

***Linking the (Un)known: A Case Study of Audience Development
and Social Inclusion in an Intercultural Art Project in Finland***

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| <p>Abstract</p> <p>While European societies continue to evolve culturally, the audience demographic of traditional arts and cultural organizations remains homogenous. This thesis explores how audience development initiatives launched by these organizations through intercultural art projects can effectively address social inclusion in response to the increasing cultural diversity of contemporary European societies, and conversely, how the evolving demands of multicultural societies shape these initiatives.</p> <p>This research is conducted through a case study of Linking the (Un)Known, implemented in three Finnish cities in 2024 as part of the Swedish Cultural Foundation’s annual Spring Festivities. The project was initiated in line with the Foundation's current strategy, which promotes inclusivity, multilingualism, and intercultural encounters in Finland. Correspondingly, the last edition of the Spring Festivities shifted its longstanding approach from a program primarily focused on a Swedish-speaking audience to one aimed at engaging a broader and more diverse audience.</p> <p>The findings demonstrate that adopting inclusive audience development approaches can significantly diversify the audience composition. The study also addresses key challenges in inclusive audience development initiatives, such as language barriers, resource limitations, and balancing the expectations of both traditional and new audiences. Additionally, it examines the potential risk that, while such initiatives may diversify the audience composition, they could lead to dissatisfaction among long-time attendees, potentially resulting in disengagement.</p> | |
| <p>Keywords</p> <p>Audience development, social inclusion, intercultural art, non-profit arts and cultural organizations.</p> | |
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To improve the text clarity, Grammarly (free version) was used for grammar, punctuation, and spelling corrections. To speed up the research process, ChatGPT (free version) was also used to summarize a few articles to determine their relevance to the thesis.

Chapter 1. Introduction

After surviving the catastrophe of the pandemic era that almost shut down the entire activities of arts and cultural organizations by disconnecting them from their audience, they have yet to recover from the devastation of that time. Now after passing a quarter of the twenty-first century, these organizations, particularly the publicly supported traditional ones, are facing alarming challenges that threaten the sustainability of their activities and ambitious objectives. On one hand, their loyal traditional audiences are aging, and on the other, new generations are more drawn to popular arts and show indifference toward participating in conventional art forms (Kawashima, 2000; Kemp & Poole, 2016). At the same time, European societies have become ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse due to rising immigration. In response, policymakers have been adjusting cultural policy instruments to align with the current needs of societies and address social cohesion and inclusion. Accordingly, arts and cultural organizations, significantly those benefiting from arts funding and public money, have been actively planning new audience development strategies to engage younger and culturally diverse groups, investing resources to cultivate their potential as future audiences. Therefore, these organizations often launch audience development initiatives to promote cultural diversity and innovative intercultural art programs in ways that simultaneously contribute to social inclusion while engaging new generations. These initiatives are designed by employing different methods of programming, marketing techniques, communication, and outreach, to name a few.

However, despite these audience development efforts and demographic changes in European societies, the audiences of arts and cultural organizations have remained characteristically homogenous. These audiences are mainly composed of white middle-class millennials and educated individuals (Glow et al, 2024; Mandel, 2019). The homogenous composition of the audiences can be linked to the issues of organizational resistance against fundamental change and the absence of an efficient framework within arts and cultural organizations (Harlow, 2014; Lindelof, 2015, as cited in Glow et al, 2024, p. 1). A majority of these organizations are often run by directors who emphasize the authenticity of their main products and programs rather than actively responding to external changes evolving beyond their walls. As a result, social inclusion and cultural diversity are

addressed as additional programs of these organizations. Kawashima (2000) argues that the lack of effective audience outreach stems from conflicting approaches within audience development initiatives of arts and cultural organizations. She explains that these initiatives are driven by two opposing approaches: ‘product-led’ and ‘target-led’. To explain in detail, arts and cultural organizations following the first approach focus on polishing their main products and programs, highlighting different aspects of these assets while emphasizing excellent art and freedom of artistic expression. Conversely, organizations adopting the second approach start by identifying their target audience and then offering suitable products that fulfill their aesthetic desires and cultural tastes. These organizations recognize that attracting hard-to-reach audiences requires an understanding that individuals come from diverse cultural backgrounds and have different levels of connection to art and culture.

While Finland also faces these evolving issues, there are relatively few studies that explore the topic of audience development in the contexts of cultural policy debates and within the frameworks of arts and cultural organizations (Hämäläinen, 2018; Markkanen, 2024; Suonsyrjä, 2007). According to the Ministry of Education and Culture’s Strategy for Cultural Policy 2025, arts and cultural organizations are experiencing a low number of immigrants in their visitor demographics while increasing demand for culturally diverse facilities is recognized due to demographic changes (The Ministry of Education and Culture 2017, p. 19). The ministry highlights the ever-diversified cultural landscape that calls for applying multilingual operations across all segments of the arts and cultural sector. One of the objectives of the Ministry’s strategy in cultural policy is to provide access to arts and cultural activities for the communities that are culturally excluded. In the document, it is mentioned that increasing equal access is expected to be achieved through new funding mechanisms, structural change, and distribution methods that are not constrained by the administrative frameworks. However, due to the rise in right-wing governments and budget cuts targeting the arts and cultural sector, Finnish arts and cultural organizations, particularly those largely relying on arts funding, have to deal with these additional financial challenges in sustaining their activities and developing a diverse and stable body of audiences.

In this situation, the role of non-profit organizations in supporting the arts and cultural sector and promoting social values has become more crucial than ever. Non-profits, grant-giving foundations, and private organizations contribute significantly to the sector through their grant programs, cultural productions, and resource allocations. These organizations typically operate autonomously, without being directly influenced by traditional, political, national, and market-driven views of the arts and culture. This unique position enables them to respond effectively to the evolving needs of society and their surrounding communities free from external policies, governmental forces, and market pressures. This paper, therefore, seeks to explore the concepts of audience development and social inclusion within the frameworks of these organizations.

1.1 Background of the Study

The Swedish Cultural Foundation is a non-profit and private Finnish cultural organization that was founded in 1908 to promote and support the Swedish language and arts and cultural activities of the Swedish-speaking population of Finland. Accordingly, the foundation allocates grants to artists, arts, and cultural organizations annually, while providing resources for artistic and cultural activities related to the Swedish language in different ways. On top of that, they organize the Spring Festivities as a free public event in three cities of Helsinki, Turku, and Vaasa, celebrating the grant recipients, prize winners, and annual activities through an art program that attracts every year around 1000 people mostly from Swedish speakers and their surrounding communities. The foundation collects funds donated by individuals, associations, and companies, and its representatives, appointed by the Swedish People's Party of Finland, determine how the funds are allocated. Although the representatives of the board are selected by a political party, they act and decide independently as a private non-profit organization.

During the past years, the Spring Festivities were organized through commissioned programming in the Swedish language, including concerts and theatre performances. However, in 2023, the foundation adopted a different approach for the first time and

announced an open call in Swedish, Finnish, and English languages to find a suitable partner, creating the program for their Spring Festivities of 2024. Through this open call, titled “are you our new program creator”, they sought a partner that could create an intercultural art program, bringing audiences from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds to these events. Highlighting the foundation's vision, the open call stated that the foundation has allocated approximately eight million euros in recent years to promote multiculturalism and enhance intercultural dialogue between different language groups in Finland. In the open call, they stated, “ Now we want to develop our skills as an event organizer in order to be able to arrange an engaging program for people from different backgrounds,” which clearly emphasizes their new approach to audience development. After the selection process, a newly established cultural association, Flux, was chosen as their partner for its proposal of *Linking the (Un)Known*, an intercultural immersive art experience aimed at diversifying the Spring Festivities’ participants. The project was conceived through an innovative and interdisciplinary approach to attract new audiences from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds while also engaging and enhancing the overall experience of the traditional audiences of these annual spring events.

This paper initially aims to understand the reasons behind this strategic shift in the Swedish Cultural Foundation, a traditional grant-giving grassroots organization that has been playing a significant role in supporting arts and cultural activities in Finnish multilingual societies. Later, after analyzing different aspects of this transition, the paper further explores how such arts and cultural organizations initiate and implement their audience development programs through art projects, to not only expand their audience but also deliver societal values. The outcome of this research would be beneficial for other organizations operating in similar contexts, aiming for comparable objectives.

1.2 Social Inclusion and Intercultural Dialogue Needs in Finnish Societies

Since Finland's independence in 1917, Finnish and Swedish have been recognized as official languages in the constitution. This policy of bilingual administration has emphasized and promoted equal cultural and social rights of both language groups since its

inception (Latomaa & Nuolijärvi, 2002, p. 99). Over time, Finland has transitioned from a predominantly Finnish-speaking country with a significant Swedish-speaking minority to a more linguistically and culturally diverse society. After decades of restrictive post-World War II immigration policies, diversity began to increase in the 1980s with more immigration; however, this process progressed more slowly in Finland compared to other Nordic countries (Latomaa, 1996, as cited in Latomaa & Nuolijärvi, 2002, p. 112). Despite this expanding diversity, interactions between immigrants and local people have remained slow and limited due to the historical isolation of the Nordics compared to other areas of the world with earlier and large-scale immigration.

According to The Ministry of Education and Culture, the number of foreigners is expected to reach 20 percent of the entire population in the Helsinki region by 2025 (The Ministry of Education and Culture 2017, p. 23). This fast-evolving change in population has gradually transformed Finland's homogeneous culture and linguistic demographics into a multicultural society, especially in larger cities such as Helsinki, Turku, and Tampere. The establishment of immigrant minorities and communities, along with their evolving cultural needs, has driven Finnish cultural policy and decision-makers to strive for a more inclusive cultural society that actively promotes diversity and integration (Saukkonen & Pyykkönen, 2008, p. 54). Consequently, various legislative and institutional changes have been implemented, such as planning integration policies that fund multicultural projects, promote cultural exchange, and offer education in multiple languages. Saukkonen & Pyykkönen (2008, p. 60) argue that the Finnish integration policy highlights not only the recognition of various ethnic minority groups within the society and their right to preserve their culture, but also their comprehensive social integration, access, and full participation in different aspects of society. However, the lack of sufficient financial resources and majority-centric perspectives have slowed down the effective development of minority cultures. The Ministry of Education and Culture's Strategy for Cultural Policy 2025 ((The Ministry of Education and Culture 2017, p. 25) recognizes the need to increase funding and enhance coordination among various stakeholders to ensure that diversity initiatives are deeply embedded within cultural policies. However, challenges such as insufficient funding, resistance from certain cultural institutions, and the absence of adequate coordination have delayed the effective implementation of these measures.

Additionally, the rise of the right-wing government in the Finnish Parliament, along with its cultural policy prioritizing budget cuts in the arts and cultural sector and its anti-immigrant stance, further threatens the sustainability of efforts aimed at promoting cultural diversity and social inclusion in the country. This precarious situation underscores the critical importance of other active players, particularly third-sector organizations, non-profits, and private grant-giving foundations, in incorporating these social values within the sector. Unlike governmental institutions, these organizations operate and serve their surrounding communities independently of national and traditional barriers. In addition to that, they play a vital role in supporting minority cultures and intercultural art projects that enhance mutual understanding, social interaction, and integration by providing platforms and resources for diverse communities to engage with one another. These projects foster dialogue and cultural exchange, addressing diversity by breaking down barriers and building meaningful connections across different groups (Nishimura, 2023, p. 17). An example of such a project is *Linking the (Un)Known*, the case study of this thesis, which was implemented as an intercultural art program aiming to create a platform where people from different cultural backgrounds could interact and better understand each other.

1.3 Overview of *Linking the (Un)Known*

The intercultural art project *Linking the (Un)Known* represents a strategic transition in audience development and intercultural and multilingual programming of the Swedish Cultural Foundation. The project was conceived and implemented through a close collaboration with the cultural association Flux during the spring of 2024. Through this collaboration, significant topics were discussed to be executed in the project during the selection process, pre-production, and production phases. To further elaborate, the topics discussed included:

- **Programming:** The program was curated and designed through an international and interdisciplinary approach, aiming to transition Spring Festivities from a Swedish-language focus to intercultural and multilingual programming.

- **Communication and Evaluation:** Communication, marketing campaigns, content creation, survey execution, and feedback assessments were implemented by the foundation in English, Swedish, and Finnish from the initial phases to the final wrap-up session.
- **Artists and Creative Team selection:** Artists and the artistic development team were selected with an emphasis on multiculturalism, multilingualism, interdisciplinarity, as well as innovative artistic expression. Moreover, integrating non-native speakers and local cultural practitioners in each city was also implemented within the technical team as part of the vision.

This multilingual and innovative approach of *Linking the (Un)Known* resulted significantly in a demographic change in the audience attending the Spring Festivities of the Swedish Cultural Foundation in 2024. Investigating the reasons contributing to this considerable alteration in the composition of the audience formulates the research questions of this paper.

1.4 Research Questions and Objectives

Exploring the existing research in the field of audience development indicates a significant gap between Finland and other European countries, the UK, and also its Nordic neighbours (Hämäläinen, 2018; Markkanen, 2024; Suonsyrjä, 2007). This study situates itself in this gap, aiming to offer audience development strategies that could effectively contribute to social inclusion. Furthermore, it seeks to provide practical recommendations for arts and cultural organizations, and research in cultural policy, with a focus on the intersection of audience development, social inclusion, and intercultural and innovative art programming. This research is therefore formulated under the following questions:

- How can intercultural art projects enhance audience development and engagement strategies within Finnish arts and cultural organizations?
- What roles do these projects play in fostering social inclusion and addressing intercultural needs in Finnish?

