomes a tool and a skill, necessary in order to maintain high motivation and a good working climate. If managers fail to communicate well, low working moral and even strikes and resignations might take place. In Sweden trust (to a comparable high degree)

exists between management and labor. Swedish company heads are usually never communicating decisions by referring to specific reasons for the decision. Swedish heads are thoroughly discussing future decisions with their subordinates before actually making one; this is a way of grounding the decision into the employees. Swedish employees expect managers to be predictable and never present surprising decisions. Danish company traditions are similar to the ones in Sweden; democracy and egalitarianism are the two most important values. As in Sweden, the management style is co-operative and participatory. No one is expecting to receive orders from anybody and every proposal has to be justified (Research Report: The European Manager 1989). Opinions of individuals are solicited and orders can be questioned and counter-proposals made. Danish employees have difficulties both in accepting direct decisions made above them and in exercising direct authority over subordinates. There exists in Danish culture an individual and collective notion of responsibility, which is so institutionalized that Danes at all levels, react very negatively when lack of trust is expressed. At the same time it is not in line with Danish tradition to obviously check up on the activities of the staff, except from discrete and supportive follow-up questions.

Based on the findings from the three countries, it is fair to say that even though both Germany and the two Nordic countries all belong to the Northern European tradition of high degree of employee participation, there is a certain difference in how this participation works. In Germany there is a formalized participation through employee representatives when important decisions are to be made, but the daily interaction between manager and subordinate is based on clearly defined tasks and responsibility. The manager is the one to make sure the tasks are being performed in a satisfactory way and is expected to do concrete controls to ensure this. The Nordic tradition is similar when it

comes to the role of employee representatives, but has an additional dimension since it strictly encourages and obliges managers to involve all subordinates in minor and major decisions relating to the daily tasks of the subordinates. Any attempt to constantly control or to check up on subordinates or colleagues might be seen as severe lack of trust, and can mean the end of a good relationship.

The Level of Innovation

Innovation means in the article by Tixier (1994) the respective national tradition for creativity related to product development and problem solving. While employee participation is crucial for the internal environment of a company, creativity has an impact on external communication, both of products and on the image of the company. In addition to say something about the ability to develop creative products and commercials for the products, innovation is also shown through how various tasks are being solved, what roles the respective nationality takes in task forces, group works and similar.

The findings divide Europe into inventive and conservative nations. The French is seen as being creative and technically sophisticated, while the Portuguese show their creativity and flexibility by the manner in which they commit themselves to a project. Greeks are found to be quick, positive and optimistic and overflowing with imaginations and resources in teamwork-situations. While the Austrians are adapting very well to situations and people, Italy is the most innovative country in Europe. Italians' ability to adapt as well as finding compromises, being creative and dynamic are core elements of their entrepreneurial nature. Sweden is the only Northern European country found worthy mentioned as an innovative country, based on their technical innovativeness and reputation as innovative designers.

Denmark and Germany are found to belong to the conservative end of the innovation scale, the countries with less appreciation of intuition and imagination. German advertisers are

used as an example of the lack of innovation and imaginative values in the German society. According to the study tend Danes and Germans to only focus on technical specifications and on efficiency.

Level of innovation says something about the degree of creativity to solve problems and to come up with creative and innovative products and thereby show that the company is dedicated to continuously develop and improve existing products or to create new products that even better can fit the needs of the customers or consumers. It was found that Europe could be divided into two camps; the creative Southern Europe and the more conservative Northern Europe. Germany belongs clearly to the tradition of Northern Europe with little room for innovation in problem solving and less focus on creative innovation. Germany is on the other hand famous for high efficiency in production processes and a very technical oriented innovation. Denmark and Sweden were found to be significantly different along this dimension. Sweden was found to belong to the innovative southern tradition, while Denmark was found to belong to the conservative northern tradition. Norway was not included in this study, but based on general knowledge on Norway, there should be little doubt that Norway would not belong to the creative cluster, at least based on product innovation. Compared to both Sweden with brands like Ikea, H&M, Volvo, Saab, Ericsson, Absolut and other brands in the field of clothing and also Denmark with B&O, H2O, Ecco, Carlsberg, Lego and multiple brands in the field of fashion, furniture and jewelry brands, Norway would not score very high on innovation.

Attitude towards Risk

The third dimension to have an impact on communication is the attitude towards risk. This is a dimension where the Nordic countries are found to be examples of no particular character;

neither very risk willing nor very risk-averse. Germany is on the other hand carefully portrayed as one of the most risk averse countries. Only beaten by the Swiss (German-speaking population), the Germans are the second most risk adverse population according to Tixier (1994). The findings state that both the Germans and the Swiss have a very strong respect for rules and focus on details, with the underlying mean to control and minimize uncertainty. This confirms the findings of Hofstede (1980). Denmark and Sweden are both found to be neither very risk averse nor very risk willing. The scores for Denmark and Sweden also correlate with the findings of Hofstede (1980). Based on the comparison of Norway with the Nordic scores in chapter 3.2.1 there is a high degree of probability that Norway would have been evaluated on the same level as Denmark and Sweden in Tixier's study (1980).

An interesting detour away from the focus on Germany and Norway (supported by Nordic findings) is the attitude towards uncertainty among the British. They have the lowest score (very risk willing) when acting on behalf of a company or employer. At the same time are British executives together with the German executives the most risk averse in Europe when their own careers are at stake. They normally perform a very thorough financial check of the recruiting organization and are very focused on the fringe benefits and the salary.

German managers are showing a very strong risk aversion both related to the daily tasks and challenges their company might face and to their own personal career. Nordic managers are found to be quite different from Germany with more average scores along this dimension. These findings confirm the finding of Hofstede (1980) and should therefore be considered as important findings in the relationship between Germany and Norway. Any cooperation between Germans and Norwegians will most likely face

challenges if not common rules to for processes and planning are agreed upon before starting such cooperation.

Attitude towards Conflict

Tixier (1994) does not describe German managers' attitude toward conflict, but carefully explains the common Swedish and Danish attitude. The Nordic countries are described as very human and consensus oriented. Managers are therefore reluctant to put at risk the co-operative environment existing between employers and employees. According to Tixier (1994) multiple Co-determination laws have reinforced this development. Also in interpersonal relations are the Nordics having a preference for avoiding conflicts. Conflict is perceived to be something sterile (that creates distance) in the Nordics, while the Latin environment is full of conflicts. Danes and Swedes are therefore having difficulties to decode these environments according to Tixier (1994). Typical for both Sweden and Denmark is the awareness of not hurting colleagues or subordinates even when discussing. Therefore, words are weighed carefully in situations where the French might appear aggressive. Also in commercial negotiations are Danes and Swedes aiming for "win-win" strategies in order to prevent a negative atmosphere.

The last paragraph has described the attitude towards conflict and the Danes and Swedes are both found to be very conflict averse. In practically all contact with human beings, either as colleagues or potential business partners, a lot of emphasis is put on choosing the right word in order not to hurt anyone's feeling. In terms of negotiation a "win-win"-strategy is applied, a contrast to the more competitive oriented strategy Americans prefer when negotiating (Rognes & Shapiro, 1996).

Managerial Pragmatism

Both Germans and the Nordics are belonging to the pragmatic cluster among the countries studied in Tixier's work (1994). The Germans are placing a very high value on theoretical conceptualization as a foundation for action. Swedes are also in favor of clear facts on which they can found their judgments. The Swedish rationalism and pragmatism are founded on the fundamental values of Protestantism, according to Tixier (1994).

Value Placed on Performance and Results

The last dimension Tixier (1994) describes in her article is the one related to performance, objectives and end results. Germans, Swedes, Danes and the British are the ones emphasizing these values the most. The Swedes are somewhat special since they also compensate for goals that are not only financial, while the Danes show a more American orientation by being very financial oriented. The Danish have also been much quicker to dismiss unproductive personnel than has been the case in Sweden. A more detailed description of the German approach is not presented by Tixier (1994), except that the German speaking Swiss seem to reward the effort and contribution of each employee at intermediate steps of a project, instead of only at the end as was the case for many of the other cultures.

Danes, Germans and Swedes place a lot of emphasis and value on individual performance and results. In addition are the Swedes seeking to reward also non-financial performance to a larger degree than the others in the same cluster.

Other Relevant Findings

The article by Tixier (1994) also describes other interesting differences and similarities between the German and the Nordic attitude to various issues:

- Preference for written vs. oral communication: Among the 15 nationalities tested, the Dutch, the Portuguese and the Germans showed a clear preference for written communication. German head offices are therefore for example often complaining about high telephone bills among their subsidiaries, for example in France, an attitude that can be traced back to the preference for written communication. Denmark and Sweden are on the other hand found to be examples of oral cultures, a finding somewhat different from Tixier`s (1994) assumption: “That all the Northern European countries would have written preferences. Even more surprising was the finding that the legal system in many of the Nordic countries put as much value on oral agreements as on written ones, this is not the case in many Latin countries.”
- The length of written communication: The Germans and Swedes seem to have a fairly similar approach to written communication. Brief and concise are two words describing the nature of written communication in Germany and Sweden, while in a country like Greece the more you write is perceived as increasing the chances for a favorable impression at the side of the recipient.
- The notion for implicit and explicit communication (Hall & Hall, 1990): Germans like it simple, unequivocal, clear and limpid and are therefore an example of explicit communication. The French prefer a mode of expression that is subtler and suggestive that requires more reading between the lines. This is an example of implicit communication. Germans can therefore, due to their preference for explicit communication, produce reports and other fundaments for decisions that are overwhelmingly long and detailed, also often written in a very professional tone. These types of report are seen from the French as

irritatingly long. The Nordics are having modes of explicit communication according to Hofstede (1984) and Hall & Hall (1990). In terms of clarity, there are some differences between Germany and Sweden, in spite the fact that both belong to the cluster with preference for explicit communication. The Germans expect precise and clear communication, while the Swedish (and the British) allow more room for individual initiative. At the same time find for example the French that Swedish executives are being vague and lack precision in their manner of delegating authority. This should be seen in context with the Nordic traditions for both employee involvement and conflict aversion presented above.