- What challenges and opportunities arise for Finnish arts and cultural organizations in designing and implementing intercultural audience development and engagement initiatives?

This thesis intends to evaluate the contribution of audience-centered programming to audience development and social inclusion in Finland. Assessing strategies, development processes, outcomes, and challenges of *Linking the (Un)Known* will be discussed to provide best practices and recommendations to arts and cultural organizations and cultural policymakers who are aiming to expand the composition of the arts and cultural audiences while pursuing their vision in delivering societal values.

1.5 Researcher Position and Ethics

During this project, I had the privilege of serving as one of the co-artistic directors of *Linking the (Un)Known* as well as the chairperson of the Flux cultural organization. Acknowledging my position in my research, I was deeply involved in every phase of the project from preparing the proposal and agreements with stakeholders, overseeing the selection process, and managing the contracts to the production and execution of the events, and feedback and reflection session with the foundation's stakeholders. My role allowed me to make significant decisions related to programming, the formation of the artistic development team, artist selection, communication, marketing, and event production.

In addition to my professional involvement, it is important to consider my background. I come from a middle-class Iranian family and I immigrated to Finland for my master's studies in Arts Management at the Sibelius Academy of the University of the Arts Helsinki. Having lived in Finland for over three years, I do not speak the native languages, Finnish and Swedish, which is an important aspect to recognize as it might affect my understanding of Finnish society. While I bring the perspective of a well-educated immigrant in arts and culture, I acknowledge the limitations of my point of view. My opinion might be formed under the influence of my access to higher education and art circles in Finland, which may

not fully reflect the experiences of other immigrants or minority groups who face different challenges.

As a researcher, I am thoroughly concerned about minority rights as I have been faced with comparable challenges during my time living and working in Finland. I aim to contribute to the integration processes of immigrants and excluded individuals in the Finnish arts and cultural sector. However, I am aware that my relatively short time residing in this country coupled with my position of privilege could lead to biases in my reflections and analysis. Therefore, I am committed to remaining critical and transparent about how these factors may influence my conclusions. To do so, through this paper, I hope not only to provide valuable insights into the contexts of this research but also to challenge my assumptions. To minimize subjectivity, I made an effort to incorporate diverse and sometimes opposing perspectives from stakeholders and participants, ensuring that the data remains transparent for readers. This was done to present a balanced and objective representation of findings as neutral as possible.

1.6 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is structured in six main chapters:

Chapter 1 introduces the background of the study along with a brief explanation of the geographical context of the project. It then provides an overview of the project, discusses current research gaps, identifies research questions, and the aim of this thesis, and concludes with the researcher's position and ethical considerations.

Chapter 2 reviews the theoretical and conceptual framework focused on the topics and the intersection of audience development, social inclusion, and intercultural art. It explains the historical evolution of the terms, and connects the theories in the context of arts and cultural organizations' framework.

Chapter 3 presents the research methodology, which is based on a qualitative single case study with triangulation. It also outlines the research design, data collection methods, and data analysis techniques.

Chapter 4 details the main findings and key outcomes of the project. It describes the project's background, inception, development, and implementation processes. It then summarizes the objectives and strategies that shaped the project, before presenting key insights on audience development and social inclusion, and concluding with a discussion of the challenges encountered during the project.

Chapter 5 focuses on addressing the research questions through an in-depth discussion of how the key outcomes of the project relate to each question.

Chapter 6 outlines a summary of findings from the case study and offers practical recommendations for arts and cultural organizations, as well as policy makers. The chapter concludes with suggestions for further research.

Chapter 2. Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

The theories presented in this chapter are structured around the main topics of audience development, social inclusion, and the potential of arts in delivering social values, all within the context of arts and cultural organizations. The first section reviews the historical evolution of audience development and its underlying concepts and definitions. The second part of the chapter provides in-depth insights into social inclusion, discussing its historical background and relevant theories. Following this, the connection between audience development and social inclusion will be explored within the frameworks of arts and cultural organizations. The discussion then shifts to the basic definitions of art, particularly the features of intercultural art projects, along with the potential of art to promote social inclusion and cultural diversity.

2.1 Audience Development in the Arts

Audience development has become a growing priority for arts and cultural organizations in order to maintain their activities and realize their ambitious objectives. Lindelof (2024, p. 204) explains the different usage of audience development as an established topic within British and Nordic cultural policy discussions, arts organizations' practices, and academic research. She explains that in the UK, audience development initially appeared as a research topic before finding its way into the practices of arts and cultural institutions. On the contrary, in the Nordics, the topic has evolved simultaneously in all three areas of research, cultural policy discourses, and the activities of arts and cultural organizations. According to Lindelof (2024, p. 204), in the context of Nordic arts and cultural organizations, audience development is linked to their initiatives aiming to broaden the audience which has been implemented under the supervision of art professionals and cultural practitioners. In the research context, it has been studied by connecting attendance statistics to the personal identities and backgrounds of the audience such as age, gender, ethnicity, and education degree, as well as identifying existing barriers holding back the non-attending audiences. Lastly, within the cultural policy framework, audience development is formulated as a strategy to promote cultural diversity and social cohesion while combating inequality and marginalization in society.

Examining the existing literature on the subject of audience development indicates a significant gap between the UK and other countries and regions (Cuenca-Amigo & Makua, 2017, p. 163). However, In Nordic countries, particularly in Norway, Sweden, and Denmark, cultural policy debates and art organizations have increasingly explored different aspects and strategies of audience development (Lindelof, 2024, p. 202). In Finland, however, the research topics covering audience development and engagement in arts and culture have remained underexplored. This is evident by the limited available studies and resources addressing these subjects within the Finnish arts and cultural organizations (Hämäläinen, 2018; Markkanen, 2024; Suonsyrjä, 2007). Suonsyrjä (2007, p. 17) argues that the substantial differences in cultural policy between Finland and the UK may be the reason behind this research and the practical gap between these two countries. While

cultural participation and attendance rates have been the main focus in the UK, Finnish cultural policy emphasizes strong and straightforward support of the arts, artists, and arts and cultural organizations. For this reason, reviewing the evolution of audience development in British research and cultural policy is beneficial, which has influenced many developed countries, particularly those in north-west Europe.

2.1.1 History of Building Audiences in the UK

The concept of audience development dates back to the Victorian era when the ruling class and politicians used it as a practical tool, initially defined as access, to navigate the surplus leisure time of the working class created by industrialization (Hayes, 2003; Kawashima, 2000; Kawashima, 2006). Initiatives launched by policymakers to engage the working class with meaningful and socially constructive activities such as visiting newly built museums and galleries (Hayes, 2003, p. 3). In that era, when the audience consisted of an exclusive elite, audience development was formulated as a strategy to diversify the audience group, particularly by enabling the mass population to participate in high art and cultural activities. According to Hayes (2003, p. 4), European cultural policy has often interpreted this strategy as ‘increasing access’ within its discourses and instruments. Hayes & Slater (2002, p. 1) explain how justification methods for arts funding coupled with market forces made the topic of audience development a trend among museums and arts organizations at the end of the 1990s. This trend was followed by museums and traditional arts and cultural organizations reconsidering their values and repositioning themselves as places that contribute to social inclusion, despite their exclusionary historical backgrounds (Cerquetti, 2017, p. 36).

Hayes (2003, pp. 4-6) explains the four eras of audience development from the Victorian era to the present. After World War II, the first era was set to increase regional equity by allocating financial resources to build a foundation for artistic professionalism. A limited number of elite artists and public arts and cultural organizations creating and producing art forms and programs were deemed eligible to receive public money to supply the masses'

demand, then called ‘consumers’. The second era was shaped by the principles of cultural democracy that positioned the cultural tastes of the masses and their non-hierarchical aesthetics as the core value of cultural policy debates. The emergence of the community arts movement in the 60s and 70s characterizes this era. The challenging economic situation and the new shift in cultural policy at the end of the 1970s began the third era in audience development. In this period, arts and cultural organizations were forced to ‘stand on their own feet’ by increasing sales and other income channels such as sponsorship. This era is identified by the significant establishment of audience development as a distinctive field driven by the theories and practices of arts marketing that leverage education and programming to shift and widen the audience. Towards the end of the 1990s, the fourth era started by emphasizing the crucial role of arts and culture in enhancing social inclusion, particularly highlighting the instrumental role of the arts. During this time, Increasing access to mainstream arts and culture for minority groups that have been hard to reach became a main feature of this era.

Hayes (2003, p. 4) explains how the historical evolution of cultural policies redefined the principles of the arts and cultural sector from a ‘supply-led’ to a ‘demand-led’ approach. Emphasizing this new approach within the debates of cultural policy has positioned the arts as a key player in catalyzing social cohesion and reducing social imbalances. The evolution of the current audience development can be traced by following the cultural policy discourses and the activities of arts and cultural organizations. At present, cultural policy has taken a turn toward a more inclusive approach by aiming to reach culturally wider participants in the arts and cultural activities through audience development programs (Kawashima, 2000, p. 1). Integrating those socially, economically, and politically excluded from the mainstream arts and culture has become crucial to enhancing social cohesion (Hayes & Slater, 2002, p.1).

2.1.2 What Audience Development Means: Concepts and Theoretical Perspectives

During the past decades, cultural policy and arts and cultural organizations have utilized different methods and approaches to diversify their audiences. The demand to reach a wider

audience in the arts and cultural sector has developed audience development as an established term in cultural policy and research within different territories of the arts and cultural sector. Audience development can be explained through wide definitions and sometimes refers to vague meanings. Because of its complex, multidimensional, and interdisciplinary nature, formulating a straightforward explanation is not simple if it is not impossible. Therefore, exploring it from different perspectives can assist in understanding various aspects of it.

Maitland (1997) defines audience development as a set of plans and actions used by arts organizations to establish a long-lasting connection to their traditional and potential audiences. Roger (1998) supplements this description by underscoring the importance of amplifying the audience's overall experience through a holistic approach combining educational, marketing, and programming initiatives. Kawashima (2000, p. 3) argues that the application of audience development stems from the 'Liberal Humanistic' viewpoint on culture which holds a dominant position in cultural policy debates. She elaborates on this perspective which underscores the freedom of expression and brilliance of the arts as well as the accessibility of arts and culture to everyone. Moreover, Kawashima (2000, pp. 8-10), explains how arts and cultural organizations use audience development strategies in four contexts: 'Cultural Inclusion', 'Extended Marketing', 'Taste Cultivation', and 'Audience Education'. According to her, audience development strategies appear in practical forms across these contexts, ranging from widening audience outreach to introducing new art forms and marketing methods and targeting different audiences. Hayes (2003) proposes a structural model, incorporating internal and external drivers and mediating factors into the decision-making process in order to maintain the relationship with the traditional core audience while establishing loyal audiences who safeguard the future. He argues that building a thriving relationship with the audience is a complex and sensitive process that requires audience development skills to be utilized and internalized across all the departments and sectors of an arts organization from management to box office and catering. (Mandel, 2019, p. 122) specifies audience development as a range of strategies utilized by arts and cultural organizations to attract a larger number and diverse range of audiences to their programs, as well as improving their image and network, and reciprocal interaction with their surrounding community. These strategies refer to the tools and plans

used in programming, marketing, communication, education, and cooperation. Moreover, according to Cerquetti (2016, p. 36), audience development is an interdisciplinary subject. It combines several fields including marketing, programming, education, communication, and community involvement as well as psychology, sociology, and information science to reach its objectives. Arts organizations study, evaluate, and employ all these areas to expand the number and types of their audiences while tightening their bonds to their existing audience.

Hayes and Slater (2002, p. 2) categorize the existing studies on the subject of audience development into two divisions; first, successful cases of reaching beyond the traditional audience by dismantling barriers; and second, research on analyzing the position of minority groups and their nonparticipation behaviors in cultural activities. While audience development covers various topics and disciplines, this thesis aims to explore the intersection of audience development with social inclusion and analyze the societal aspects of audience development strategies employed by arts and cultural organizations.

2.1.3 Where do Audience Development and Social Inclusion intersect?

In the current discussions on cultural policy, Kawashima (2000, p. 3) argues that audience development is closely connected to a democratized view of arts and culture, emphasizing the importance of accessibility, i.e. culture for all. She further explains the clashing perspectives on audience development within cultural policy agendas. The dominant perspective is focused on the ‘Liberal Humanistic’ view which claims that excellent and autonomous art is capable of removing barriers in society and increasing the participation of excluded individuals and minority groups. Conversely, the sociological perspective dismisses this dominant view by arguing that culture has historically played a significant role in creating divisions between people. Kawashima elaborates on how these clashing perspectives appear in two different methods within the discourse of cultural policy: ‘product-led’ and ‘target-led’. Later in the next section, we explain the different outcomes

of these two methods in the context of arts organizations' audience development programs and art marketing.

In the domain of social inclusion, Kawashima (2000, p.1) describes audience development as a set of measures to reach a socially excluded audience such as low-income individuals and underrepresented ethnic minorities. These measures are specifically designed to address the topics of access and arts participation within cultural policy. The concepts of access and participation are broadly explored within the arts and cultural studies, cultural policy debates, and arts organizations' practices (Allegrini & Paltrinieri, 2022; Kawashima 2000; Mandel 2019; Sandel, 1998). Access as a general term refers to the availability of resources to the population in society. To provide access to the arts and culture, cultural policy and arts organizations often aim to remove financial, geographical, cultural, and psychological barriers preventing people from participating in artistic and cultural activities (Sandel 1998; Kawashima, 2006; Mandel, 2019; Hayes, 2003; Lindelof, 2014). These instruments range from funding cultural centers, libraries, and museums open to the public to promoting public art projects in different areas and supporting artists' touring expenses. Moreover, Matarasso (1997) evaluated the benefits of arts and cultural participation in society and its contribution to social cohesion by shaping the identities and boosting the self-confidence and self-esteem of the participants (as cited in Kawashima, 2000, p. 17). According to Sandell (1998, p. 410), addressing the topics of representation, participation, and access has become an essential part of audience development programs, particularly within the frameworks of museums. These programs targeting cultural inclusion, provide under-represented communities with access and opportunity to present their culture. Accordingly, these programs develop a ground where the unique minority cultures are meaningfully valued alongside dominant cultures. This positive development may result in broader empathetic relationships among surrounding community members.

To better understand how the concept of social inclusion affects audience development initiatives launched by arts and cultural organizations, it is essential to examine the details of this complex term from a more holistic perspective. Exploring the different dimensions of social inclusion enables a thorough analysis of these specific initiatives and the

identification of their potential and challenges.

2.2 Social Inclusion or Social Exclusion?

Social inclusion and exclusion are often explained in different contexts to assist in better understanding and clarification of each term. Hayes et al. (2008, p. 4) believe that social inclusion can not be fully understood unless it is defined by explaining the concepts and dimensions of social exclusion as they fall on the opposing ends of the same agenda's spectrum. Both of the terms are multidimensional and complex concepts that touch sensitive areas of society. Therefore, to avoid misunderstanding and explaining it through ambiguous definitions, it is worthwhile to explore the emergence and evolution of both topics through the contemporary social and cultural policies. Additionally, discussing their distinguished definitions, contexts, and labels while discovering their connections, correlations, and parallelism would help to understand and contextualize them within the framework of this thesis

2.2.1 When the Concept of Social Inclusion/Exclusion Appeared?

Exploring the literature on the concept of social inclusion demonstrates its inseparable tie to social exclusion, highlighting insufficient discussion on social inclusion as an independent field of research (Rawal, 2008, p.117). For this reason, we move between both terms in this section accordingly. Understanding this relationship assists in gaining knowledge from different points of view. The emergence of social exclusion dates back to the 1970s in French policy discourse and followed by its expansion into a structural field shaping social policy debates across Europe in the 1980s, and later in the UK during the 90s (Haan, 1998, Sandell, 1998, Rawal, 2008; Belfiore, 2002; Kabeer, 2000). The term was formulated as a reaction to the diminishing status quo of the welfare state caused by the widespread poverty and unemployment rates, as well as the increasing number of immigrants across European societies. Social exclusion has broadly been used and constantly evolving within various contexts such as academia, policies, and numerous professions (Sandell, 1998, p. 403).

Kabeer (2000, p. 83) explains the dynamic relationship between social exclusion and social and economic changes in the 1990s that led to poverty, inequality, and a weakened status of justice, particularly among the industrially developed northern hemisphere countries. According to Hayes et al. (2008, p. 13), in the 2000s, combating social exclusion became an instrumental action plan within the European Council's strategy to position Europe as the global economy leader. This strategy encouraged the member countries to develop education, training, and employment policy. Later in 2005, the revision of the action plan highlighted the importance of integrating minority groups and immigrants across European societies. Gidley et al. (2010, p. 5) also describe the evolution of policy discourse in the UK that demonstrates a pivotal shift from negative labeling of poverty, exclusion, and disadvantage to defining social inclusion as a positive approach.

According to the World Bank (2013, p. 49), social inclusion is broadly addressed within the policy documents of numerous countries. Silver (2015, p. 1) examines how the concept of social inclusion is referenced within the 8th, 10th, 11th, and 16th goals in Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) made by the United Nations's action plan and how contemporary economic, political, and social movements accelerated the global demand for social inclusion. As expressed by the WHO, SDGs are "a call to end poverty and inequality, [...], and ensure that all people enjoy health, justice and prosperity".

Inclusion has mainly been used within Finnish cultural policy debates, acts, and regulations to address access and participation in arts and cultural activities (Söderblom, 2021, p. 29). However, it is not comprehensively mentioned in what ways these policies and measures will be implemented to develop more inclusive Finnish societies.

2.2.2 Social Inclusion/Exclusion in Theories

There are probably numerous ways of defining social inclusion as no agreed definition includes all aspects of it. Based on the studies, it is evident that both social inclusion and exclusion refer to both static results and multidimensional processes (Sandel 1998; World

Bank, 2013; Azmat et al, 2015; Galabuzi, 2004). First, I define each term separately, and later I discuss them in the context of arts and cultural organizations.

Halder and Squires (2023, p. ix) define essential aspects of social inclusion as equal rights, access, opportunity, and participation of all members of society in cultural, political, social, and economic activities and decision-making processes while their diversity is respected and accepted. Halder (2023, p. 2) explains inclusion as a response to human rights that needs cooperation and collective effort from all levels of society in order to be normalized thoroughly into everyday life. She outlines inclusion as a setting that protects everyone's maximum level of participation and opposes any form of discrimination. Additionally, this extensive and active participation is complemented by valuing the diversity that includes all individuals and groups. Silver (2015, p. 2) formulates social inclusion as a dynamic and interconnected process that resonates across different layers of society, increasing social participation and equal opportunities, integration, and social cohesion. According to the World Bank (2013), social inclusion is a process that promotes the capability, opportunity, and dignity of those who are excluded from participating in society, compared to other majorities.

On the opposite side, social exclusion is characterized as dynamic and chronic conditions that exclude individuals and groups from the main part of society and prevent them from active social participation (Kabeer, 2000, p. 83). Similar to the concept of social inclusion, social exclusion is better defined also as a process rather than only a fixed outcome that resonates with a broad range of contexts and dimensions (Haan, 1998, p. 10). According to Hayes et al. (2008, p. 4), social Exclusion from one angle is linked to poverty. It refers to those who experience limited social participation and marginalization due to financial constraints. From the other angle, it is defined as a form of disadvantage in the context of social and cultural capital, resulting from limited social networks. Sandell (1998, p. 404) argues that, unlike the concept of poverty which associates disadvantaged groups with their low income, social exclusion is defined as an interdependent process that influences the relationships between individuals, groups, organizations, and governments. Halder (2023, p. 3-4) enumerates the main reasons for exclusion which arise from identity differences in “gender, age, location, poverty, disability, ethnicity, indigeneity, language, religion,

migration or displacement, sexual orientation or gender identity expression, incarceration, beliefs, and attitudes”. These identity aspects are social products and assign individuals and groups to excluded or included areas of society. From another perspective, social exclusion has been used to explain how different individuals and communities are positioned within society, how they relate to each other, and what forms of relationships they develop (Silver, 2015, as cited in Belugina et al., 2018, p. 166).

Moreover, social exclusion has received attention from researchers and policymakers from various fields, but its cultural dimension has remained underexplored and inadequately defined (Azmat et al., 2015; Sandell, 1998, p. 401). Sandell (1998, p. 406) argues that unlike the general agreement on the multidimensionality of social exclusion, extensive study on three economic, social, and political dimensions highlights the exploration of the cultural dimension. Economic, social, and political dimensions relate to income level, social participation, and human and political rights. To define the cultural dimension, Sandell (1998, p. 410) identifies three main contributing factors: representation, participation, and access. Accordingly, individuals are excluded from the mainstream culture based on their cultural background and heritage, as well as the opportunities and access available for them to fully participate and engage with cultural production and services, the majority benefit from. Conversely, Cultural inclusion, as a component of social inclusion, refers to the process of building an inclusive setting that ensures people from various cultural backgrounds are actively and extensively engaged in the socio-economic activities of society (Chavez and Weisinger, 2008, as cited in Azmat et al., 2015, p. 376). This process provides culturally excluded members of society with access and opportunity to participate in mainstream culture meaningfully. Moreover, cultural inclusion highlights the uniqueness of different cultures and promotes individuals’ dignity and enthusiasm in sharing their distinguished cultural heritage (Miller, 1998; Shore et al., 2011, as cited in Azmat et al., 2015, p. 377). According to Sandell (1998), cultural inclusion provides minorities access and opportunity while ensuring their representation and participation in mainstream culture.

After exploring the various aspects of social inclusion, the discussion now turns to explaining the interrelation between audience development and social inclusion within the contexts of arts and cultural organizations. To do so, it is valuable to review existing

literature addressing the topics and the emergence of the terms in European contemporary policy discourses.

2.3 Audience Development and Social Inclusion within the Framework of Arts and Cultural Organizations

After World War II, cultural policy debates and research in the field of arts and culture in the UK and Europe shifted from an initial focus on the creators of arts and culture towards audience-centric agendas (Kawashima, 2000, p. 1). Hayes (2003, p. 4) describes this shift as a transition from a 'supply-led' into a 'demand-led' approach. To ensure the receipt of arts funding, public arts, and cultural organizations have adapted to this shift by launching new initiatives aiming to increase access and encourage wider participation in arts and culture. This transition coupled with the development of art marketing led to a new era of improved knowledge and data on participation numbers and identities of audience groups, benefiting policymakers, researchers, and arts organizations. Hayes (2003, p. 10) categorizes these organizations into three types: activists, opportunists, and ambivalent. Each of these three types has adjusted its practices to the new principles of cultural policy to different extents. The activists adapt their activities to a high level of compatibility with the social inclusion mission, the opportunists follow the funding criteria closely to match their practices accordingly, and the ambivalents take a more conservative approach by sticking to their traditional activities while introducing limited socially inclusive initiatives.

Alnasser and Lim (2023, p. 1) explain the role of arts and cultural organizations in intercultural dialogue and cultural diversity in society. These organizations contribute to social, cultural, economic, educational, and political values in society and in relation to their audiences. Besides that, arts and cultural organizations have been faced with the challenges of aging their traditional audiences, the uncertainty of future arts funding as well as the indifference of new generations to participate in conventional forms of art (Kawashima, 2000; Kemp & Poole, 2016; Mandel, 2019). Furthermore, despite the demographic shifts in Europe, the composition of the arts and cultural organizations' audiences has remained homogenous. Their audience is mainly composed of white

middle-class millennials and educated individuals (Mandel, 1998; Glow et al., 2024). In response to these challenges, arts and cultural organizations have been significantly focusing on audience development strategies. They have been establishing various initiatives to extend the body of their audiences and engage with them long-term while fulfilling existing audiences' desires.

As a result of immigration, societies, particularly in Northwestern Europe, have become more diversified ethnically and culturally. In response, policymakers are adjusting cultural policies to meet the varying needs of these societies and address social inclusion. Meanwhile, arts and cultural organizations are seeking new channels of engagement with different groups, developing relationships with them as their potential future audiences. Kawashima, (2006, p. 69) explains the different implementation of audience development methods between public and private arts organizations. While private organizations use these methods to increase the number of their audience and maintain their profitability, public organizations concentrate on the socio-political missions by keeping their programs accessible to a diverse range of audiences, with less regard for market forces. These different approaches are implemented since private art organizations' income relies mostly on their sales while public organizations benefit from public funding. However, Kawashima (2006, p. 68) argues the difficulties of measuring the contribution of audience development to social inclusion, particularly in the long-run process. The measuring procedure often includes evaluating the participation rates and demographics of individuals attending arts and cultural programs. this method is often used by public arts organizations to justify public funding for their projects rather than to be implemented fundamentally within their institutional work frame (Kawashima 2000, p. 26). She further explains the instability of this approach that could leave such organizations in a vulnerable situation by limiting their ability to extend beyond their common audiences.

Furthermore, Kawashima (2000, p. 17) elaborates on the opposing audience development approaches of 'product-led' and 'target-led' employed by arts organizations within their marketing strategies. The former approach refers to initially creating a product and then searching for potential consumers. At the same time, the latter approach focuses on identifying a target audience and addressing their needs with a matching product. Arts and

cultural organizations with a ‘product-led’ approach primarily concentrate on existing products and seek new audiences by highlighting and expanding the different features of these products. Consequently, this approach ends up offering similar products over and over to an undefined audience. Differently, organizations with a ‘target-led’ approach, start their marketing process by identifying the unique cultural backgrounds of their target audience. This approach enables arts and cultural organizations to connect with the target audience with an open-minded attitude, offering them a tailored product based on their needs and preferences, while remaining flexible to adjust their existing products to engage with a diverse range of individuals. This audience-centric approach becomes important especially when arts and cultural organizations aim to attract hard-to-reach audiences.

Additionally, Mandel (2019, p. 131) also points out that some arts and cultural organizations are run by directors and artists who often focus on the autonomy and freedom of artistic expression rather than addressing current socio-political issues. This restrictive mindset ends up repeatedly creating art programs that attract a selected group of audiences, mostly from educated and socially high-class backgrounds. She argues that a fundamental set of changes needs to be established within the organizational body of such organizations. This means a comprehensive revision plan for program creation strategies, participatory initiatives, and diversifying the staff. This is further underscored by the current cultural policy discussions on effectively incorporating cultural diversity by including a wide range of cultural tastes and aesthetic preferences, not confined to high arts, into public art programs (Mandel, 2019, p. 131)

Glow et al. (2024, p. 316) categorize arts and cultural organizations based on their level of willingness and flexibility to implement systematic changes aimed at extending and diversifying the composition of their audiences. To draw a range from the lowest to the highest level of readiness, organizations with large-scale traditional programs that benefit from arts funding, granted venues, and commissions are situated at the lower end, while those that are smaller or medium-sized with multidisciplinary art programs are placed at the higher end. Moreover, Glow et al. (2024, p. 316) identify three common features among arts and cultural organizations that recognize the need to diversify the profile of their audience. The First feature is the external alerting agent that signals to the organization the

necessity to adjust their internal ecosystem to better align with current external trends. The second feature is the emphasis on positioning their target audience at the core rather than mainly relying on their established brand assets. Lastly, possessing the ability to flexibly diversify their resources and networks, enabling them to reach beyond their traditional audiences. Additionally, the arts and cultural organizations that are confident in their established network and local ties are more open to welcoming change, while also aiming to deliver social values.