- Degree of formality in communication: The degree of formality is determined by the use of first names, titles and the formal/informal YOU, when that is possible. According to Tixier's findings (1994), the Germans have a strong need for recognition, consideration and respect, and symbols of power count a great deal to them. Titles, size of office, the type of company car and the location of their parking space are all of very high importance for German managers. The use of first names is seldom and even though everyone refers to all the others in the organization as "colleagues", this definition is connected with an accepted distant relationship. Scandinavia stands out as the diametrical opposite to Germany. In Sweden titles are of little importance and due to the common opinion that a working relationship should be egalitarian, the use of formal YOU has been abolished. The practice of not using the formal YOU was actually imposed in the early 1970-ies by a government decree. The use of secretaries as a symbol of formality is overcome by the fact that CEOs of leading Swedish companies have been answering their own phones without having a secretary at all.

The article by Maud Tixier (1994) shows that there are several dimensions where Germans and Scandinavians are very similar. Simultaneous there are many dimensions

where Germans and Scandinavians are differing significantly from each other. The table sums up the article and the conclusions will be used in the next chapter when they are being compared to the findings of the field study.

Dimension	Denmark	Germany	Sweden
Employee participation*	High	Medium	High
Innovation potential among managers	Medium	Low	High
Risk aversion	Medium	Very High	Medium
Conflict aversion	High	Medium	Very High
Pragmatism among managers	High	High	High
Strong performance and result orientation	Very High	High	High**
Preference for written communication (vs oral)	Low	High	Low
Preference for extensive written communication (vs. brief)	Low	Low	Low
Explicit communication (alternative is implicit)	High	High***	High***
Degree of formality in communication	Low	High	Low

Table 1: Summary of findings - Tixier`s article (1994)

* Germany has a very high degree of formal participation in important decisions through employee representatives, while in both Denmark and Sweden employees have a significant impact on daily tasks and also minor decisions.

** In Sweden also other dimensions in addition to the financial one is being rewarded

*** Both Germany and Sweden belong to the cluster with preference for explicit communication, but Sweden is found to accept more room for individual initiatives, while the Germans prefer very precise and clear communication

4.2 “Cultural Variation of Leadership Prototypes”

This article, “Cultural Variation of Leadership Prototypes across 22 European Countries”, was written by Felix C. Brodbeck (2000) with support from 44 colleagues from almost the entire Europe, in order to: “test the assumption that concepts of leadership differ as a function of cultural differences in Europe and to identify dimensions which describe differences in leadership concepts across European countries”. The findings of the article support the assumption that leadership concepts are culturally endorsed. Specifically, clusters of European countries that share similar cultural values according to prior cross-cultural research (Ronen & Shenkar 1985), also share similar leadership concepts. A finding by Smith, Dugan and Trompenaars (1996) confirms that prototypical leadership dimensions found are highly correlated with cultural dimensions. The article by Brodbeck et al. (2000) is based on the European sub sample of the GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness) study (Hanges et al. 1998, House et al. 1997, 1999) and the 22 countries were chosen based on the criteria that they either had to be a member of the European Union or in the process of becoming member or that the country is geographically located in Europe. Unfortunately is Norway, also in this paper, left out of the study, but the three other countries belonging to the Nordic cluster (Ronen & Shenkar 1985); Denmark, Finland and Sweden are all included.

The three research questions to be answered in this article were as follows:

- I. To study the cultural endorsement of leadership prototypes with comprehensive samples of European countries
- II. To identify leadership prototypical dimensions which describe differences between European countries and regions

III. Possibility of emergence of different cultural dimensions as a result of using different regional sub-samples of different European countries

The article presents in detail how the research was carried out, but this Siviløkonom thesis will only present the major findings of the work carried out by Brodbeck et al. (2000).

4.2.1 Cultural Endorsement of Leadership Prototypes

By use of hierarchical cluster analysis and discriminant analysis, the following dendrogram was presented (Brodbeck et al. 2000):

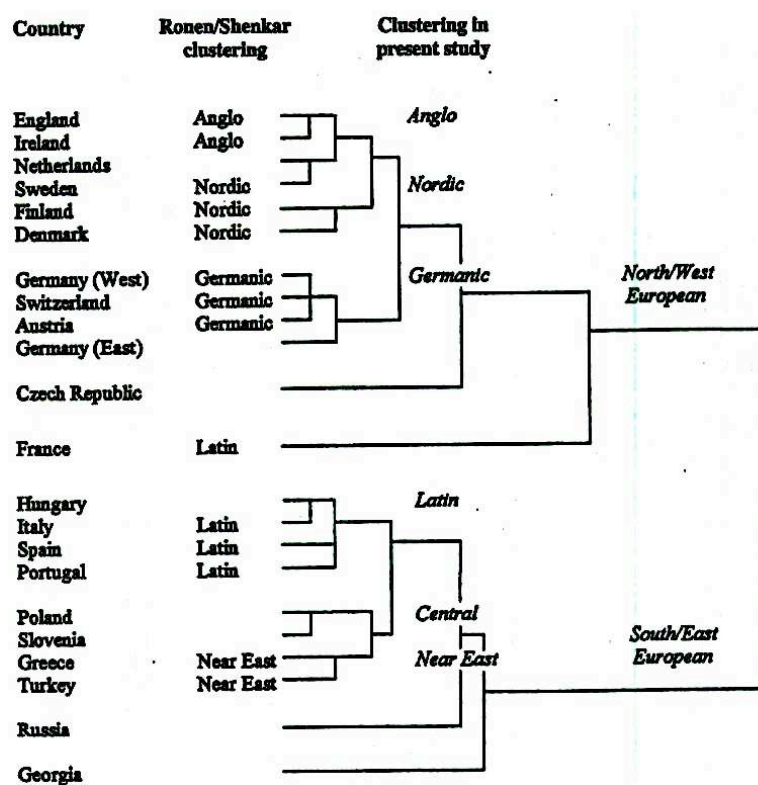


Figure 6: Dendrogram with European Country Cluster (Brodbeck et. al. 2000)

The dendrogram is to be read from right to left and the emergence of two major clusters; the South/East European and the North/West European prototypes of a good leader are the two main models for European leaders. As a consequence of this major finding, it is obvious that Germany and the Nordic countries are sharing the same overall picture of the ideal leader.

By following the dendrogram further to the right, there are several branches splitting respectively the North/West European as well as the South/East European cluster into smaller clusters. The Germanic cluster consists of Germany, Switzerland and Austria, while we see that in the Anglo-Nordic-Dutch cluster are the Swedish showing closer proximity to the Dutch, while Denmark and Finland seems to have more in common than is the case for Sweden and the to neighboring countries. As to the statistical impact of the findings presented in the dendrogram by Brodbeck et al. (2000) it is to be added that through discriminant analysis there was found a 100% correct prediction of cluster membership in accord with Ronen and Shenkar's (1985) clustering (displayed in column two of figure six).

The table below shows in detail a ranking of the prototypical leadership attributes by region. As expected shows the table only minor differences between Germany and the Nordic countries, but there are some interesting results worth mentioning;

- Team integrator is perceived as the fourth most important quality among Nordic (and Dutch) respondents, while the Germanic cluster values this as the eight most important qualities.
- While administrative is seen as a very important value in the Germanic cluster it is of minor importance in the Nordic/Dutch cluster.
- Of very interesting character is the perception of autonomous leadership style. In the Germanic cluster is an autonomous style perceived as slightly positive, while in the Nordic/Dutch cluster this is perceived as slightly negative. This is therefore a dimension managers operating in both of these clusters should be aware of.

Table 3. Prototypicality rankings of leadership attributes by region and country cluster

Leadership prototypicality	North/West European regions				South/East European regions				
	Anglo (GB, IRL)	Scandinavian (SWE, NL, FIN, DEN)	Germanic (CH, GEA/w, GEA/e, AUS)	Italy (ITA)	Latin (ITA, SPA, POR, HUN)	Central (POL, SLO)	Near East (TUR, GRE)	RUS (RUS)	GBE (GBE)
High positive (facilitates outstanding leadership)	Performance Inspired Visionary Team Integrator Inspired Decisive Participative	Inspired Inspired Team Integrator Performance Decisive Non-assertive Participative	Inspired Inspired Performance Non-assertive Visionary Decisive Participative Team Integrator	Inspired Performance Administrative Inspired Non-assertive Visionary Participative Self Sacrificial Team Integrator Diplomatic	Team Integrator Performance Inspired Visionary Decisive Administrative Diplomatic Collaborative	Team Integrator Visionary Administrative Diplomatic Decisive Inspired Performance Inspired	Team Integrator Decisive Visionary Inspired Administrative Diplomatic Collaborative Performance	Visionary Administrative Performance Inspired Decisive Inspired Team Integrator	Administrative Decisive Performance Visionary Inspired Team Integrator Humane Diplomatic Collaborative Modesty
Low positive (slightly facilitates)	Non-assertive Administrative Diplomatic Collaborative Modesty Self Sacrificial Humane Conflict Avoider	Collaborative Diplomatic Administrative Conflict Avoider Self Sacrificial Humane Modesty	Diplomatic Collaborative Self Sacrificial Modesty Humane Conflict Avoider Autonomous	Collaborative Decisive Modesty Autonomous Humane	Non-assertive Participative Self Sacrificial Modesty Humane Status Conscious Conflict Avoider Collaborative Conflict Avoider Administrative Modesty	Collaborative Participative Non-assertive Modesty Self Sacrificial Status Conscious Autonomous Humane Proceedural	Participative Non-assertive Self Sacrificial Modesty Humane Status Conscious Conflict Avoider Autonomous	Participative Collaborative Diplomatic Status Conscious Self Sacrificial Modesty Conflict Avoider Autonomous	Impersonal Non-assertive Self Sacrificial Status Conscious Autonomous Participative Proceedural
Low negative (slightly impedes)	Autonomous Status Conscious Proceedural	Autonomous Status Conscious Proceedural	Status Conscious Proceedural	Proceedural Conflict Avoider Pace Setter	Proceedural Autonomous	Conflict Avoider Pace Setter	Autonomous Proceedural Pace Setter	Humane Non-assertive Proceedural Pace Setter	Conflict Avoider Pace Setter Self Centered
High negative (impedes)	Pace Setter Self Centered Malvolent	Pace Setter Self Centered Malvolent	Pace Setter Self Centered Malvolent	Status Conscious Self Centered Malvolent	Pace Setter Self Centered Malvolent	Self Centered Malvolent	Self Centered Malvolent	Self Centered Malvolent	Malvolent

Sp. AUS = Austria, CH = Switzerland, CSR = Czech Republic, DEN = Denmark, FIN = Finland, FRA = France, GB = United Kingdom, GEA/w = Germany, GEA/e = former East Germany, GBE = Greece, HUN = Hungary, ITA = Italy, IRL = Ireland, NE = Netherlands, POL = Poland, POR = Portugal, RUS = Russia, SLO = Slovenia, SPA = Spain, SWE = Sweden, TUR = Turkey.