It is also important to underline the different characteristics of social inclusion and audience development and contextualize their features within the frameworks of arts and cultural organizations. Kawashima (2006, p.58) explains that social inclusion is a complex political term that addresses the challenges of individuals and communities who are marginalized from mainstream society in social, political, and economic contexts, while audience development deals with a group of people who are either part of the audience or not. She argues that when these two terms intersect within the framework of arts and cultural organizations, they push the organizations to address issues that may not be related only to the arts and culture, but also extend into social, political, and economic contexts. Accordingly, those organizations aiming to develop their audience, particularly those with programs addressing social inclusion, may find themselves in unfamiliar territories. Therefore, the directors of such organizations must acknowledge this strange situation if they plan to implement substantial changes in order to develop the audience inclusively and permanently.

In the context of arts and cultural organizations, the integration of social inclusion into audience development strategies has become a crucial step, especially as societies continue to evolve culturally. This brings about a significant question about what makes arts and cultural organizations inclusive. To address this question, the following section reviews the characteristics of inclusive organizations and the ideal organizational frameworks in which inclusion practices can flourish and culminate.

2.3.1 Inclusive Organizations: Definitions and Characteristics

The process of social inclusion cannot be implemented without the contribution of arts and cultural organizations that incorporate diversity practices not only by integrating it into their workforce but also by developing it in connection with their surrounding environments and societies. Kawashima (2000) and Mandel (2019) both emphasize that a fundamental change needs to be implemented within the organizational structure of arts and cultural organizations, allowing them to adjust their practices in response to evolving cultural diversity and the process of social inclusion within their surrounding societies. They highlight that inclusive organizations acknowledge cultural inclusion by diversifying their staff and addressing cultural exclusion through inclusive initiatives supporting the preferences of minority groups (Mor Barak, 2010, as cited in Azmat et al., 2015, p. 376). Consequently, inclusive organizations influence their internal organizational structure and the external communities they interact with. Additionally, inclusive organizations are characterized by a high level of appreciation and acceptance of diversity and differences, as well as their commitment to intersectoral and cross-cultural cooperation and supporting social values.

To elaborate further on the concept of inclusive organizations, Mor Borak (2000) emphasizes the integration of inclusion in the domestic ecosystem of organizations and expanding outside their walls beyond cultural, local, and national boundaries. She proposes an inclusive workplace model and identifies the benefits of incorporating it within the framework of organizations. These benefits include promoting the organization's image, developing institutional capability, and enhancing flexibility and resilience. To build on this model, she explains how it supports inclusion in four domains. First, it improves organizations' domestic framework by establishing a culturally inclusive information system and creating a diverse ecosystem where minority staff are actively and collectively involved in decision-making. The second domain involves strengthening their interaction with external communities by widening access to their activities and employment opportunities for excluded and minority groups. The third domain addresses the relationship between organizations and governments. The inclusive workplace model's

third domain enables organizations to align their values with social and cultural inclusion policies, contributing to increased inclusion in society. Lastly, the fourth domain focuses on developing regional and cross-national partnerships between organizations, communities, and individuals through collaborative projects addressing inclusion.

Moreover, Kabeer (2000, p. 84) argues that structural and exclusionary rules of institutions systematically count out the social participation of certain groups of people by distributing their resources and establishing their values, resulting in either giving access or exclusion. Consequently, having access and being included become a social status among different individuals and groups and an exclusive right that highlights differences between them. She draws a 'joined-up' perspective recommendation to view social exclusion as a linking term between different people, problems, and processes rather than being referred to as problematic groups, conditions, and processes in social policy debates.

Considering the broad dimensions of social inclusion, this study particularly focuses on discussing the audience development initiatives of arts and cultural organizations aiming at addressing social inclusion through intercultural art projects. The following section will explore the potentials of the arts in contributing to social inclusion and intercultural dialogue.

2.4 The Potentials of the Arts in Promoting Social Inclusion and Intercultural Dialogue

Many studies have been conducted to demonstrate the numerous positive impacts of participating in arts programs on individuals, communities, and society (Abbasian, 2023; Baban & Rygiel, 2018; Barraket, 2015; Le et al., 2015; Wesley, 2007; Matarasso, 1997). Before discussing how art can influence the process of social inclusion and intercultural dialogue, it is insightful to briefly review various art forms and their underlying definitions. Various forms of the arts as commonly understood, range from exhibitory formats such as fine arts and installation to performing arts like theater and live music, as well as emerging and technology-driven new media art. Additionally, Barraket (2005, p. 3) elaborates on the

field of community arts, which is defined as a collaborative form of art that connects artists, producers, and individual audiences and communities through a process of creative co-creation. Furthermore, Intercultural arts projects are shaped through a collaborative and co-creative process between individuals coming from different backgrounds (Nishimura, 2015, p. 62). This process creates a platform where new connections and understanding are established beyond the traditional static cultural boundaries. Art audiences can also be categorized into passive and active types, depending on how they engage with the art forms. For example, the audience of a classical music concert, who only listens to the performance while sitting in their seats, are considered passive, and communities involved in the creation process of an art piece through a community art project are counted as active.

Additionally, Matarasso (1997) has explored how community and participatory arts impact the individual involved. The transformative role of arts and cultural activities in bringing people together and developing inclusive societies has also been studied through the lens of radical cosmopolitanism by Baban & Rygiel (2018, p. 20). They argue that radical cosmopolitanism is a refined version of traditional cosmopolitanism. It emphasizes humanity as a shared and appreciates the sense of differentness that arises among people living with others. They explain that artistic and cultural activities play an important role in conveying the positive aspects of radical cosmopolitanism in multicultural societies. Moreover, Barraket (2005, pp. 4–13) discusses the contribution of the arts in enhancing social inclusion by listing the positive outcomes of the arts-based programs addressing social exclusion. To name a few, such programs result in general improvements in education, participation, employment, safety, well-being, personal development, social cohesion, and integration within society. Although the exact reasons behind these improvements are not mentioned, she argues that these arts-based projects indicate an increase in participants' social capital and the level of engagement. However, the success of such projects relies on the concepts behind the content, the participants involved, and the underlying goals. According to Barraket (2005, p. 13), common factors contributing to the success of arts projects aiming to enhance social inclusion include artistic quality, risk-taking orientation, collective direction, and the assessment of inclusion-related results. However, when it comes to the assessment of the art projects addressing social inclusion,

certain restrictive barriers can be noticed. These barriers include resistance from the art sector concerned about the potential degradation of pure artistic values in favor of prioritizing social missions of art, as well as a lack of comprehensive and context-specific evaluation methods.

Furthermore, Abbasian (2023, p. 476) argues that participation in multicultural festivals can increase the sociocultural integration of individuals into the host society by creating a cultural platform where minority groups and the host society encounter and interact. These encounters allow ethnic cultures to be recognized, acknowledged, and accepted by native cultures resulting in appreciation and celebration of cultural diversity and multiculturalism. However, he argues that these positive outcomes of multicultural festivals rely on the condition of whether meaningful intercultural interactions occur during the events. For example, the content of the program, location, schedule, artists, communities involved, and marketing play crucial roles in shaping an interactive multicultural festival where effective and reciprocal interactions happen. According to Hounq et al, (2015, p. 395), organizing arts and cultural events, including festivals, and local and community art events, that bridge communities and cultures, particularly those linking minority and mainstream cultures, contribute to social cohesion and inclusion in society, as well as sociocultural integration of minorities. However, for an impactful event, cultural and arts organizations are required to reconsider their conventional approaches and strategies according to the specific needs and desires of their targeted communities.

Moreover, Gonçalves and Majhanovich (2016, vii) explain the extraordinary capabilities of the arts and its expressive, creative, emotional language that drive intercultural dialogue by promoting and safeguarding diversity in society and local communities. They link the creative process of art creation with the characteristics of diversity and explain how both of them are synthesized through dialogue, interaction, cultural exchange, and communication. Gonçalves (2016, p. 4) discusses the nonverbal expression and communicative aspect of the arts which allow it to become a universal language and globally accessible beyond national and cultural barriers. She explains that the interwoven relationship between the arts and culture allows the arts to become a dynamic and effective communication tool, allowing intercultural dialogue and reinforcing cultural diversity, Gonçalves (2016, p. 6). A device

that pulls you out of your comfort zone into the unfamiliar environment that may develop into a contact zone. Furthermore, she enumerates the outcomes of intercultural dialogue as an increase in mutual understanding, freedom of expression, equality, creativity, and participation which are realized in a safe and respectful space.

Intercultural dialogue is a process based on an open and respectful exchange of views between individuals, groups, and organizations with different cultural backgrounds or mindsets. Among its aims are: to develop a deeper understanding of diverse perspectives and practices; to increase participation; to ensure freedom of expression and the ability to make choices; to foster equality; and to enhance creative processes. (Gonçalves, 2016, p. 7).

Lähdesmäki (2021, p. 48) explains the evolution of highlighting the need for intercultural dialogue to address the growing cultural diversity in Western countries, to improve interaction between individuals from different cultural backgrounds, and to increase empathetic understanding within societies. She argues that researchers and policymakers have predominantly discussed the concept of intercultural dialogue in connection with space as a physical requirement where dialogue can take place and emphasized renewing public spaces and urban regeneration (Lähdesmäki, 2021, p. 50). However, she argues that physical space should embody the prerequisites of safe space to be able to allow for intercultural dialogue. She also adds that, although the benefits of the arts and their transformative power are listed by scholars, it cannot certainly create a safe space for intercultural dialogue without the presence of other contributing factors such as educational activities (Lähdesmäki, 2021, p. 54).

2.5 The Role of Non-Profit Organizations in Using Art for Social Inclusion

Over the past few decades, cultural policy instruments, particularly in the UK, have been encouraging museums and public arts and cultural organizations to actively contribute to social inclusion and drive social change (Azmat et al, 2015; Belfiore, 2002; Sandel, 1998). However, we are now living in an era marked by increasing political polarization, the rise

of right-wing parties, and the precarious situation caused by the current war in Europe. As a result, cultural funding is being significantly reduced to prioritize military security, while Europe continues to tighten its anti-immigrant policies. In this insecure and intolerant environment, the role of non-profit arts and cultural organizations and grant-giving foundations has become more crucial than ever in preserving social cohesion within European societies. Murray Svidroňová (2014) emphasizes the importance of non-profit organizations in enhancing social cohesion across their surrounding communities. She argues that these entities address the social issues that government sectors are often unable to resolve thoroughly, while the private sector is reluctant to get involved due to the lack of financial incentives (Weisbrod, 1988; Pestoff, 2006 as cited in Svidroňová, 2014, p. 568). However, reviewing the available studies demonstrates that the role of non-profit arts organizations in promoting social inclusion through arts initiatives has remained underexplored (Azmat et al., 2015; Barraket, 2005).

Nishimura (2015, p. 62) highlights the significance of intercultural arts projects that can be used as an effective tool for non-profit organizations aiming to deliver social inclusion and strengthen multiculturalism in their surrounding communities and society. Build on the previous studies demonstrating the benefits of cultural inclusion and inclusive organizations by Sandell (1998) and Mor Barak (2000), Azmat et al. (2015, p. 391) explain that successful cultural inclusion programs launched by inclusive organizations foster three key features within their environment: customized engagement, reciprocal empowerment, and self-development. They argue that culturally inclusive programs not only contribute to social integration but also pave the way for the self-development of minority artists and the advancement of their careers. Moreover, such programs create an engaging, reciprocal, and multicultural setting where minority and majority audiences meet, interact, understand, and appreciate the uniqueness of each other's cultures. In addition, organizations aiming to become inclusive in a sustainable way, are required to consider and execute particular principles. To illustrate further, as Azmat et al. (2015) argue, inclusive organizations must place inclusion as one of their fundamental values, integrate inclusive practices within their main products and services, and extend their partnerships aiming for cross-regional and international collaboration with individuals, communities, organizations, and states beyond societal and national boundaries.

It is important to highlight that, besides the significant role of non-profit organizations in producing arts and cultural programs aiming at social inclusion, the evaluation methods are equally crucial. Matarasso (1996) has conducted a large study to propose a new method to evaluate the social contribution of arts projects. Matarasso argues that art projects should be assessed based on their 'outcomes' rather than their 'outputs'. Matarasso highlights the importance of evaluating the impacts of arts participation by focusing on its long-term effects on participants' social lives. However, Belfiore (2002, p. 12) argues that Matarasso's study lacks a long-term evaluation method as the assessment and reports are finalized upon the completion of the projects. She explains that arts organizations tend to use quick and short-term evaluation methods that are more likely to demonstrate the successful outputs of their projects and secure funding. Belfiore and Bennett (2007, p. 148) emphasize the crucial need for formulating a multidimensional methodology for evaluating the actual outcomes of the arts in society. They criticize the current instrumental view of the arts within cultural policy debates and their evaluation methods that are often based on assumptions and anticipated outcomes, particularly economically. They argue that a critical unbiased theoretical framework is crucial to consider and connect the political, social, and cultural contexts of the arts and their social impacts based on evidence. Furthermore, Barraket (2005, p. 140) argues that conducting the assessment methods by professionals working on the projects is highly valuable as they understand the context of the project and the evaluation process is meaningful to them.