Table 2: Prototypical rankings of leadership attributes by region and country cluster

4.2.2 Difference in Leadership Prototypes between European Countries

The second research question in the article seeks to identify particular differences between the individual countries, based on some of the dimensions from the table above. Multi-dimensional Scaling (MDS) was used. For interpretative purposes, Brodbeck et. al (2000) applied the regression method used by Smith, Dugan and Trompenaars (1996). The relationship between Interpersonal Directness and Proximity and Autonomy is presented in the figure below:

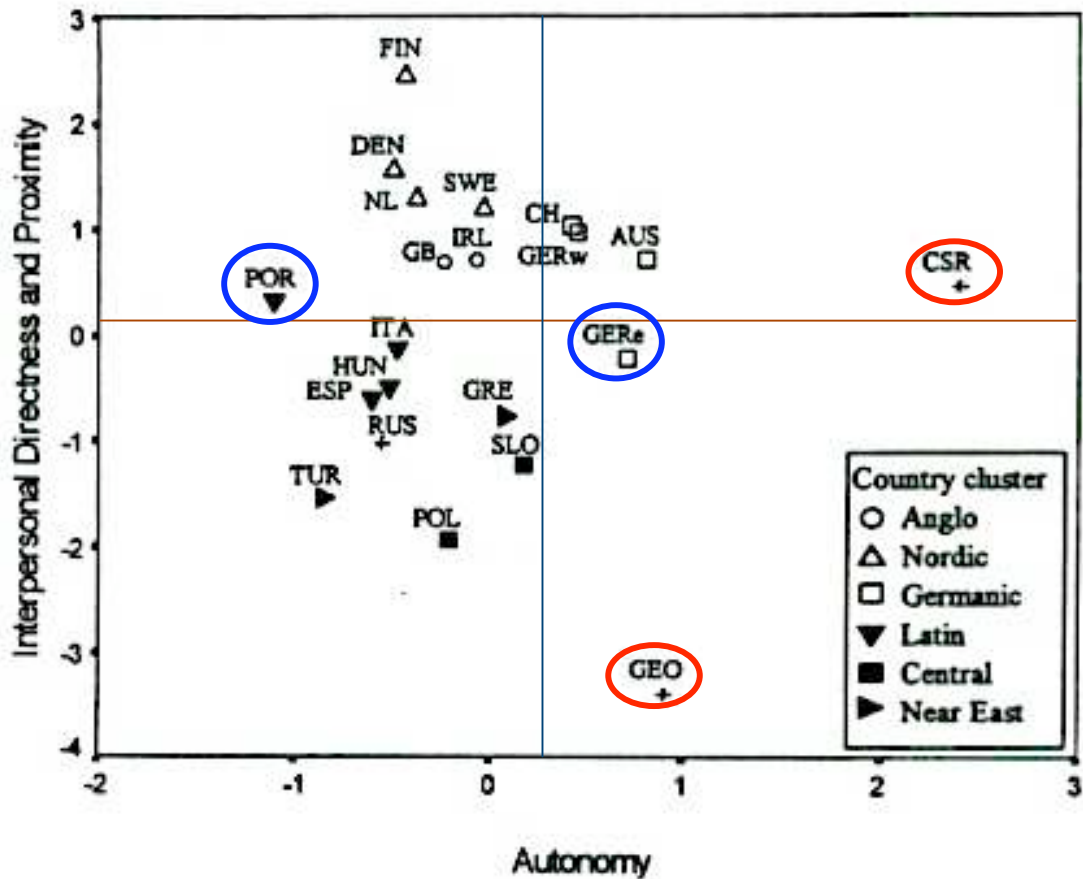


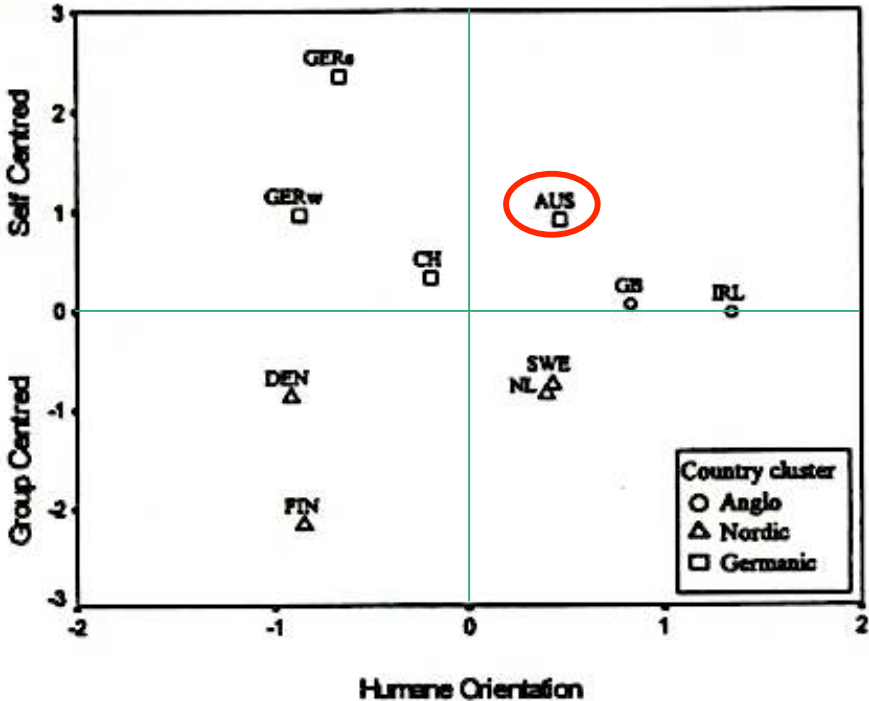
Figure 7: Country score for two leadership dimensions; Interpersonal Directness and Proximity and Autonomy

The main finding according to Brodbeck et al. (2000) is that the main sub-clusters in Europe; the North/West Europe and South/East Europe are to be clearly separated. This also confirms

the former findings of the more detailed sub-clusters (Ronen & Shenkar 1985) like the Anglo-, Nordic-, Germanic-, Latin-, Central- and the Near East cluster (with the exception of Portugal and former East Germany – marked in blue). With regards to the Autonomy dimension the Germanic cluster together with Czech Republic (marked in red) and Georgia (marked in red) showed a significantly different attitude from the other sub-clusters. This confirms the point made under the previous research question, stating the difference between Germany and the Nordic countries related to this quality.

4.2.3 Compatibility of across- and within regional dimensions

The third and last research question aimed to answer if there are any significant differences within the regional sub-clusters. The figure below shows that there are significant differences, related to the dimensions “Self Centered/Conflict Inducer” and “Team Collaborative/Team Integration” and the “Human Orientation”:



:

Figure 8: Country score for two leading dimensions; Group/self centered- and Human orientation

It is evident based on the figure that the Nordic cluster (including the Netherlands) perceives group centered orientation as more prototypical for outstanding leaders as is the case for Germanic cluster. The Anglo cluster kept a central position on this dimension. Human orientation is again a dimension where there is a split in the Nordic cluster. Denmark and Finland are together with the Germanic cluster (Austria is an exception) not of the opinion that human orientation is a prototypical quality among outstanding leaders. Sweden and the Netherlands, together with the Anglo European countries are showing a positive perception of human orientation as an advantage for outstanding leadership.

The article by Brodbeck et al. (2000) confirms some of the previous finding, but is also presenting these findings in a quite different way than for example the article by Tixier. The table below will, as was done for the article by Tixier (1994), sum up the main findings in the work done by Brodbeck et. al. (2000).

Positive Leadership Qualities	Den	Fin	Ger	Swe
Autonomy	No	No	Yes	No
Administrative quality	Moderate	Moderate	High	Moderate
Team integrator	High	High	Moderate	High
Human orientation	Low	Low	Low	Moderate

Table 3: Summary of findings - article by Brodbeck et al. (2000)

4.3 Conclusion

R.Q. I: Germany is a country with a significantly higher degree of autonomy in the relationship between managers and subordinates than is the case in Norway and the other Nordic countries. Germans put a lot of emphasis on the administrative quality of a leader, but less focus on the ability of team integration. This is exactly the opposite of the case in

Norway and the Nordic countries. The degree of employee participation is significantly higher in the Nordic countries than in Germany, especially related to the more informal participation and influence on individual tasks and range of responsibility. The tradition for being innovative is rather low, both in Germany and in Norway. Germans show a high degree of aversion against risk, something that is of less importance in Norway and the neighboring Nordic countries. Germany has a stronger preference for written communication than the tradition in the Nordic countries (this might be seen in connection with the strong aversion against risk). Germans prefer a more formal way of communication than common in the Nordic countries. The best example is the use of a formal language when communicating with unknown people or people older on a different hierarchical layer in the organization.

R.Q. II: The mentioned differences can individually create tensions, but most likely not be the main obstacle for cooperation between Germans and Norwegians. However, if not both parties take these dimensions into consideration when interacting with the opposite culture, significant challenges can arise. This is due to the extensive amount of smaller differences. The sum of all the minor differences lead to numerous smaller pitfalls that independently can create considerable misunderstandings and in worst-case create serious cooperative problems if not identified and acknowledged in advance.

Many of the differences identified above can as mentioned be considerable enough to create significant interpersonal problems. At the same time do these differences not explicitly answer why Germans in increasing numbers find Norway interesting and Norwegians in decreasing numbers find Germany interesting.

5 Theory and research: Findings and comparison

A thorough review of the findings in the last chapters is necessary in order to have a clear view of the dimensions this thesis aims to test in the following field-study. The original research questions are repeated below in order to draw the attention to the dimensions crucial for this thesis:

1. *What cultural differences and similarities are there between Germans and Norwegians?*
2. *Are the cultural differences between Germans and Norwegians creating significant challenges in cooperation between the two nationalities?*

The first two sub-chapters will present the findings of chapter three and four and respectively answer the first research question for these two chapters. The third sub-chapter will discuss the impact of these differences and thereby answer the second research question. At the end of the of the chapter some reflections will be made related to the degree of difference between Germany and Norway in a greater perspective.

5.1 Theoretical framework

The main foundation for the theoretical work was the extensive framework on the cultural dimension by Hofstede (1980, 2001). In addition did the angle of this thesis give the opportunity to introduce Ronen and Shenkar`s theory on country clusters (1985). This theory was not only confirmed by Brodbeck et al. (2000), but also together with Hofstede`s comparison of four of the Nordic countries (1980), it supports the use of Denmark, Finland and Sweden as substitutes for Norway. Norway has not specifically been included in the two articles by Tixier (1994) and Brodbeck et al. (2000), but since the findings by Hofstede (1980) and Ronen and Shenkar (1985) show a strong degree of similarity among the four

Nordic countries, the findings of the Denmark, Finland and Sweden will count as representative for the lacking Norwegian findings.

5.2 Research

The articles by Tixier (1994) and Brodbeck et al. (2000) introduce two slightly different angles, but were all researching the perception of organizational culture and tradition, and the preferred and observed management prototype in a number of European countries. The main findings from Tixier`s article (1994) are that German managers and organizations are differing from Danish and Swedish managers and organizations in the dimensions related to:

- employee participation
- innovative potential among managers
- conflict aversion
- preference for oral or written communication
- formality in communication

Brodbeck et al. (2000) found significant differences in the perception of good leaders and managers, related to the following dimensions:

- degree and use of autonomy
- administrative quality
- team integrative capabilities

These findings give the opportunity to describe the typical German organizational climate as:

“Organizations with emphasis on roles, positions and autonomy in a hierarchical setting, specified tasks, low degree of individual freedom, formal communication along well defined

communication channels, focus on administrative correctness and medium perception of team integration as an important manager quality”

The Norwegian (or Nordic) organizational climate looks quite different:

“Organizations are dependent on a large degree of both formal and informal participation among the employees across all layers. Conflict aversion is very strong, while formality in the communication is seen as unnecessary, distance-creating and preventing an egalitarian environment”.

By observing the two definitions above, it seems clear that there are significant differences in preferences and structures between German and Norwegian organizations. At the same time the findings in the two articles also confirm some common values worth mentioning;

“Explicit communication is by both cultures preferred when communicating, either orally or written. At the same time there is a joint preference for brief written communication when this style is required. The last dimension to be perceived as similar is the high degree of pragmatism among managers in both cultures”

5.3 Findings

Sub-chapter 5.2 summarizes the main findings from the previous chapter. Hereby is also the first research question answered. However, to answer if these differences are of such character that they can create significant challenges in terms of German-Norwegian cooperation is another discussion.

There should be no doubt that the degree of employee involvement and the degree of formality are two important dimensions that could create significant challenges if not identified. Most likely will two scenarios be realistic if unprepared cooperation is launched:

Nordic subordinates would feel completely overrun if managed by a very formal and autonomous manager, without focus on team integration. This situation would most likely lead to resistance and lack of wholehearted support for the project goal.

A second potential scenario is if a Nordic manager should manage a group of German subordinates. The lack of a clear direction, frequent check-up on the tasks to be completed, could lead to frustration among the subordinates. They would find the manager too democratic with no clear knowledge on where to bring the group and a feeling of little important tasks might evolve, since the manager does not frequently check up on the progress

The examples mentioned above should definitely illustrate the unfavorable situations that might evolve if not enough attention is drawn towards the various expectations and culturally related particularities that exist in every culture. If such differences are being ignored many good projects can fail, only due to the disappearance of motivation or the evolvment of frustration among the persons involved in such cooperation.

5.4 Reflections

Based on the findings above, there should be no doubt that cooperation between German and Norwegian (Nordic) managers and employees and between enterprises might present some challenges for the people involved. While the Nordic organizational climate in general gives the impression of a free and individual atmosphere, the findings on Germany provide a more functional and task oriented tradition where the degree of individual freedom at work is rather limited.

The GLOBE (Hanges et al. 1998 and House et al. 1997, 1999)-material used in Brodbeck et al.'s article has been collected from more than 60 countries around the world. It might be reasonable to believe that the differences between Germany (or the German cluster) and Norway (the Nordic cluster) are minor compared to differences between regions within

Europe and even more so between Europe and non-European cultures. The article by Brodbeck et al. (2000) confirms at least the existence of a North/West European culture and South/East European cultures with clear differences.

6 Germans about Norwegians and vice versa

This chapter will present how the field study was carried out and what the main findings of the in-depth-interviews were. Initially the chapter will describe the main goal of the field study; thereafter a presentation of the interviewed persons will follow. The main part of the chapter will be the findings of the interviews, including the range of opinions that were expressed on the various topics discussed during the qualitative interviews.

6.1 Background information

In order to understand the findings that will be presented below, a thorough description of the “facts and figures” of the interviews, the “reason for selection” and the “nature of the interviews” will be presented in the following sub-chapters.

6.1.1 Facts and figures

Ten interviewees in total were involved; of them were five Germans and five Norwegians; six males and four females. It was an equal number of males and females from Germany and Norway. The average age was around fifty. The men were somewhat older than the women. The age difference was approximately the same for both nationalities.

6.1.2 Reason for selection of interviewees

These ten were chosen because; *“they all have decades of experience with working with business partners, colleagues and managers of the other nationality”*.

Since the findings of established researchers already have been presented, the goal of the field study was to present the experiences and thoughts of non-researchers and compare these with the theoretical findings.

More than half of the Norwegians have worked for the Norwegian Export Council. All of them are now either working for non-Norwegian companies in Norway, or have positions in Norwegian companies with extensive orientation towards non-Norwegian customers and partners, mainly in Germany. For the German sample the picture is naturally slightly different. Three out of five had worked in Norway for a longer period, but all of them had been or are still working for Norwegian companies in Germany. One of the German respondents had also worked for the Norwegian Export Council and has for the last ten years worked for a subsidiary of a Norwegian company in Germany.

6.1.3 The nature of the interviews

Each interview was scheduled a couple of weeks before the actual date of the interview. When planning the time for the interview, a certain rotation between Germans and Norwegians was pursued. This was done in order to get a fairly even distribution of input from both nationalities, to make the latter interviews even more fruitful as the earlier due to increased knowledge and experience. The interviews lasted in general between 90 minutes and two hours, with some exceptions when the discussions continued even longer.

Initially only a brief introduction to the topic was repeated, since they already had been introduced to the topic during the initial contact. The interviewees were told to reflect and tell about the following dimensions:

- Relevant background
- First meeting with opposite culture
- Systematic evaluation of the interaction (first interaction until today)

- A reflection on changes in the behavior (of the opposite culture) since the first meeting (in order to identify if significant changes have taken place)
- Similarities and differences discovered
- Examples of explicit situations where differences were shown
- Differences that have led to a changed view (greater acceptance for opposite culture)

Based on the dimensions above the interviews all had different characters. This had to do with personal experiences and the degree of capacity to evaluate all dimensions discussed. Consequently, both the length and the flow of the interviews were different, but they all had the common denominator that they summarized differences and similarities between Germany and Norway in such a way that their experiences gave a good foundation for comparing the findings with the conclusions from the theoretical part. If a dimension or a specific topic was not carefully discussed during the interview or questions came up after the interview was conducted, follow-up questions were discussed on the phone in order to clarify the respective view or opinion on relevant question.

6.1.4 General observations

All ten interviews were, as described above, different. At the same time is the general impression that both the Germans and the Norwegians respectively were sharing the views of their countrymen. They all were of the opinion that the German and the Norwegian culture were two cultures with more similarities than differences, in other words; two cultures that are matching each other quite well. However, an interesting observation was that the Germans were more positive towards the Norwegian culture than the other way around. The Norwegians did also express less understanding for the existing differences and were in general of the opinion that the Germans in most cases would have to adapt to a more

Norwegian behavior in order to have a fruitful cooperation. This observation alone is of course very interesting for the general differences between Germans and Norwegians.

Among the Germans was more emphasis on how Norwegians were organized in organizations or companies. Lack of (perceived?) efficiency was one of the most frequently mentioned differences of negative character. The most frequent comment was on the lack of extensive hierarchy in Norwegian organizations and across layers of these.

Interestingly was the focus among the Norwegians on the Germans as individuals. Less reflection was on German tradition or culture as reason for behavior, but more focus was on the formal and strict personal behavior. On the other side were the Norwegians somewhat divided on the German tradition for formality. Two of the five told that they could see positive aspects related to the use of formal language, but they also said they had needed a long time to come to this conclusion.

However, the point all of the interviewees made was the issue of roles for males and females in the two countries. While the Germans found the progressive and somehow softer (feminine) Norwegian society charming and modern, with several advantages related to the multiple opportunities for combining family and career (especially favoring female participation in the working life), was the opinion on Germany, among the Norwegians, exactly the opposite. "Germany is still where Norway was in the sixties" one Norwegian commented. Another Norwegian interviewee said: "Germany is still very male-oriented, and both in commercials for cars, beers and tools, in TV shows and in the newspapers, women are very often used as pure sex symbols without any relevance to the product or the actual program". It is fair to say that Hofstede's findings (1980) related to masculinity had a 100 % support from the interviewees.

6.1.5 Link between research and field study

While the theory and research presented in chapter three and four, and summarized in chapter five, aimed at structurally present the findings from accepted frameworks (e.g. by Hofstede and Ronen and Shenkar) and from the articles by Tixier (1994) and Brodbeck et al. (2000) the organization of the following sub-chapters is different. Chapter 6.2 and 6.3 will respectively present the findings of the interviews with Germans and Norwegians and then sum-up the main findings. These findings are organized according to suitable “umbrellas”, including the various sub-topics and do not always suit the distinct structure of the theoretical part in chapter three and four. However, in chapter seven the findings from both the theoretical part and the field study will be compared and discussed. In chapter eight the strengths and limitations of this structure will be analyzed and a recommendations for further research will be presented.