To conclude, non-profit arts and cultural organizations with a mission to deliver social value to local communities have a unique potential to incorporate social inclusion through their art-based practices and initiate inclusivity-driven audience development strategies. Due to their distinct position in the arts and cultural sector, they can inspire other organizations to pursue similar objectives while also collaborating with governmental bodies to address social inclusion more comprehensively, and enhance the social cohesion of societies.

Chapter 3. Methodology and Data

This thesis is conducted through a qualitative single case study with triangulation exploring the intersection of audience development and social inclusion in *Linking the (Un)Known*, an intercultural art project implemented in Finland. This chapter describes the research design, data collection methods, and data analysis techniques that were used for the implementation of this study. The triangulation approach is employed to combine multiple data sources to increase the credibility of findings and provide a broader insight into the different angles of the topics.

3.1 Research Design: Single Case Study Approach with Triangulation

The research method behind the structure of this thesis is designed by a qualitative single case study with triangulation, linking collected data from different sources in order to comprehensively explore the research questions. Bryman (2012, p. 392) describes triangulation as an approach researchers use to include and integrate multiple methods and data sources within their research to increase the credibility of their findings. Furthermore, the single case study method is employed to grasp a better understanding of the concepts and definitions of audience development, social inclusion, and intercultural dialogue specifically in *Linking the (Un)Known*, an intercultural art project implemented by the Swedish Cultural Foundation in collaboration with Flux Cultural Association in three Finnish cities during May 2024. According to Yin (2018, p. 15) a case study research approach “investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-world context” and can be conducted as an “all-encompassing” method.

The Swedish Cultural Foundation organizes this event as their annual Spring Festivities. In addition to the event, they carried out two surveys, one before and one after the event, to evaluate the outcomes by identifying the audience attraction and understanding how participants perceived the concept of social and cultural inclusion as the theme of this year’s Spring Festivities. The first survey was designed as a registration form, which individuals could fill out to obtain their entrance ticket via email. The idea behind the form was mainly to collect data to distinguish new and returning attendees of this annual event

while also functioning as a ticket-issuing platform. The outcome of this audience survey revealed that around half of the attendees were participating in this year's Spring Festivities for the first time. Moreover, the Foundation implemented another survey after the last event to collect feedback from the attendees by sending survey forms to the registered emails. The responses were later analyzed and shared with the co-artistic directors of the Flux Cultural Association during a post-event reflection and wrap-up session held in June 2024 at the Swedish Cultural Foundation's office with the participation of their CEO, producer, and communication manager.

Although the surveys provided many valuable insights into audience development and attendees' perspectives on the concepts of multiculturalism, inclusion, and the potential of intercultural art programs to bring people from different cultures together within Finnish society, many angles of these multidimensional topics remained unexplored. Furthermore, Yin (2018, p. 15) argues that the survey method can be significantly restricted due to its shortage of questions and participants. Therefore, I decided to explore the outcome of this multifaceted project together with the survey's results to provide a better understanding of how this audience development initiative contributed to social inclusion in Finnish society through its intercultural art programming.

Audience development, social inclusion, and intercultural arts are vast, complex, and layered topics that intersect reciprocally through the implementation of this project to achieve specific goals such as reaching new audiences, encouraging intercultural dialogue, and promoting multiculturalism. According to Yin (2018, p. 18), explaining the complexity of the phenomenon in actual projects extends beyond the limitations of survey questions. In other words, instead of depending on statistics, a case study aims to find new methods of exploring a phenomenon (Yin, 2018, p. 33). Therefore, the research process started by exploring and reviewing relevant literature to link the meanings, concepts, and interpretations across these fields to identify where and how these topics connect, which ultimately led to the formation of the theoretical framework of this study. Following that, semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore how these topics are defined by stakeholders, creators, and participants, as well as to discover motivations and intentions that influenced the project's concept, development, and execution. Accordingly, the

research methodology is designed to provide a better understanding by including insights from different perspectives, viewpoints, and angles of the studied project. Yin (2018, p. 7), argues that the qualitative case study approach is well-suited not only for the exploratory study of a phenomenon but could also be used for providing descriptive and explanatory investigations.

As a result, this thesis does not aim to criticize or evaluate the success, but rather it intends to understand how the objectives of audience development and social inclusion can intersect through the intercultural art programs of arts and cultural organizations and what factors can optimize the multidimensional outcomes of such projects. To do so, it is crucial to find out how these concepts are understood not only by decision-makers and stakeholders but also by participants as the target audience of the project. However, evaluating the outcomes of the project is complicated and needs to be carefully discussed since it can be defined and comprehended differently from various perspectives and points of view.

3.2 Data Collection

There are different methods for collecting data in qualitative research including document review, interviews, surveys, observations, diaries, and journals among others. For this thesis, the data collection methods were guided by the needs of the research questions. Yin (2018, p. 168) explains that relying on theoretical propositions can help devise a proper data collection strategy and provide a structured framework for analysis. Following this approach, the research process began by exploring the theories underpinning the structure of research topics. Developing a comprehensive theoretical framework allowed me to shed light on different dimensions of the research questions. Subsequently, data were collected through semi-structured interviews, reviews of internal and external documents and archival records from the pre- and post-production phases, notes and diaries documented during the project, and observations of participant behavior during the event.

3.2.1 Interviews

The primary data of this paper were gathered through semi-structured interviews with the stakeholders, creators, and participants of the project. The selection of the interviewees was based on the interviewees' roles, positions of influence, and representations within the project. The interviews were conducted in December 2024 and January 2025. Interviews were conducted with the Swedish Cultural Foundation's producer, communication manager, and communicator, as well as with the co-artistic director of the project, and a first-time audience member who participated in the event. All interviewees were provided with an overview of the thesis and research questions and signed a letter of consent before the interview. The interviews were held in English in a one-on-one format via Zoom and in person, except for the session with the Swedish Cultural Foundation's representatives where all three interviewees were interviewed together. The interviews lasted 45 minutes to approximately one hour and were recorded with permission. After the interviews, transcriptions were later sent to the interviewees for final confirmation. The responses are written in their original format to ensure that readers have access to the exact expressions and wordings of the interviewees.

The semi-structured format enabled dynamic conversations and allowed interviewees to flexibly discuss their opinions and perspectives regarding the project objectives, outcomes, challenges, and opportunities. The questions were designed to explore the meanings and definitions of audience development, social inclusion, and intercultural dialogue through this project from the interviewees' points of view. Moreover, the motivations behind the programming, selection criteria, strategies for expanding the audience, and reflections on the project's outcomes were discussed with the interviewees.

3.2.2 Document Review

Documents including the Swedish Cultural Foundation's and Flux's press releases, website materials, internal reports, meeting memos, and social media promotional content were analyzed to provide contextual background and support the interpretation of primary data.

Looking into these materials helped to grasp a better understanding of stakeholders' objectives and key strategies underpinning *Linking the (Un)Known* project.

In general, the program was created through a close collaboration of both organizations, an artistic development team, and a group of artists selected by the co-artistic directors who led the development and co-creation process driven by an interdisciplinary approach. During weekly meetings, artists presented their progress to the co-artistic directors and other creative members, and the content and ideas behind the artwork were discussed in relation to the project's objectives and concept. In separate weekly sessions, co-artistic directors met with the Swedish Cultural Foundation's production and communication team to provide updates on the program's progress and to cooperate in marketing, communication, recruitment, and logistics processes. Reviewing and analyzing the documents from these sessions, as well as other archival records, was important as they uncovered key information about the programming at the decision-making level and provided a wider perspective on the motivations and intentions of the project's creators.

3.2.3 Surveys

The secondary data for this study was collected from two surveys conducted by the Swedish Cultural Foundation in May 2024. The Spring Festivities in all three cities were organized as public events and participants received their tickets via email after filling out a registration form. In the form, participants were asked to answer some questions regarding their home language, emotional language, age, place of residence, cultural background, and whether they had previously attended the annual Spring Festivities, and how they had heard about the program. A total of 912 individuals completed the registration form and approximately the same number attended *Linking the (Un)Known* across the three cities of Helsinki, Vaasa, and Turku. Helsinki attracted the largest audience with 428 attendees including 54 guests, followed by Vaasa with 284 participants, and Turku with 200 attendees.

In addition to that, another survey was carried out after the final event to collect feedback from the audience. The feedback survey link was sent to participants' emails collected upon

registration, as well as to the artists' emails who were involved in the creation of the program. The questions were composed in a way to collect audience opinions on the concept of the multilingual program and its different components, as the program featured multiple parts and artworks. Additionally, the audiences were asked to write about their overall experience in a free comment section embedded in the form. Altogether, 158 participants responded to the feedback survey form and 97 of them also wrote in the free comment section in Swedish, Finnish, and English. Later in June 2024, the Swedish Cultural Foundation shared the results of both surveys with the co-artistic directors through an evaluation session held in their office, and it was hosted by the CEO, producer, and communication team of the foundation.

3.2.4 Autoethnographic Reflections and Observations

I served as the co-artistic director of the project, a position that allowed me to attend essential sessions, meetings, and visits, while also giving access to insider information. For that reason, my notes, diaries, and journals based on my systematic observations during key moments from the pre-production, production, and events days to the post-event phase of the project were incorporated into the research materials as additional data. These observations specifically focused on the communication, collaboration, and brainstorming between decision-makers and creative members during the co-creation process of the program. Additionally, the audience's behavior, their interactions with each other and with the artworks, along with the overall atmosphere of the events were documented in personal notes in the form of diaries. These observations provided me with firsthand insight into the development process, the communication flow, and the audiences' different perceptions of the programming.

According to Ellis et al. (2011, p. 273), "Autoethnography refers to an approach to a research method and writing style that "seeks to describe and systematically analyze (graphy) personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience ". Furthermore, the method combines autobiography and ethnography not only in the research and writing processes but also in the final product. Expanding on this concept, researchers

and writers may neglect and overlook the perspectives and beliefs of others due to the influence of their personal identities such as race, age, class, gender, and education, to name a few. Therefore, autoethnographic research allows for viewing research subjects through a broader lens that prompts researchers and writers to carefully examine how their identity may affect their judgments, analysis, and conclusions (Ellis et al., 2011, p. 276). During the writing process, ethnographers investigate cultural dynamics by taking field notes, observing participants, and interviewing culturally diverse people involved in events to provide a better understanding of cultural phenomena. Highlighting my position as one of the key decision-makers in the project, I incorporated an autoethnographic reflection into the research process and analysis. These reflections include my personal experiences and insights gained during the planning, execution, and evaluation of the project. While recognizing the potential for bias, this approach adds critical depth and greater transparency to the study by providing an insider's perspective on the decision-making processes and challenges encountered during the project.

3.3 Data Analysis Techniques

In creating an analytical strategy for this thesis, I followed the suggestions of Yin (2018, p. 167) who explains different classification methods for data analysis. To highlight a few, Yin illustrates that data can be sorted into different arrays, visualizations, matrixes, and time-based layouts, and they can be classified by their frequency of appearance, similarities, and contrasts. Accordingly, for classifying the primary data, I initially collected keywords, primary terms, and bridging elements between them by analyzing the interviews' transcriptions. Following this process, the core concepts and terms were organized into different categories, with their definitions and meanings grouped with them. This classification allowed for the identification of similarities, differences, and oppositions between descriptions and meanings, and characteristics of terms explained by the interviewees.

Building on this classification process, the thematic analysis method was employed to analyze the qualitative data collected through interviews, surveys, reviews of documents,

and autoethnographic reflections and observations. According to Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 79), thematic is a qualitative analytic research method for “identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data” in order to find out the frequency of concepts and their definitions within specific contexts. In this method, the theme highlights a significant aspect or a phenomenon within the collected data by creating codes that are systematically connected to the research questions (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 83). The analysis approach involved coding the data to identify recurring themes and patterns related to the topics of audience development, social inclusion, and intercultural dialogue, as well as the role and potential of specific art programs aiming to address these topics. Moreover, pattern-matching techniques explained by Yin (2018, p. 175) were used to match empirical and predicted patterns.

To support the findings, triangulation was used by comparing data from other sources, including survey results, document reviews, and autoethnographic reflections and observations. This strategy assisted in enhancing the reliability of the findings and ensuring consistency across different data and research materials. Survey data were analyzed descriptively to identify demographic changes and participant feedback. The Swedish Cultural Foundation categorized the responses into groups of negative, positive, constructive, and other feedback. However, instead of measuring success or failure, the research questions of this thesis are designed not only to focus on understanding the key elements that contributed to the output figures but also to explore the forces that influenced the project's development process. For that reason, I decided to go beyond the existing analysis and shed light on the unexplored angles of the responses by highlighting and extracting core words, primary terms, and relevant expressions addressing the research questions. Furthermore, autoethnographic reflections were explored for comparative analysis and connecting data from different sources.

3.4 Research Limitations

During this research, several limitations were encountered that influenced the findings and the implementation process. Elaborating on the limitations of this study would help to

clarify its contextual background and boundaries. To name a few, most of the references and all of the interviews were restricted to English. Although survey responses and documents were also available in Swedish and Finnish, and translations were implemented to incorporate them into this research, decoding nuanced cultural differences, expressions, and layered social norms was beyond the scope of this study conducted in English. Not comprehensively including native languages in the research process makes it difficult to provide authentic explanations of cultural and social phenomena.

Additionally, relying on a single case enabled me to conduct an in-depth exploration of the research questions and frame the broad topics within an analyzable framework. However, this approach, on the other hand, restricts the applicability and generalization of findings to other cases and contexts. It is important to note that the project was executed over an intensive period of five consecutive months. This short period challenges the proper execution and evaluation of such multidimensional projects' long-term goals and outcomes. Moreover, the Swedish Cultural Foundation operates primarily as a grant-giving organization rather than an art organization that regularly organizes art projects, which makes it difficult to evaluate the outcome of the project through a comparative analysis.