6.2 Interviews with Germans and Norwegians

The main reason for undertaking a field study like this is to be divided into two;

1. To see if the personal experiences regarding cultural differences between Germans and Norwegians could be explained by, and therefore confirm existing cultural models and the existing research. If successful, this will answer the first of the research questions of this thesis.
2. The second research question asks if discovered cultural differences create serious challenges in the cooperation between Germans and Norwegians. By again using the experiences both Germans and Norwegians had, the goal is to define dimensions where both nationalities should be focused in order to tear down the potential barriers that might exist between the two cultures.

6.2.1 Organization and preparation

The first dimension to be described is how Germans and Norwegians prepare and organize themselves and their businesses for change. As mentioned in the previous sub-chapter, all interviewees had experienced the opposite culture throughout smaller or greater changes.

Examples of such changes were;

- Entry into non-domestic markets
- Entry into both new and slightly different business areas
- Restructuring or set up of company/organization/subsidiaries

Changes of more personal character were e.g.;

- Shorter or longer stays abroad as expatriates, doctoral student or other types of long-term engagements abroad

On this topic, all ten objects were of the same opinion. The German interviewees were more critical towards the Norwegian organizational style than the Norwegians were, but also the Norwegians identified weaknesses in the Norwegian lack of planning and preparation.

The German Approach:

Both German individuals and German companies follow a very secure strategy when going abroad. A thorough research is carried out in advance and great resources are spent, both financial, but also in terms of time.

The German and Norwegian interviewees were all of the opinion that it made German individuals and organizations well prepared for greater changes. At one point the Germans and Norwegians presented different opinions; while the Germans saw no negative aspects of this time- and money consuming process, three of the Norwegians considered this a strategy that most likely would lead to lost opportunities, since the process was too time consuming.

The Norwegian Approach:

Along this dimension Norwegians differ significantly from the Germans. Germans talked about a very low degree of planning from Norwegians and Norwegian companies when expanding outside of Norway, this was both related to some of the biggest companies in Norway, but also smaller family run businesses. Both the necessary knowledge of the formal procedures, the culture in general and a thorough assessment of the new market were often lacking. Norwegians in general expressed a high degree of self-confidence in themselves and in their products and did not spend much time on planning for the unexpected.

Both Germans and Norwegians agreed that this was an approach with many weaknesses. Stories were also told about big Norwegian companies, which had spent millions of Euros, but were forced out of the market after a very short time, simply due to poor planning. Some of these companies have later had success abroad, but often in less developed and less mature markets. Even though the Norwegian and the German opinion on this point were of very similar character did the Norwegians judge the approach as slightly more positive than the Germans. This had to do with the capability of responding quickly to a potential market opportunity. One Norwegian also said it that: “Norwegians often show good adaptable skills that of course can contribute positively to a fast changing market”.

The findings provided along this dimension support a semi-conclusion that both Germans and Norwegians do think that a higher degree of preparation would be of advantage for Norwegian companies and Norwegian individuals. This is not the same as stating that the German approach is the right one, especially if the markets are moving quickly. However, the majority of the respondents would prefer the German style, but some suggested that the German style mixed with a “light-version” of the Norwegian style would be ideal.

*“Germans believe in preparation, thoroughness and structure. Norwegians believe in own
(or the product’s) uniqueness, destiny and freedom”*

6.2.2 The Nature of Networking

One of the first dimensions many of the interviewed objects used when mentioning differences between Germans and Norwegians, was “the nature of networking”. In both countries, as well as in most other countries and societies, networking is the consequence of membership in formal or informal organizations, clubs, unions or alliances. In spite of this fact referred most of the interviewees to the nature of networking in the opposite country as something they had needed some time to really understand. There are significant differences in the way Germans and Norwegians create networks and also differences in the way they structure and use their networks. The following paragraphs will in detail describe the two traditions and briefly comment on the main differences.

The German way of Networking

All five Norwegian respondents emphasized that the Germans seemed to perceive the networks created during studies or other types of education, as something structured and of high importance. Also the German respondents confirmed that networks are of high importance and should only consist of members who have been selected based on the same criteria. Networks are in Germany seldom based on coincidences, but should always be rooted in traditions and strict entry requirements. All the German, but also some of the Norwegian respondents, referred to the German traditions for “Studenteverbindungen”. This is a particular type of network, with traditions back to the time around year 1800. Today, these “Verbindungen” are to a large degree organized as they were about 200 years ago. Members become members if they fulfill certain criteria, the most crucial criterion is often that your father (or mother), is a member. These networks enable a good flow of communication across generations, since the relationship to the older members is well maintained. The students are heavily subsidized by the so-called “Alte Herrn” (old men), members who have graduated and are now working. Many of the younger members, the so

called “Füchse” (fox) are living in mansions and are well known for their extensive partying, but also a very strong loyalty to the “Verbindung” and its members. These “Verbindungen” also have a political wing. The so-called “Burschenschaften” were created with the goal to not only create a favorable network for its members, but also to defend and protect German traditions and German identity. Also the red color in the German flag (“Schwarz, Rot, Gold”) is related to the activities and the impact of the political oriented “Burschenschaften”. Many of the “Burschenschaften” have had and still have a very conservative and right oriented identity, and this has not improved the general impression of these among general German citizens. In addition to the student unions, Germany also has a long tradition for craft organizations. These have a history dating back to the Roman Empire and are still visible today through the emblems of and in numerous German cities. In addition, members of these craft organizations dress up in their traditional costume or working clothes and travel for longer periods with minimal financial backing around Germany as craftsmen used to do.

Germans emphasize their various networks. Strict guidelines and requirements are related to the traditional networks. The use of modern technology like Internet might create a threat to this dimension, but the nature of the professional network “X-ing” (also known as “openBC”- Open Business Connections) is a signal that new networks are available to a wider range of members. At the same time is this Germany-oriented network very conservative in its structure and content, even though the layout is of very modern character.

The Norwegian way of Networking

Also when it came to how Norwegians seem to network, the German respondents found Norwegians much unstructured. They commented at the same time that Norwegians seemed to have numerous connections, often via friends of friends, and seldom in the formalized way, typical in Germany. The Norwegian respondents confirmed that networking has a quite different character in Norway than in Germany, but meant that it had more to do with the egalitarian traditions in Norway than being less structured.

Three of the Norwegian respondents mentioned at the same time that there are organizations in Norway similar to the German “Verbindungen”. These do not have political ambitions or opinions. The male choir Svæveru at NHH is an example of a network where family-ties and relations and/or a certain geographical origin decide if a membership is granted or not. This network also continues beyond graduation with “Svæveru Old Boys”: an association for older members.

One of the Norwegian respondents also pointed out the size of the country. Norway is a fairly small country and the few university centers in Bergen, Oslo, Trondheim and Tromsø are all consisting of students from all over Norway. The limited number of universities and students in total enable former high school friends to automatically get an insight into or an informal membership in the networks across branches of studies or universities. It is therefore easier in Norway to find a person in the networks of friends and acquaintances with the needed skills or connections than in a country with a bigger and more complex societal and educational structure. As a consequence of the existing proximity between students and later friends and acquaintances in Norway, foreigners get the impression that “Norwegians always seem to know someone with the right contact” as one of the German interviewees put it.

Also when it comes to networking and networking tradition Germany and Norway are different: Networks in Germany are carefully built up and have a clear structure; while in Norway networks are being created based on personal interactions and more often based on personal connections than through organized frames.

“In Germany, network is a structured highway which leads you through life, while in Norway network is more a map of crossing roads showing the way”

6.2.3 Communication

An important dimension when comparing the culture and the behavior of the people in two different countries is the style of communication. The interviewees of this field-study all had clear opinions on the main differences and similarities on communication in respectively Germany and Norway.

German Communication

One of the biggest challenges all the Norwegian respondents faced when they first came to Germany and learned the German language, was to accept and get used to the formal “you” (Sie). Even though some of them had experienced a limited use of this formal “you” in Norway when they were young, they found it challenging to get used to the extent the formal “you” was used. In addition four of them stated that they had found it difficult to understand why Germans insisted on using the formal “Sie”, also when they were strongly arguing with each other. The Germans naturally did not find the use of “Sie” problematic at all. What many of them focused on, in order to explain the advantages with “Sie”, was that this was a way of keeping a certain distance to the people they were not particular interested in having a close relationship with. The awareness that the formal “you” is more than just being polite, but also expresses a certain interpersonal distance, was an aspect the Norwegians explained had taken quite a long time to understand.

Another particularity the Norwegians had found and still find very different from Norway, was the way Germans express criticism. Germans were perceived to be very direct and often rude when providing feedback or participating in discussions. As a consequence of this difference two Norwegians expressed a discrepancy in the way Germans were criticizing and the content of the statement; it was said that: “They stick to the formalities, but are very rude”. The Germans perceived this differently. None of the German respondents would confirm that they were rude or unfriendly. They emphasized that they were giving their clear opinion, but that there is a strong distinction between the persons involved and the topic they are discussing.

The last dimension that was mentioned in regards to communication was the style of written communication. “Germans are always formal and they tend to express themselves so detailed that I often do not read the second half of the document, one Norwegian said”. This view was supported by one of the other Norwegians, while the three others preferred the detailed German communication style. Four of the Germans surprisingly supported the view of the minority of the Norwegians. They confirmed that they often found German written communication too thorough and too detailed. They mentioned that the English style, with a higher degree of freedom and less details were preferable. All the respondents mentioned that the use of e-mail has shortened and made German communication less formal, at least with company-internal communication.

Norwegian Communication

One of the aspects the Germans found positive about the Norwegian communication style was the relaxed nature and the use of the informal “you” (du). Even though the same Germans preferred the German diversification of the formal and informal “you”, they stated that the relaxed Norwegian behavior and interpersonal behavior suited the use of informal “you”. The Norwegians were naturally very much in favor of the Norwegian use of informal “you”. They expressed a certain degree of proud of the informal tradition, compared to languages with both a formal and an informal language.