Ultimately, my role as one of the co-artistic directors of the project provided me with broader access to multiple sources of the project's data. However, reflecting on the sensitive and complex topics of the thesis may not be entirely free from my presumptions and biases. Consequently, the interpretations of the outcomes of the project may be influenced by my personal, social, and cultural boundaries.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

The data collection methods and use of various sources for this thesis were guided by ethical considerations, which were addressed throughout the research process. Following the principles recommended by Israel and Hay (2006, p. 75), the thesis objectives, letters of consent, and research questions were provided to the interviewees before the interviews. In addition to that, the confidentiality of the data and personal information of the interviewees was discussed and ensured through agreements made with the people involved in the

research. Also, the Swedish Cultural Foundation's producer provided me with supplementary data on the events' attendees, with all names kept anonymous to protect privacy. Moreover, the transcriptions and quotations used in this study were reviewed with the interviewees, ensuring their consent and confirming their accurate representation of their opinions on various topics in different contexts.

Chapter 4. Main Findings from the Case Study: *Linking the (Un)Known*

This chapter begins by taking a look into the project, its objectives, components, and development processes. Following this, the outcomes in the areas of audience development, social inclusion, and intercultural dialogue are examined by analyzing the project archival records, documents, interviews, statistics, and feedback received from attendees. Furthermore, key findings, challenges, and insights are discussed to bridge the outcomes and the factors that influenced the final results. In this context, the relationship between the individuals involved in the project, and the development processes of each sector ranging from the project's initiation phase, artistic program, working groups, marketing, communication, outreach, and final reports were assessed in connection with research questions.

4.1 Project Background and Aims

This audience development initiative was started as a new edition of the annual Spring Festivities of the Swedish Cultural Foundation in Finland. These annual festivities are often organized in the coastal areas of Finland such as Helsinki, Vaasa, and Turku where the majority of Swedish-speaking communities reside. The events in different cities attract approximately 1,000 attendees each year in total. The foundation stated on its website that "our mission is to support and strengthen the culture and education of the Swedish-speaking minority in Finland, by supporting education, arts and culture and social cohesion through non-profit organizations" (Swedish Cultural Foundation, n.d.). To accomplish this mission, the foundation supports artistic, cultural, and educational projects

by allocating approximately 40 to 50 million Euros in the form of grants to individuals, working groups, and organizations. In addition, it also produces its own arts, cultural, and educational projects, one of which is the noteworthy annual Spring Festivities. To elaborate on the concept of this yearly event, it is held as a free art event in three different cities, where all grant recipients, prizewinners, and donors are invited to celebrate the arts and culture of the Swedish community. Despite the tradition of organizing the Spring Festivities with a program focused on the Swedish language and culture, created through direct commissioning, the foundation decided to adopt a distinct strategy in 2024. For this year's events, they announced an open call in three languages, Swedish, Finnish, and English, where they sought a partner to create an intercultural program. This strategy aimed to initiate a significant change, allowing a selected partner to lead the event's programming, which could bring a diverse range of audiences including different language groups in Finland (Swedish Cultural Foundation, 2023).

I was surprised that they used all three languages because usually they focus on Swedish. So, I was surprised in a good way, in a positive manner, that they were trying to broaden their audience and reach a wider group than just the Swedish-speaking community. - Jens Heinström, Flux's co-artistic director

The aim of the program was explained in the open call, which specifically mentioned: "We want to create a set of intercultural programs that will help people from different cultural and language backgrounds to understand each other better". Also, in the previous edition of the event, which was programmed as a theatre performance, it was announced on their website that although the performance was in Swedish, the venues were chosen in Finnish-speaking theaters to highlight bilingualism and multilingualism in Finland (Swedish Cultural Foundation, 2023). By reviewing the Spring Festivities in the past years, it is noticeable that the Swedish Cultural Foundation has been employing different strategies to engage audiences beyond its traditional Swedish-speaking demographic. In line with this strategy, for the latest edition of the Spring Festivities, the foundation took a different approach by selecting a program creator from the proposed projects through the open call instead of using the commissioning method. In addition to that, it was stated in the open call that "In recent years, we have allocated nearly eight million euros for projects

that promote multilingualism, dialogue, and understanding between different language groups in Finland” (Swedish Cultural Foundation, 2023).

After all, the Swedish Cultural Foundation decided to go with the proposal ‘Linking the (Un)known’ submitted by Flux, a newly established cultural association founded by two arts management master’s students at the Sibelius Academy of the University of the Arts Helsinki. Before this project, Flux had organized two interdisciplinary performance art festivals featuring a lineup of international artists in Finland and Iran. Additionally, the co-founders had the experience of working in different international festivals in the fields of film, new media, music, and performance art, among others. The idea behind the proposal of the intercultural art experience ‘Linking the (Un)Known’ was to present an innovative concept and a diverse artistic team to attract new audiences to the Spring Festivities in 2024, while also highlighting multiculturalism and intercultural dialogue in Finland through its programming.

4.1.1 Project Inception, Development Process, and Implementation

The first step of the project began when I noticed an open call announced by the Swedish Cultural Foundation on their website. The details of the open call were later discussed in a meeting among us, the Flux co-founders. At first, the traditional background of the Swedish Cultural Foundation made the Flux hesitant about whether they should apply for the open call. However, after reviewing different aspects of this opportunity, they decided to prepare an innovative proposal to catch the foundation's attention. The Finnish arts and culture scene is characterized as small circles where artists, producers, organizations, and cultural practitioners are known to each other. This was a unique opportunity for a newly founded cultural organization like Flux to build a network with an established organization while pursuing its vision of creating innovative arts and cultural experiences.

At first, I was a bit excited because I thought it was an open position where you could create whatever concept came to your mind. But then, my second thought was that I realized it was with a pretty conservative organization. So, I was a

bit concerned about what they would think of an idea like that. I was skeptical at first, but then, of course, I thought, let's try it and apply, and create a concept they haven't seen before - Jens Heinström, Flux's co-artistic director

The proposal was developed through several collaborative and remote sessions between the co-artistic directors. After carefully considering different aspects of the open call, the values, and the missions of the Swedish Cultural Foundation in alignment with the artistic vision of the Flux, a project was proposed. The concept was influenced by the immersive theatre to create an interactive art program addressing the multiculturalism and multilingualism of current Finnish society. Following the initial phase of the application, Flux was asked to expand its conceptual proposal into a project plan, detailing the program, artistic team, production plan, and estimated budget required for the project. The proposal was later discussed during an interview with the senior staff of the Swedish Cultural Foundation and the co-founders of Flux. During the interview, several key topics were addressed such as the inclusion of both international and native artists, the adoption of a multilingual strategy in the project's programming, marketing, and communication channels, and the importance of diversifying the composition of the audience. Following the selection process, the project 'Linking the (Un)Known' was chosen to be the program of the Swedish Cultural Foundation's Spring Festivities in 2024 and the decision was communicated via email.

The development process started with searching for and selecting suitable venues in the three cities, Helsinki, Vaasa, and Turku. As the co-artistic director of the project, I traveled with the producer of the Swedish Cultural Foundation to visit venues in other cities to find suitable spaces for the project. Since the program was influenced by the concept of audience immersion, venues were chosen for their multiple spaces where the audience could roam freely. Especially in Vaasa, the chosen venue was a large and unused tram overhaul station belonging to an old factory in the city center, which had not hosted any public arts and cultural events before this project. Following the venue selection phase, the project moved forward with building the artistic development team, responsible for the co-creation and implementation of the main program. This team consisted of a group of young native and non-native artists and designers from various disciplines, selected by the

co-artistic directors. In parallel with developing the main program, the recruitment process continued with hiring other performers, musicians, cultural workers, technicians, and a graphic designer. Besides these processes, co-artistic directors coordinated the recruitment process, contracts, and general logistical matters in collaboration with the Swedish Cultural Foundation's production team during weekly meetings.

After the formation of the core artistic team, every team member received an email containing a document titled 'General Artistic Vision and Curatorial Guidelines'. The document outlined the key themes, concepts, roles, responsibilities, and information about the venues. Following this introductory phase, the development of the main program began with a session arranged to introduce the members to one another. The process then progressed with weekly sessions, both remotely and in person, led by the co-artistic directors. These sessions featured presentations from artists and designers regarding their processes, followed by discussions and feedback on the concepts and ideas. Additionally, the connections between the artworks and the core artistic vision were regularly reviewed by the entire artistic team. These sessions were specifically designed to further explore the possibilities of co-creation and interdisciplinary collaboration, influencing both individual and collective artworks of the program. In parallel with the core artistic team, other performance groups, musicians, and artists developed additional acts for the program.

4.2 Strategies in Developing Audience, Partnership, and Marketing

The Swedish Cultural Foundation has established a strong relationship with its loyal audiences by offering arts programs tailored to their cultural preferences and tastes. A review of the foundation's previous activities, interviews, and feedback surveys indicates that most of their regular audiences are made up of elderly and traditional Swedish-speaking individuals, communities, and organizations.

In my opinion, their target group has mostly been older generations, based on their previous years' programs [...] I know this foundation for years, it's

always been concerts or theater or those more conventional forms of art. - Jens Heinström, Flux's co-artistic director

However, despite the longstanding strategy of focusing on traditional audiences in previous years, the foundation has recently adopted a different approach to engage with individuals and communities from other language groups and cultural backgrounds living in Finland. Also, its current criteria for funding projects emphasize that while proposed projects must address the Swedish language and culture, the applicants are not required to be proficient in Swedish, as long as there is a meaningful connection between the project and the language. In line with these developments, the foundation decided to make a significant change in organizing one of its key yearly projects, Spring Festivities. This shift was carried out through the application of various strategies in programming, marketing, communication, partnerships, and production.

The Swedish Cultural Foundation has identified many global trends, that affect our activities as well [...] for instance, demographic changes and diversity, and also the competing identities are things that affect our field of activity. [...] In recent years, we have supported quite many multicultural projects. We also have this strategic project to promote multilingualism and dialogue and understanding between different languages and cultures. - Mia Smulter, the Swedish Cultural Foundation's producer

Apart from using three languages, Swedish, Finnish, and English in the open call, the foundation also stated that “now we want to develop our skills as an event organizer in order to be able to arrange an engaging program for people from different backgrounds” (Swedish Cultural Foundation, 2023). Accordingly, they sought a program creator capable of bringing a creative concept and diverse networks to contribute to the program's development and implementation. For this year's Spring Festivities, the foundation utilized the open-call method to receive a broad range of ideas from applicants and stated in the call that:

The content of the program is free form, for instance, a cross-disciplinary set of events related to theatre, music, dance, or visual arts, or a cultural or a

discussion festival or some other form of entertainment in line with the Foundation's purposes. Since the Swedish language and Swedish-speaking activities in Finland are the "thing" for us, we also want you to think about how this could be reflected in the program content aimed at all language groups and how it could be a natural part of the program (Swedish Cultural Foundation, 2023).

Additionally, the interview with the communication team revealed that the foundation has been considering the idea of offering more open call-based projects to expand its collaborations as part of its process of allowing changes within its framework.

We have been talking about using more open calls to find people to cooperate with, and because it's quite a good thing for many people to have worked with the Swedish Cultural Foundation, and to get the opportunity - Martina Landén-Westerholm, the Swedish Cultural Foundation's Communication Manager

In line with its audience development strategies, the foundation aimed to broaden its contact with creative individuals, groups, and organizations who could implement intercultural art projects and have access to networks within non-native communities, which was reflected in the open call:

Now we want to develop our skills as an event organizer in order to be able to arrange an engaging program for people from different backgrounds [...] We need help in creating a program for the spring festivals in 2024, and that is why we are looking for a partner. (Swedish Cultural Foundation, 2023)

Furthermore, the communication and marketing strategies were discussed at the very beginning during the first interview with the co-artistic directors. The proposed project 'Linking the (Un)Know' presented a multicultural, interdisciplinary, immersive, and interactive concept integrating several non-verbal artworks and acts as part of its programming. However, finding a suitable communication and marketing method to

introduce this multidimensional and complex programming presented several difficulties. To address that, English was chosen as the primary language of communication, with the integration of Swedish and Finnish on the website, social media, campaigns, and marketing channels.

The marketing of the events began with introducing the selected project, along with highlighting the goals behind this year's program.

With our Spring Festivities in 2024 we:

- *hope that the festival program will promote living intercultural encounters and multilingualism in Finland*
- *hope that the festivities will enable us to bring up and promote the emergence of positive attitudes and dialogue between the different language groups*
- *want to create a set of intercultural and engaging programs that will help people from different cultural and language backgrounds to understand each other better.*
- *hope to reach new target groups and make friends (Swedish Cultural Foundation, 2024)*

The marketing plan progressed by publishing the statement of the program's artistic vision, introducing artistic directors, explaining the program's details and timeline format, and sharing the biographies of the artists and creatives involved in the program. The marketing strategy aimed to make the complex concept more accessible and provide a more detailed explanation of the event's activities for the audience, particularly for traditional, elderly, and other groups accustomed to more conventional art forms rather than alternative art programs.

Additionally, the Swedish Cultural Foundation's communication team contacted local arts and cultural organizations, universities, newspapers, and communities to promote the event through their networks. This was planned specifically to engage with new people without ties with the foundation's activities. To support this strategy, two interviews were arranged between me, as the co-artistic director of the project, and local news media in the cities of

Vaasa and Turku, to increase the visibility of the project and its objectives within local communities. The Swedish Cultural Foundation's communication team carried out these marketing efforts because they were concerned about effectively reaching new individuals and communities outside their established networks, as well as attracting enough audience to the events.