Concerning the way Norwegians are expressing criticism, three of the Norwegians found the Norwegian approach friendly and appropriate while the two other were rather neutral. The Germans expressed on this topic their opinions more strongly. Four of them found Norwegians completely incompetent in expressing negative feedback. Two of them were actually referring to personal experiences (two separate, but similar cases) when they had done rather big mistakes. By analyzing the error with their Norwegian superior afterwards, they got the feeling that the superior blamed himself for the mistake, even though it was very clear that the Germans themselves were responsible. They confirmed that such errors would have resulted in a very direct round of feedback if the same mistake had been evaluated with a German superior. The Germans expressed that the Norwegian approach made it difficult to understand what the superior manager really thought, since the whole conversation was “wrapped up so neatly” as one of the Germans expressed it.

When communicating in the written language Norwegians are brief and direct according to the Norwegian objects. The length is definitely shorter than in the German cases, and in general straight to the point, with few unnecessary detours. The Germans supported this view and found the Norwegian written communication appropriate without much of the German written literal irrelevancies. Only when communication criticism did the Germans

find Norwegians being too polite and too diplomatic, but that should be no surprise, based on the findings for the oral style of communication.

Germans do have a very direct way of oral communication. Criticism is communicated directly, but there is always an attempt to maintain a certain personal distance by using the formal “you” if there is a counter party with no direct personal connection. Norwegians have no formal barriers when communicating. On the other hand do Norwegians seem to have no preference for expressing criticism and that is often causing frustration among Germans.

“Germans are marching verbally into discussions until they face resistance, Norwegians on the other side start discussions as if they were already defeated....”

6.2.4 Style and behavior

This sub-chapter discusses the main findings from the field study will present the opinions on how Germans and Norwegians are doing in terms of style and behavior.

Germans

According to the Norwegians interviewed, the Germans are extremely correct and classy in the way they dress during daytime and in formal settings. Germans are also perceived as very formal and with a strong preference for hierarchies and layers that express a certain difference in importance within the association or company. All of the Norwegians expressed themselves quite negatively about the German tradition for having more distanced relationships across layers of an organization. As already mentioned was the direct criticism, but also the lack of respect for individuals lower in the organization, the two aspects Norwegians had most difficulties to accept. Germans on the other hand, did not find this behavior unnatural and they supported the system. One stated that managers were there to “guide the employees in an efficient way, and not to function as a social worker”. Other

Germans expressed an understanding for the Norwegian skepticism, but said that they did not find it as explicit as some of the Norwegians perceived it. One stated that the distanced relationship to persons with more autonomy or in a higher position is something Germans have been used to since they were young. Another German also stated that the issue of having different layers was a natural consequence of an early distinction of pupils between those who should pursue a university degree and those who had to choose more practical paths of education. The same respondent meant that such a diversification at an early age lead to a greater accept for differences.

In terms of how Germans are behaving in social settings were both the Germans and the Norwegians of the same opinion; “Germans are able to create a comfortable atmosphere and are particular good hosts for their guests”. One of the Norwegians also stated that: “German humor is a lot better than its reputation”.

Norwegians

According to the German objects; ”Norwegians tend to dress up very non-businesslike during business hours. Often do they tend to show up without having polished their shoes for a very long time and seldom is the tie really matching the shirt or the style of the suit, if they wear a tie at all”. On the other hand do Norwegians usually dress up significantly in more informal settings like dinners and “get-togethers” The lack of style during work is something the Germans confirmed reduces the respect for Norwegians among Germans, but might at the same time be seen as a break from the somewhat over-dressed German attitude, but this is only if the Germans are going to work in such an environment themselves. For shorter interactions like meetings or even more important, negotiations, Norwegians are provided little respect due to their way of dressing. Norwegians did agree that they are not dressing up as well as the Germans, but defended it by stating; “we are not putting emphasis on the surface, we are more concerned with the person itself”. On the other hand did one of the

German objects express an understanding of the Norwegian way of dressing, just stated that it was completely the opposite of the German tradition and that she therefore had needed some time to get used to it; “I got the impression that Norwegians did not pay too much attention to the formalized ways of dressing, and after a couple of weeks, I got used to it. However, when we were invited home to Mr. X the first time and everyone were significantly better dressed than I had ever seen them before, then I finally understood the Norwegian way of dressing - same as the German, just to the opposite time of the day and situation”.

When it comes to the very informal and egalitarian treatment of fellow colleagues across the whole organizations did both the Germans and the Norwegians appreciate this tradition. However the German respondents found it was often difficult to really identify who is the real leader or manager in Norwegian organizations since the art of managing is differing so clearly from the German style. The Norwegian respondents did on the other side express understanding of this, but explained that the distinction between managers and subordinates is; “something you understand, often without really being able to relate it to particular actions or behavior. It is something you simply know!”

When it comes to how Norwegians are doing in social settings, there were different opinions among the ten. Many of the Germans found Norwegians friendly; “but they often seem to lack an interest for cultural dimensions like literature, theatre and art. Norwegians prefer talking about winners of skiing competitions, the size of the Norwegian Petroleum Fund or the UN-ranking stating that Norway is the best country to live in four years in a row.” Three Germans also said that Norwegians were better answering questions than asking questions themselves, thereby proving little interest in the opposite culture. One of these two Germans actually referred to a Spanish businessman who had been doing business with Norwegians for many years, who once said; “Norwegians are honest and I am very pleased doing

business with them. To have dinner with Norwegians? No thanks. That I would prefer not to have”. The Norwegians respondents were in general supporting the views of the Germans stating that; “we are not a very social people, at least not before we have had a glass of wine or a couple of beers...” In addition, one of the Norwegians said that he found Norwegians to be very self-confident. In particular he found that this development had taken place over the last decade, since he found Norwegian used to be more humble only 25-30 years ago.

“Norwegians are very informal, almost too informal. Have limited perspective outside of the Norwegian scope, not particularly polite, but trustable. Germans prefer hierarchy and formalized rules for interaction with superiors or business acquaintance. Germans show an interest in the unknown and can converse along a wide range of topics”

6.3 Field study: Summary and findings

As the previous sub-chapters have shown, there are some dimensions where Germans and Norwegians both are behaving differently and also have very different preferences on the ideal “should be-behavior/situation”.

Germany:

- I. Germans are putting a lot of emphasis on being prepared, be thorough in nearly said all situations. German companies are divided into very strict hierarchical organizations and for every position there are clearly defined roles, tasks and responsibility. In case the organization is taking a step into unknown markets or cultures a lot of emphasis is placed on getting a thorough overview, to develop plans and strategies to combat all possible scenarios. Many employees will be involved at all stages and each of these will have concrete roles and specific defined responsibilities.

- II. Networking wise do Germans show their thoroughness. A network is something that is well organized and there are clear entry requirements and frame for the network.
- III. When communicating, the Germans are polite, but direct. They are well prepared and know exactly what their goals are. If they face no resistance they just continue until they face heavy resistance.
- IV. In interpersonal settings, Germans do show style and politeness. Germans keep a certain professional distance, but are well articulated and can entertain an acquaintance through insight across multiple topics and areas.

Norway:

- I. Norwegians are having a very strong faith in themselves, their products and their ability to create success. Many very large decisions are taken very quickly and action is taken immediately. Preparation is kept on a minimum and the belief is that the uniqueness of the product or the individuals involved, will take care of all the challenges that might pop up.
- II. Networking is to a certain degree related to formal requirements like university or membership, but in general is everyone in a kind of network as long as you know someone who knows someone who can introduce you to someone else. The size of Norway is probably one of the reasons that for foreigners: “everyone seems to know each other”.
- III. When negotiating the Norwegians play with open cards, are rather defensive and expect the counterpart to be exactly as open as them. They do not want to hurt anyone and prefer often a rather unfavorable agreement instead of conflict.
- IV. Interaction with others is based on egalitarian principles. Hierarchy is not determining roles during discussions and different layers are all addressing each other in an informal language. When meeting foreigners Norwegians prefer to talk about Norway and the

superiority of Norwegian solutions to various dimensions in society. Knowledge and interest for non-Norwegian fields and topics are often lacking, contributing to give Norwegian the image of being very self-oriented.

Germans express a genuine interest and respect for the Norwegian culture and most of the Norwegian qualities. They point out some negative particularities (mentioned above), but are highlighting the fact that as soon as a closer relationship is established, Norwegians are opening up. Germans state that many of the Norwegian particularities like non-hierarchical organization tradition and lack of too many formal barriers, as well as a progressive society in terms of equal terms for women and men in the working life are positive and should be implemented in Germany as well.

The Norwegians interviewed declared a similar attitude towards some aspects of the German culture and behavior, though with more reservations as was the case for the German interviewees. Germans' willingness and capability to plan and prepare them was seen as a very good quality, the same was to a certain degree the German thoroughness when a decision had been made. The negative dimensions were at the same time dedicated more feedback, proving the initial statement that Norwegians have a solid faith in their own solutions: "The Germans are too formal, too hierarchical; they are too concerned with rules and regulations and too direct in their way of communicating."

6.4 Conclusion

R.Q. I: There are numerous differences between Germans and Norwegians, based on the experiences of the interviewees. Germans are preparing themselves and their organizations thoroughly before any

kind of change. Norwegians tend to make considerable less effort to prepare changes, either on a personal level or on a professional level. A German network is another example of thoroughness and is usually a result of strict entry requirements and a structured organization. In Norway a network is often something that develops as a consequence of coincidences, through friends of friends or other less structured means of interpersonal interaction. Germans are consequent in the use of a formal language when communicating with non-friends. The informal language is in Germany reserved for friends, family or colleagues with whom the use of the informal language has been agreed upon. In Norway the use of informal language exist between all layers of society or organization. The use of formal language was abandoned 30-40 years ago and is now non-existing in the daily use. Views on the individual in the organization or in other hierarchical settings are differing significantly between Germany and Norway. Germans have a very high degree of tolerance to the fact that some are leaders and managers with the right to make decisions, while others are on the lower layers in the organization and should therefore accept all the decisions made by the superiors. In Norway there is a certain understanding for the fact that managers and leaders have to make decisions, but all decisions with a certain influence on the individual subordinate is expected to be discussed with the subordinate in order to get his/her opinion on the relevant issue. Germans are found to be very polite and capable of creating a pleasant atmosphere, particular in non-business settings like dinners or receptions. Norwegians are found to be very self-centered and very much focused on Norwegian topics and issues.