About the audience reach potential of the project, we were quite nervous whether we could reach out to enough people because we knew that our network wasn't gonna be enough. So, it was necessary for us to reach out to new people, but we didn't really know how. And we were also a little bit afraid, or I was maybe a little bit afraid, that the concept would be, like, too fresh, too new, too different for those who usually come to our festivities. So I think for me, that was, like, the big thing. I was really nervous if we could get [...] the right kind of people to come. - Martina Landén-Westerholm, the Swedish Cultural Foundation's Communication Manager

4.2.1 Project Components, Key Engagement Elements and Activities

The concept behind *Linking the (Un)Known* was inspired by immersive theater. In this format, instead of having a stationary stage, the audience has the freedom to independently wander around the spaces and explore the venue and the program's content at their own pace. In general, the program consisted of three parts, including the intro phase, the middle part, and the ending, with each event lasting approximately two hours. In addition to the program's different acts and artworks, the artistic directors incorporated various interactive methods to facilitate and enhance the interaction of the audience with the program's different elements, regardless of their previous experience. One of these methods was to explore the concept of anonymity. As the audience entered the main hall, they were given small masks. The idea was to encourage individual expression and interaction, free from the immediate influence of peers and others by allowing the audience to remain anonymous during the event while wearing the masks. During the intro phase, the evening started with a five-minute movie showing an actor preparing to act as the host of the night. He then

entered the stage to perform the introductory performance, setting the tone for the evening by introducing himself as the host, explaining the program, and giving instructions and safety guidelines to the participants. At the end of his performance, he invited everyone to wear masks and exit the main hall to explore the other spaces of the venue and interact with the artworks and performers.

I think putting on the blindfolds was definitely a moment where you felt equal to everybody else in the space. And everybody was in on the same adventure. Nobody knew what was outside of those theater doors and when you stepped out of that, everybody was wearing those. I was with my colleague, but my mission was to experience it alone. So I was very comfortable in that setting, not seeing anybody I knew just yet. I did notice a few, but they had very distinguished features, like being really tall or having noticeable hair; it was a good start - Frida, an audience member

The middle part of the program took place in various spaces of the venue, including foyers, passages, rooms, and lobbies, lasting between 45 minutes to one hour. This part featured five interactive new media installations, three performances, and several light installations scattered around the venues. The main goal of this part was to encourage participants to interact with the artworks, acts, and performers while showcasing a combination of different disciplines, cultures, and art forms. Following this part, the participants were invited to return to the main hall for the final performance. The performance started with the live footage of the actor appearing on the big screen, this time entering the main hall from behind the audience, captured by a following camera. He began the performance by walking through the participants' seating rows, engaging with them in a friendly manner, and asking about their experience during the event. A few minutes later, he invited everyone to remove their masks while returning to the main stage. The program concluded with a collaborative interdisciplinary performance featuring most of the performers and artists of the project.

Based on the interviews, the intro performance had a significant impact on the audience and the overall atmosphere of the event. It played a key role in introducing the concept and

helping the diverse audience connect with the intercultural concept of the program. In the video shown before the introductory performance, the actor was in a dressing room, preparing to host an upcoming show, while the audience could hear his inner monologue. While the actor narrated his thoughts and feelings about taking on the host's role, the pressure of being exposed to many people from different cultures, and his struggle with his own cultural identity, the audience was still unaware of who this person was.

I think it was really smart of Flux to choose Walter Ahman as the presenter(host) since his mother tongue is Swedish but in his character, he spoke English, and he was like, thinking about all these parallel identities and who am I and so on - Mia Smulter, the Swedish Cultural Foundation's producer

As the video ended in a vague and uncertain atmosphere, the hall brightened, and the unknown actor entered the stage. Three cameras followed him, projecting his movement from different angles on the screen, simulating the shown video, now in real-time. At this moment, the audience realized that the host had been preparing for them and was anxious about not knowing them or how they would judge his role as the host. However, the actor began his performance with full confidence, displaying his professionalism, as if unaware that the audience had already seen his feelings before entering the stage. The actor concluded the performance by explaining guidelines and safety measures to make everyone feel comfortable and safe about the program content.

The opening speech and the whole performance within the theater really set the tone. It was fantastic [...] with the whole multi-camera angles, you also got this feeling of being more immersed, more engaged. You were not this static audience. - Frida, an audience member

The concept of this introductory performance was to evoke a sense of sympathy and empathy among the audience in this culturally sensitive situation and to create an atmosphere for self-reflection. The co-artistic directors and the Swedish Cultural Foundation's stakeholders discussed several times to formulate an inclusive introductory performance that could make everyone feel included and comfortable about the program.

I think the host of the night was the one program element that included people, that made them feel comfortable in this situation and invited them to the art evening. So without that it wouldn't have worked at all. So that was a crucial point. - Jens Heinström, co-artistic director

After the introductory performance, the audience left the main hall and entered the foyers to experience the middle part of the program. Most of the artworks and acts were interactive, combining multimedia and multisensory elements that invited the audience to engage through movements, voice, touch, and their mobile phones. Because of the emphasis on the intercultural aspect of the project and targeting a diverse range of audiences, the creation of the artworks was driven by a language-less, participatory, and innovative artistic direction.

Usually, when we have something that happens on the stage, everything is about what is said or what people sing, and it's the language that is very central. But in your concept, it was more about seeing things and experiencing things and you didn't have to talk too much in order to be part of it - Martina Landén-Westerholm, the Swedish Cultural Foundation's Communication Manager

These strategies were specifically adopted by the co-artistic directors to attract hard-to-reach younger generations to the event while improving the overall experience of the entire audience by stimulating their curiosity.

because I was so curious that I wanted to try them all out. I think you had many of the elements that really support using the participatory element as a tool, and this immersive level as well just makes it more memorable. Making art and culture memorable is already half the battle for many who maybe don't engage with it often or a lot - Frida, an audience member

In addition to the artworks, three performances took place in the form of spoken word, theatre, and global music improvisation in different spaces. The spoken word performance particularly caught the attention of the audience, even though it was held in a small corner of the venue. To elaborate on the performance, the artist sat behind a table with a

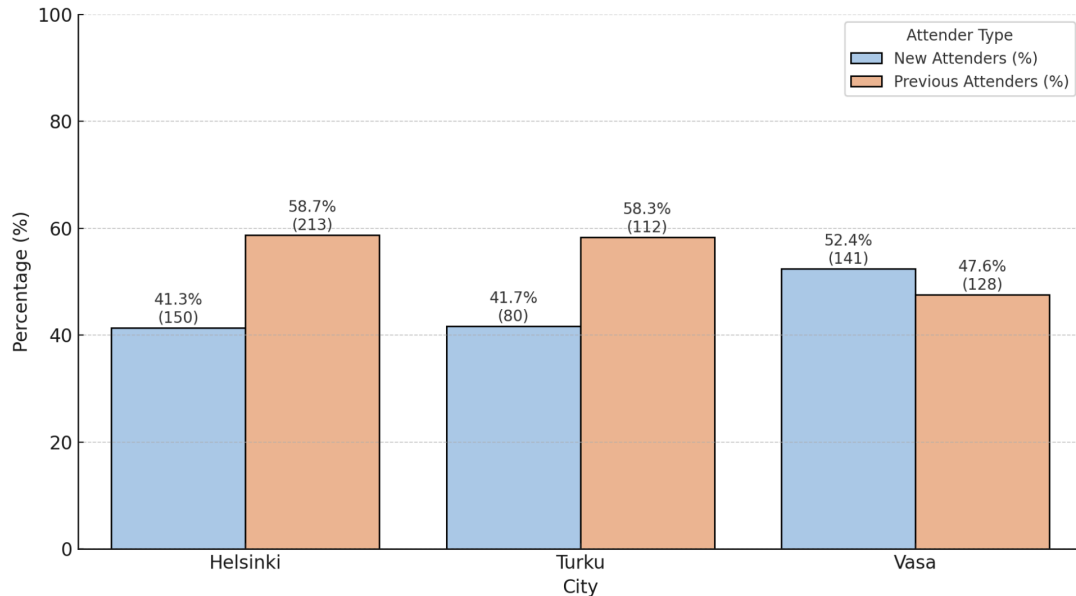
typewriting machine, waiting for individual audience members to approach and interact with them. The format consisted of a short one-to-one dialogue between the artist and a single participant. Following an intimate conversation, the artist typed a few sentences on paper in the form of a creative poem and handed them to the audience members. Due to the performance's unique and interpersonal aspects, it attracted many participants. However, the short duration of the event, the one-to-one setting, and the resulting queue made it impossible for everyone to experience it.

The typewriter poem was fantastic. It was really nice, and it gave you a moment of reflection because there were all the people around and you could just sit down and give it a little bit of a think. So it also gave you a separation from all the rest that was happening. And she was very nice and welcoming, and you felt very relaxed and at home at that moment you spent there - Frida, an audience member

4.3 Outcomes in Audience Demographic and Diversity

Based on on-site observations and 912 individuals who completed the registration forms, approximately 900 audience members attended the events held in three cities. Each year, the Spring Festivities take place at the start of spring in three Finnish cities, attracting around 1,000 attendees, mostly from Finland's Swedish-speaking population. The Survey results of the last edition of the event in 2024 revealed that 45 percent of the audience were first-time participants, indicating a significant change in the audience demographic. In Vaasa, surprisingly, 52.4 percent of the audience were newcomers (see Figure 1).

Figure 1
Audience Demographic of the Swedish Cultural Foundation's Sprinf Festivities 2024 (Linking the (Un)Known)



Furthermore, according to the analysis of the survey data on participants' nationalities, cultural backgrounds, and ethnicities, the events attracted a diverse range of audiences. Although many respondents did not provide details about their nationality or cultural background, the nationalities represented in the responses included at least 15 different groups, such as British, Finnish, Greek, Indian, Iranian, Nepali, and Taiwanese, among others (see Figure 2). Additionally, a few individuals labeled themselves as 'immigrants' in the survey's answer box. However, based on on-site observations at all three events and the survey's responses, the majority of the participants were natives.

Figure 2
Audience Diversity: Circular Representation

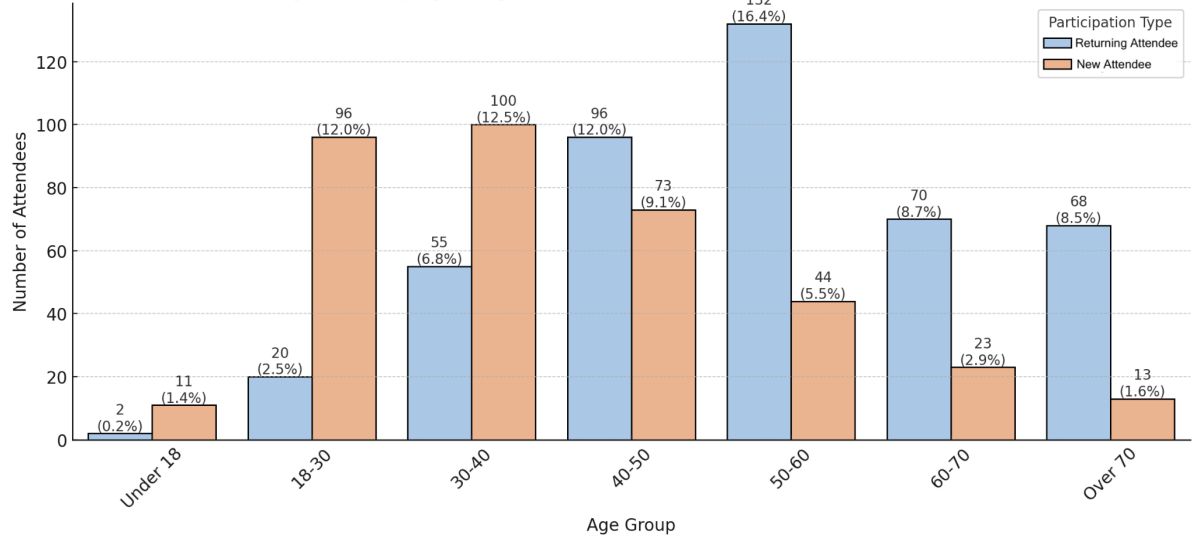


Note: 'Immigrant' and 'Unspecified' are excluded from the chart.

Furthermore, the open and public format of the Spring Festivals welcomed attendees from all age groups. As illustrated in Figure 3, the audience's age distribution ranged from individuals under 18 to those over 70, indicating a wide age spectrum. The analysis shows that most of the new attendees were between the ages of 18 and 50, while a smaller proportion were either under 18 or over 60. In contrast, the majority of returning attendees were aged between 50 and 60, followed by those aged 40 to 50 and over 60.

Figure 3

Distribution of New and Returning Attendees by Age Group



Overall, interviews, on-site observations, and survey findings demonstrate that the Swedish Cultural Foundation’s core audience is primarily composed of Swedish-speaking, middle-aged, and older adults, many of whom show strong loyalty through their repeated participation. Conversely, the new audience consisted of mainly young adults who were attracted to this year’s program, which aligns with the new approaches in programming, marketing, and outreach channels.