R. Q. II: Many of the findings above are definitely creating challenges in the cooperation between Germans and Norwegians. In particular if cooperation is suppose to take place without any preliminary knowledge on the actual differences. All the interviewees stated that they had gotten used to the mentioned differences, but that they had often faced challenges with the tradition and behavior of the opposite culture.

Again it is very difficult to explain why Germans find Norway particularly interesting and Norwegians find Germany less interesting than before. Naturally can the negatively perceived dimensions of the German culture defend the change in the Norwegian attitude towards Germany, but on the other hand should the negative dimensions of the Norwegian culture lead to a similar change in the attitude among Germans.

7 Findings & Reflections

Both in the theoretical part and in the research part, similarities, but first and foremost differences between Germans and Norwegians have been discovered and presented. This chapter will summarize the findings and discuss if there is a correlation between the theoretical-/research findings and the observations from the field study. The goal of the comparison of findings is to answer the first research question and give a foundation to discuss the second research question:

- I What cultural differences and similarities are there between Germans and Norwegians?*
- II Are there cultural differences between Germans and Norwegians creating significant challenges in cooperation between the two nationalities?*

7.1 Organizational tradition

This chapter will summarize all the findings related to the subordinates' expectations towards managers, the degree of employee participation in decision processes, risk, thoroughness in planning and the general interaction between employees on different levels in the organization.

7.1.1 Theory and research

In the third chapter “uncertainty avoidance” and “masculinity” were identified as the two dimensions in which Germans and Norwegians were different. The first of the findings should mean that Germans prepare themselves more when changes are expected to occur than Norwegians do. The second finding should indicate a stronger tradition for specified roles and tasks for males and females and a clear difference related to softer values and more assertive values.

From the article by Tixier (1994) proof is found that the degree of employee participation is greater in the Nordic countries than in Germany, especially related to informal influence on the daily tasks and responsibilities of a subordinate. In addition do this article argue that Germans are substantially more risk averse than the Nordic countries in the study.

The article by Brodbeck et al. (2000) concludes that autonomy is perceived a positive leadership quality among Germans, while the Nordic respondents consider autonomy a negative tradition. Simultaneous are administrative qualities understood as very important among the German respondents while the Nordic respondents only consider this a quality of moderate importance.

7.1.2 Field study

Based on the findings from the interviews with the ten interviewees, three main findings stand out as the most important one related to organizational tradition:

- German thoroughness in planning and preparation
- Norwegian self confidence and “carpe momento”
- Strong Norwegian egalitarian tradition

The field study concludes that Germans are extremely cautious when planning changes, expansions or development of their organization. Every small details are analyzed and taken into consideration and concrete tasks and responsibilities are drawn up for every individual during and after the change has taken place.

Norwegians are fundamentally different from the Germans when it comes to planning and organization. Norwegians do in general have a very high degree of faith in themselves and in their products and do often decide and implement strategic moves within a very short time. Norwegians are more concerned with seizing the right moment for their actions than to plan every step in the process of changing.

There is a very strong tradition for egalitarian values in Norway, which implies that every “little” member of the organization is granted a certain influence on his/her tasks and responsibilities. It is not accepted that a manager controls his/her subordinates to tight and freedom to organize own work must be granted.

7.1.3 Findings: Organizational tradition

Based on the findings from the theoretical review and the research, and the field study there is no doubt that there are many differences between Germany and Norway and hereby answering the first research question. The degree to which these differences are causing challenges in the cooperation between Germans and Norwegians is often dependent on the individual experiencing the difference and on how the individual has prepared him-/herself for these differences.

From an organizational point of view Germans and Norwegians are very different in terms of how changes are being prepared and carried out. While Germans tend to be patient, to plan and to make sure changes happen without a high degree of uncertainty, Norwegians often try to seize the right moment without too much focus on planning and preparing the consequences of their actions. In general Germans are operating with significantly less risk than Norwegians. This finding is consistent from the theoretical part (Hofstede’s dimension “uncertainty avoidance”), the very high degree of risk aversion among Germans, found in Tixier’s article is another example and the feedback from the interviewees in the field study give a good reason to believe that Germans are different than Norwegians in terms of their relationship to risk and thereby how to deal with greater changes.

The second important finding is the relationship to autonomy and the relationship between manager and subordinate. In spite of the finding of Hofstede (1980), showing little difference in the dimension “power distance” between Germans and Norwegians do the research finding

in Brodbeck et al. (2000) identify a clear preference for more autonomy on the various management levels among Germans than among the Nordic respondents. In addition were Germans less concerned with avoiding conflicts in the organization, signaling that a good leader is expected to communicate directly and not take the often multiple individual needs into consideration for each individual decision.

7.2 Communication

A culture's preferences related to style of communication, both in the use of the written and the oral language, is another dimension that shows a difference between Germany and Norway.

7.2.1 Theory and research

Tixier (1994) found that Germans have a high degree of formality in non-familiar situations, while the Nordic language (today) is lacking all use of formalities in both the written and the oral language. In terms of explicit and implicit use of language, Hall and Hall (1990) have ranked Germany and Norway as cultures with a similar preference for explicit communication.

7.2.2 Field study

From the field study there are some interesting findings also related to the nature of communication in both countries. The opinion on the use of formal- and informal language is quite different. The German respondents did not find that the use of formalized language creates any inconvenience in the daily interaction. The Norwegian respondents found on the

other hand that this creates a strong distance, both across layers of an organization, but also between colleagues on the same level. However, both the German and the Norwegian respondents confirmed that they all got used to this difference after a while. In spite of the fact that both cultures are classified with almost the same score in terms of explicit communication, there is an important difference related to how the two cultures deal with oral disagreements. While Germans are very direct when negative feedback is communicated, Norwegians tend to be very careful when criticizing others. The German interviewees found Norwegians to be difficult to cooperate with, since it was often very difficult to interpret what they really thought about important issues. The Norwegians had logically the opposite problem; they found the Germans aggressive and rude since they are communicating criticism so directly.

7.2.3 Findings: Communication

Related to research question one, there should be no doubt that a difference exists between Germany and Norway when it comes to communication. Hall and Hall (1990) rank the two countries as only slightly different in terms of explicit communication, meaning that little is “said between the lines” and most communication is communicated directly. Tixier (1994) has on the other hand found the two countries to have very different traditions in the use of formal and informal language. The German interviewees did not explicitly find the use of formal language problematic, they commented that this is something they have been used to since they were small children, however they had found it peculiar to adapt to only using an informal language in Norway. The Norwegians on the other hand, commented that they had all needed a very long time to get used to the formal language and also expressed that it had given them an impression of unnecessary distance, both to people in the organization and also to others with whom they always would have used informal language in Norway.

The observations from the field study should indicate that both Germans and Norwegians found it difficult or strange to adapt to the existing differences, related to the use of both informal and formal language in Germany and only informal language in Norway.

In addition did both nationalities find the opposite culture difficult to understand and like, related to expression of criticism. While Germans found Norwegians difficult to interpret due to lack of direct expression of criticism, did the Norwegians find Germans rude and impolite, since they communicated it so harshly and direct.

7.3 Progressiveness

Progressiveness is an expression for how developed a society is, related to the relationship between males and females. Hofstede (1980) defines this partly as degree of “masculinity”, for example related to how traditional a society is, in defining jobs and tasks suitable for men and for women or to accept males showing significant consideration for others. A less progressive country (high degree of masculinity) would typically be reluctant to accept females in leading positions and would also stronger oppose longer parental leaves for fathers of newborn children.

7.3.1 Theory and research

Hofstede (1980) found that the second dimension with the most significant difference between Germany and Norway was the degree of “masculinity”. Norway ranks as the second least masculine country, while Germany ranks as the ninth most masculine country out of 66 countries in total.

7.3.2 Field study

Based on the answers from the field study and by living in Germany myself, there is no doubt that Hofstede's finding (1980) is true, also in 2008. Norway has an extensive supply of daycare centers and similar offers for children, all in order to enable both fathers and mothers to combine work and family. At the same time is an interesting observation that Norwegians are guarding their time with family significantly stronger than Germans do. In Germany the number of daycare slots cover below ten percent (compared to close to 100 % in Norway) of the actual need if all fathers and mothers should be able to combine work and having children. Everyone not being lucky enough to have a slot in the limited number of daycare centers, have to sacrifice the career of one of the parents or rely on the support from grand parents, "nannies" or similar daycare in their private homes. Consequently, in Germany do significantly more men choose career while many, often well educated, women are staying home in order to take care of children. This make these women very dependent on their husband or partner and is of course maintaining a very traditional organization of family and career, which is significantly different from Norway. In order to also exemplify that there is a different attitude towards families and especially mothers who chose to combine work and family is the frequent use of the nickname "Rabenmutter" (Raven mother). This phrase is used both among young and old persons, males as well as females, to express their derogatory opinion on females doing what most women in Norway would take for granted.

7.3.3 Findings: Progressiveness

According to Hofstede (1980) the "masculinity"-scores for Germany and Norway is the most obvious dimension for cultural differences between the two countries. According to research

question one, this dimension was therefore one of the most interesting ones to compare with the experiences from the field study and the personal impressions from living in Germany. As presented above there are no doubts that Germany is significantly different from Norway when it comes to the roles and expectations towards males and females. Hereby research question one should be answered and an important difference is revealed. If this difference is of such character that it creates serious challenges for cooperation between Germans and Norwegians is a very individual question. It depends naturally on the view of the respective German and Norwegian interacting with each other. This thesis will not conclude that it is a fundamental hindrance for cooperation, but the discrepancy between the two cultures is definitely something that creates a certain image of the two respective countries. However, of all the findings in this thesis, this is most likely the most important finding that partly can explain the opposite views on Germany and Norway among young people in the two respective countries. Norway is not only progressive based on Hofstede (1980), but also perceived to represent something very alternative to the traditional German society according to the interviewees from the field study, but also numerous Germans with whom the author of this thesis, has discussed these issues with over the last almost four years. For young Norwegians experiencing Germany, this might activate certain skepticism and build barriers preventing further exploration of a very exciting and interesting country.

7.4 Reflections

The dimensions mentioned above are important for individuals and companies wanting to create synergies based on German-Norwegian cooperation. If the awareness of these dimensions does not exist and both sides show a total lack of respect for the culture different than their own values, such cooperation will face severe challenges. Germany and Norway

are, as stated by most of the interviewees in the field study, countries with many similar cultural dimensions. If both nationalities show a dedication in learning the details of the other culture to know, many similarities are to be found. On the other hand, if such an effort is not done, the two cultures might judge each other negatively, based on the significant dimensions mentioned in this chapter.

The underlying question; “Why Norwegians seem to have lost their interest for Germany and Germans seem to love Norway?” might to a certain degree be answered by the assumption that Germans have shown a stronger interest in learning Norway to know and have thereby discovered a country different from their own and been attracted by these differences. Norway and Norwegians have over the last ten to twenty years experienced a significant economic growth, and with this development also the ability to explore more distant cultures and countries has increased. Can a consequence of this flexibility be that Norwegians to a certain degree forget the more immediate countries and cultures, e.g. Germany, and rather develop a more shallow view on cultures in general, since shorter vacations in Latin America or Asia, never really can be seen as the way to thoroughly learn a culture to know? Germany on the other side has not gone through a similar economic development. Germany has over the last two decades, partly because of the financially challenging reunification in 1990 and partly due to thorough changes in the international business community, faced high unemployment and slow economic development. During such times it is natural to search for other alternatives, both in terms of individual job opportunities, but also to provide more stimulating surroundings for future generations. Germans have then been forced to also look outside of Germany and then the most immediate destinations have been first explored. Norway has as mentioned been in the need of labor and has had one of the lowest unemployment rates in Europe. These coincidences have made Norway a natural destination for Germans, while Norwegians have not had the pressure to search for anything outside of

Norway, except for interesting (short-term) vacation experiences. At the same time is of course the difference between a progressive Norway and a more traditional Germany, especially related to family and career, something that naturally will prevent many young people to explore Germany, at least with a permanent stay in mind.

The two research questions that created the foundation for this thesis have been answered. Both the existing literature and the field study have shown that there are dimensions where Germans and Norwegians are representing quite different values and opinions. The dimensions;

- Hierarchy
- Communication
- Attitude to risk
- Progressiveness

are four dimensions where significant differences have been identified. At the same time has the same research and field study identified that both cultures are having similar character.

Examples of these dimensions are:

- Use of explicit communication
- Preference for brief written communication
- Strong performance and result orientation
- High degree of pragmatism among managers

The research by Brodbeck et al. (2000) show a similar preference for “human orientation” among managers and in addition do the findings by Hofstede (1980) show similar scores related to “individualism” among Germans and Norwegians. The respondents from the field study were in general stating that Germans and Norwegians have a lot in common and that the differences between the two countries just have been enrichment for them. Some of the

respondents were still critical towards some of the views represented by the opposite culture, but others had again developed a more critical view on their own culture, and through these developments gotten a wider cultural horizon according to themselves.

By studying two cultures with a high degree of shared history, language and cultural tradition, it is challenging to point out several dimensions that can clearly separate the two countries. This would have been different if the countries had been from two continents and even easier if the countries were totally detached in terms of common history or cultural foundation. A cross cultural study of Germany and Norway was chosen for the reasons presented in the introduction and anyone with an interest in the relationship between the two countries should have an interest in the findings presented. For any reader with multiple years of interaction with both nationalities, most findings might be obvious, but the challenging aspect of comparing such similar cultures is to get an understanding of the quite many smaller differences. Many of these differences are initially of such character that they could be perceived as marginal and unimportant. However, it is often the sum of these smaller differences that creates a distance between two cultures. This distance can lead to fundamental misunderstandings or misinterpretations of the total image of the respective culture. This thesis has shown that there are differences between Germany and Norway. However, the perceived differences are in my opinion greater than the actual differences. The many small differences and particularities have created an image that seems to be more extensive than the actual findings of both the theoretical framework, the research and of the field study. A support for this view is to be found in the general comments from the interviewees. These comments confirmed that most of the respondents found the countries quite similar and the differences existing are of such character that it is fairly easy to overcome and get used to these differences.

8 Implications and Limitations

This Siviløkonom thesis has been written in order to explore two research questions:

I What cultural differences and similarities are there between Germans and Norwegians?

II Are the cultural differences between Germans and Norwegians creating significant challenges in cooperation between the two nationalities?

A third sub-goal is to inspire to further research and development in the relationship between Germans and Norwegians. The latter is an ambitious goal, but one of the experiences drawn from the work on this thesis is that there are some, both young and somewhat older, who have an interest in learning more about Germany and Norway, and the author of this thesis will contribute in all possible ways to everyone interesting in this exciting cross cultural dimension.

8.1 Implications

This thesis has after a brief introduction presented the German-Norwegian interaction in an historical perspective. Following the historical introduction, the thesis has presented the most used and quoted framework on cultural dimensions, Hofstede`s five cultural dimensions (1980). After Hofstede`s dimensions, the cluster theory of Ronen and Shenkar (1985) was briefly introduced in order to prepare the reader for the two extensive articles by Tixier (1994) and Brodbeck et al. (2000). These two articles have compared and analyzed European preferences for ways of being managed, but also grouped European managers according to their particular strengths and weaknesses, based on their national culture and the inclinations of the respective culture. Finally this thesis has presented the findings of a field study carried

out by conducting in-depth interviews with ten people, all with significant experience from working both with Germans and Norwegians and living in the respective countries.

The goal was to create a thorough overview of the existing findings from current literature and compare this with the personal experiences of the ten people interviewed. In the last chapter the main findings were summed up and there were dimensions where both the literature and the personal opinions were aligned, but there are also dimensions where it might be appropriate to question the existing research and literature.

It should now be clear that there are differences between Germans and Norwegians, both in terms of preferred and applied management styles. In addition there are also no doubts that Germans and Norwegians perceive an organization differently. At the same time show the findings that these differences are of such character that they should not be a significant hindrance for fruitful cooperation between Germans and Norwegians. However, there is one requirement for not letting the relative minor differences creating huge challenges; the know-how and experience of the differences and how to deal with these.

This thesis documents that some of the findings from the academic research, e.g. the hierarchical dimension (“power distance”) of Hofstede (1980) and the degree of influence and participation of employees on own tasks and the organization (Tixier 1994). Both these findings are not very well supported among the interviewees from the field study. Germany is perceived as significantly more hierarchical than Norway, in particular among the Norwegian respondents. In addition are Norwegian employees perceived to have extensively more freedom, both in terms of shaping own tasks, but also to actively influence decisions of managers on various levels in the organization than is the case for their German colleagues.

However, the field study does also confirm a long range of findings from the academic research where there is support in the findings from the field study e.g.:

- The German society (and also working culture) is more masculine (Hofstede 1980), with a clearer distinction between roles and interests of males and females and a less soft attitude towards subordinates. Both German and Norwegian respondents confirm this.
- Norwegians have a lower degree of “long-term orientation” and “uncertainty avoidance” (Hofstede 1980) than Germany. This is reflected in willingness and capability to plan, both expected and unexpected scenarios.

8.2 Weaknesses and limitations

This paper presents sufficient findings to provide a thorough insight into some of the dimensions where both Germans and Norwegians represent shared values and opinions. The paper introduces aspects and cultural preferences that are differing substantially between Germans and Norwegians. However, this paper cannot be seen as the total guide to differences between Germany and Norway. There are aspects related to the findings, but also to the gathering of information that represents dimensions of potential improvement:

- Theoretical introduction: In order to provide an introduction to theory on cultural differences a selection was necessary. This paper is fundamentally using Hofstede (1980), due to the significance and worldwide acceptance for his findings. However, there are numerous researchers who have studied this field and developed frameworks and models for cultural differences. If the time and size of this Siviløkonom thesis had been more substantial, there should have been an even more thorough presentation of multiple frameworks, of both more recent character, but also including additional dimensions in addition to those presented.

- **Article evaluation:** The two articles of Tixier (1994) and Brodbeck et al. (2000) were chosen since the authors both have researched a very interesting range of cultural dimensions and since they provide a thorough overview of the various findings for both Germany (the Germanic cluster) and Norway (the Scandinavian cluster). Nonetheless, these articles also have weaknesses, especially in terms of evaluating Norwegian particularities. The lack of explicit Norwegian findings and therefore direct comparison between German and Norwegian particularities are the greatest objections to the choice of articles used in this paper. At the same time it is fair to say that the major findings of this part most likely represents a high degree of truth since the findings of this section is correlated with findings in the theoretical introduction and a large degree of the findings from the field study.
- **Field study:** Ten carefully chosen candidates were interviewed for the field study. These five German and five Norwegian candidates were included in this paper since they all have a high degree of experience from working with respectively Germans and Norwegians and since most of them have spent significant time both living in the other country and working for companies of both nationalities. Despite the careful selection, every decision to use individual opinions of one person means the exclusion of another candidate that might have had other opinions than the ten included in this field study. If both more time and resources had been available, an even more extensive field study could have been carried out. This would definitely have contributed increase the quality of this paper, but when priorities were needed, a selection of ten people still provide a quite good sample size for a qualitative field study.
- **General remarks:** This thesis was written when the author had left NHH and started working. This reality represents both advantages, but also disadvantages in how the writing process has been carried out. A negative dimension is naturally that the proximity to the

university and the resources connected to library and the personal interaction with academic advisor has been suffering somewhat from the lack of physical presence. However, the practical experiences from working in a multi-cultural environment, with a majority of Germans and Norwegians, are naturally representing a very positive dimension in terms of references and motivation for such a work.

8.3 Final Remark

This thesis has been written within the given limitations, both in terms of access to information and the given time frame. Should any future reader have questions or remarks to this thesis, the author will have a strong interest to hear the comments, objections or disagreements future readers might have. Feel free to contact me (email: mborgund@gmail.com) and I look forward to hear your opinions and hopefully enhance a fruitful discussion.

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