I think I was very intrigued with the actual program. There was probably a reason I hadn't attended it before, just because it might have seemed more formal. - Frida, an audience member

I remember this one foreigner guy in Vaasa, who told me this was the first invite he ever got in Finland to any sort of cultural event and he was really pleased - Emma Augustsson, Swedish Cultural Foundation’s Communicator

4.4 Audience Reactions, Intercultural Encounter, and Social Inclusion

The primary objective of ‘*Linking the (un)Known*’ was to bring individuals from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds together to increase intercultural encounters and dialogue in Finnish societies. To achieve this, the project’s stakeholders and creators sought to ensure that every aspect of the project was made as accessible as possible, regardless of participants’ language backgrounds. In line with this vision, the development process of the program, artist selection criteria, communication methods, and marketing strategies were carried out through a multilingual approach, alongside the incorporation of non-verbal elements into the program. Additionally, an essential component of the program involved providing introductions and guidelines in English for the audience. These strategies were particularly tailored not only to address language barriers but also to support artists’ creative expression, and connect with a diverse range of audiences through the universal language of art.

I was really excited about the whole participatory aspect of it. So I was very engaged in the performance and very much in the experience, which felt more languageless, but I did, of course, have in the back of my mind what other people would think. You know, every time you do multi-intercultural things, there's always somebody who's going to think there's too much or too little of something, but that's also tied to their expectations. But it was very brave, and I salute them (The Swedish Cultural Foundation) for that - Frida, an audience member

The Swedish Cultural Foundation is widely recognized among its loyal audience and other arts and cultural organizations as a traditional organization that promotes the Swedish language in Finland, along with the arts and culture associated with it. As a result, the foundation’s main supporters consist of Swedish-speaking communities in Finland, who have consistently participated in the Spring Festivities over the years. The Swedish-language-focused program of the Spring Festivities remains a cornerstone of this annual event and is deeply valued by its long-standing and dedicated audience. Reviewing

the evidence from the survey's responses along with interview answers and stakeholders' feedback, reveals that this year's Spring Festivities program conducted in English caused a mix of dissatisfaction, confusion, and mixed reactions among regular attendees.

I was a bit surprised that there was so much English at the SWEDISH Cultural Foundation's event... - An anonymous participant

Lite förvånad var jag ju nog över att det var så mycket på engelska på SVENSKA kulturfondens fest...

It felt a bit strange that such a large percentage of what was said was in English. There is so much talk about not giving up Swedish in favor of English - but it is important to include and make more people feel involved. A very challenging equation. I would have expected more Swedish during the Swedish Cultural Foundation's party. Maybe an even more wordless program? It was very nice that the theme was the roles that we humans have/take/get, and it was exciting and rewarding to experiment with moving among acquaintances and strangers, wearing a mask. I am satisfied with the experience as a whole and had a rewarding and thought-provoking evening. - An anonymous participant

Det kändes lite konstigt att så stor procent av det som sades var på engelska. Det talas så mycket om att inte ge upp svenskan till förmån för engelskan - men det är viktigt att inkludera och få fler att känna sig delaktiga. En mycket utmanande ekvation. Hade ändå förväntat mig mer svenska under Svenska kulturfondens fest. Kanske ännu mer ordlöst program? Mycket fint att temat var de roller som vi människor har/tar/får och spännande och givande att få experimentera med att röra sig bland bekanta och obekanta, klädd i mask. Jag är nöjd med upplevelsen som helhet och hade en givande och tankeväckande kväll.

Additionally, apart from the language preference of the traditional audience being the main source of complaints, some of them left negative responses, particularly about the new media and technology-oriented installations that were set up in other spaces as part of the program's middle part. Analyzing the responses indicates that these reactions stemmed from pre-existing expectations, the type of art forms, inadequate explanations of the program's features, and the mismatch between the crowd size and the venue for such an immersive and interactive program.

felt almost tricked or stupid because I didn't understand the installations or the chaotic performance - An anonymous participant

Jag kände mig nästan lurad eller korkad eftersom jag inte begrep mig på installationerna eller den virriga performansen.

Nice to break new ground and make the spring party a different experience. The concept was innovative but difficult to grasp for someone who consumes more traditional culture than these types of installations and performances. - An anonymous participant

Fint att bryta ny mark och göra vårfestandet till en annorlunda upplevelse. Konceptet var nyskapande, men svårt att greppa för en person som konsumerar mera traditionell kultur.

Despite the negative feedback from some traditional audience members, others highlighted that the concept, artistic direction, and societal aspects of this year's Spring Festivities raised important questions about the new direction of the Swedish Cultural Foundation, while also supporting its inclusive approach toward non-native artists and audiences.

Many thanks for clearly choosing to invest in art and artists. An exciting choice that the program was mostly in English, raises some questions about whether it was actually necessary, and it is the first sign of some kind of new era within Swedish-Finnish relations. - An anonymous participant

Stort tack att ni helt tydligt hade valt att satsa på konst och konstnärer. Spännande val att programmet till största delen gick på engelska, väcker lite frågor om det faktiskt var nödvändigt och det är första tecken på nån sorts nytid inom svenskfinland.

After the events, The Swedish Cultural Foundation conducted a survey to evaluate the outcomes of the project from the participants' perspective. The survey received 158 responses, which the foundation categorized into positive (34,38 percent), negative (33,33 percent), and constructive (32,29 percent) feedback. Additionally, regarding the question of whether participants felt included and welcomed in a program primarily conducted in English, 79.1 percent responded positively, while 20,9 percent expressed negative views. The majority of the respondents showed positive reactions toward the program on the main stage and the installations, but more than half selected the survey options indicating confusion, indifference, or irritation about the unexpected performance that took place in the foyers.

Overall, analyzing the audience feedback and interviews reveals opposing opinions among the participants, highlighting the contrasting expectations of traditional and new audiences. On one side, there is a group of dedicated followers who support the activities of the Swedish Cultural Foundation through their active participation in its events and programs, expecting a significant integration of the Swedish language and culture to be the main focus of the program, primarily through traditional art forms. On the other side, a notable number of young and culturally diverse individuals expressed enthusiasm for the intercultural and innovative program of the last edition of the Spring Festivities, potentially representing a future audience for this traditional foundation.

4.5 Challenges and Key Insights

Organizing intercultural art events involves various components and often encounters numerous challenges and barriers during both the development and implementation phases. The successful execution of such multidimensional and complex projects relies heavily on close collaboration, cooperation, and mutual understanding among stakeholders and key

players to achieve their goals. Intercultural teams who run these projects, usually consist of individuals with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Therefore, reaching a shared understanding and unified vision among all parties requires open and transparent communication, along with regular feedback sessions, to clarify and continuously redefine meanings, ideas, and expectations. These processes are crucial for preventing and reducing misunderstandings among team members and misleading activities in the project. This section discusses the challenges the *'Linking the (Un)Known'* project faced throughout its implementation.

4.5.1 Building Mutual Understanding in Stakeholder-Program Creator Relationship

The development process of the intercultural art project *'Linking the (Un)Known'* began with emphasizing and clarifying the project's values and artistic vision among the Swedish Cultural Foundation's stakeholders and Flux's co-artistic directors. The main objectives of the project were briefly outlined in the open call published on the foundation's website. The call sought a partner organization or working group to develop an intercultural art program aimed at attracting new audience members from different language groups and cultures to the traditional Spring Festivities primarily attended by Finland's Swedish-speaking individuals.

After the selection process, the submitted proposal by Flux was discussed between the production team and co-artistic directors to build a mutual understanding and a unified perspective among both parties. The Swedish Cultural Foundation explicitly stated that for this year's Spring Festivities, the program should be accessible to all language groups, reflecting the multilingual reality of contemporary Finnish society and promoting intercultural interaction in the country. Additionally, the inclusion of artists from Swedish-speaking backgrounds within the artistic team was discussed. However, the foundation gave the artistic director considerable autonomy in developing the program.

I guess we more or less gave you free hands to shape the program and also to engage the artists you wanted to work with. Mia Smulter, The Swedish Cultural Foundation's producer

Although efforts were made through weekly discussions between both sides to clarify the concept, the definition of intercultural art remained partially ambiguous among the stakeholders and artistic directors. This lack of shared understanding of the fundamental concepts led to some confusion during the development process.

They provided us with a thematic framework for the project, and I think that was one of the few directional pointers they gave us. Initially, it felt positive to have such a lot of freedom to work within those broad parameters. But, pretty quickly, it became unclear to me because we wanted to understand what kind of event they envisioned. Sometimes, their answers felt pretty vague, and they mostly encouraged us to work within that broad thematic framework with a lot of freedom - Jens Heinström, The project's co-artistic director

Except for the overall artistic direction and the event's chronological plan, the program's content was developed through an interdisciplinary co-creation process. The program's components such as performances, installations, and set designs evolved through both individual and collective working sessions between the artists and the co-artistic directors. Meanwhile, the production team received regular on the program's content, artists' recruitment, and logistical details during weekly meetings with the co-artistic directors. In this arrangement, the co-artistic directors also served as intermediaries between the artistic and production teams. As a result, since the producer was not fully involved in the development of the artistic content, logistics, and close relationship with the entire artistic group, the development process led to several challenges and difficulties for all parties involved.

Due to the process-based and evolving concept of the program, the co-artistic directors decided to take on several production tasks during the early phases. This approach excluded the producer from the regular weekly meetings of the artistic development team, which led to an increase in the workloads of the co-artistic directors and the underuse of the producer's support in different aspects of the production. For example, the budgeting of the program was managed in a parallel setting and matched together every week, which was a risky situation.

I think it was a bit challenging to keep track of all expenses. So I think it was a bit risky to have parallel budgets, and I sometimes felt that I didn't really have control over all the expenses. So I thought it would have been maybe good to clarify the roles between the artistic directors and the producer before starting
- Mia Smulter, The Swedish Cultural Foundation's producer

Furthermore, as the event dates approached, time constraints made it difficult to delegate numerous production tasks to the producer, who had not been fully informed about the details. The artistic director's additional workload and lack of cooperation heightened the stress levels among both the production and artistic team.

I think, from our point of view, it would have been better if you had given us, assigned us, things to do during the process, because it felt like, close to the end of the process, we were like, we can help you, but how should we help you?
- Martina Landén-Westerholm, The Swedish Cultural Foundation's Communication Manager

Moreover, communication between the marketing and artistic teams encountered barriers, which slowed down the delivery of marketing materials.

It was a bit slow communication when I needed content for social media that I found challenging - Emma Augustsson, The Swedish Cultural Foundation's Communicator

4.5.2 Target Audience, Where to reach, How to reach?

In 2024, A major focus of the Spring Festivities was to diversify the audience of the Swedish Cultural Foundation. With the foundation's long history and established activities, the communication team had a well-defined profile of its regular audience. However, despite the foundation's clear intent to attract non-native individuals, reaching and attracting new audiences from different cultural and language backgrounds was a challenging task. Similar to other industrially developed European countries, Finland's

foreign population is diverse, comprising people from various backgrounds. Many individuals have immigrated to the country for study or work, and there are also significant refugee communities in larger urban areas. With such a broad mix of cultures, languages, and backgrounds, defining a clear profile for each group becomes nearly impossible, and exceeds the resources of non-governmental arts and cultural organizations. Accordingly, it became apparent that the target audience had not been clearly defined when the project began, and this uncertainty around the target audience made it difficult to develop an effective and focused marketing strategy.

We knew that there was this huge potential group of people that we wanted to reach, but we didn't have them in our network. I felt like I was just working in the dark. Like, what is this gonna lead into? it felt like we were kinda shooting in the dark and not knowing who we were even gonna reach - Emma Augustsson, The Swedish Cultural Foundation's Communicator

Furthermore, balancing between the traditional and new audiences was a big challenge for both stakeholders and the artistic team. Although the new concept for the Spring Festivities was set to attract new audiences, particularly young and culturally diverse groups, including the traditional audience preferences in the content created a dilemma in the development process. Especially, further during the development process, stakeholders were concerned and questioned about the integration of the Swedish language into the program in a natural way to some extent. This brought up again between both parties the question of whether the mutual understanding regarding intercultural art is clearly understood.

I feel like the foundation has typically targeted an older, upper-middle-class audience, but we aimed to widen that demographic. We wanted to reach younger individuals and those who are looking for more alternative programs than what the Swedish Cultural Foundation usually offers - Jens Heinström, the project's co-artistic director

4.5.3 Resource Limitations, Intensive Timing, and Scope of the Project

The Swedish Cultural Foundation did not specify the allocated budget for the Spring Festivities in the open call. This strategy was adopted to leave room for proposals with different scales and scopes. After Flux was invited to expand on the initial concept, the foundation requested that an estimated budget be incorporated into the proposal's project plan. The previous edition of the Spring Festivities in 2023 was a major theater program involving a large working group. Using this program as a reference, the co-artistic directors sent an initial budget to the Swedish Foundation. After the submission, the foundation informed the co-artistic directors that only one-third of the proposed budget would be allocated to this year's Spring Festivities. Since the program's concept allowed for scalability, a revised budget was prepared to align with the available resources while preserving the artistic vision. The reduction in budget resources specifically affected negotiations with artists and cultural workers regarding their payments and also reduced the size of the working group. Additionally, Flux leveraged its network to collaborate with organizations such as local universities, to access their resources and minimize expenses related to equipment and working space rentals.

Although the events were organized without compromising the program's core concept, the financial constraints affected working conditions, causing varying levels of stress among team members. Moreover, compared to the previous year, the pre-production phase of the project was delayed due to a slow selection process, which led to a tight production timeline, especially as the event's dates approached. These limitations, coupled with insufficient cooperation between the production and artistic teams, led to overwork in certain areas and intense working conditions, particularly for the co-artistic directors.

It was the Swedish Cultural Foundation's fault that the production schedule became quite tight since we made our decision so late about who to collaborate with. So I think, we all would have benefited from starting a couple of months earlier, because now I think that the process got a bit stressful for all parties - Mia Smulter, The Swedish Cultural Foundation's producer

Furthermore, developing the audience composition while addressing social inclusion and multiculturalism requires a deep understanding of the target community's needs, cultural tastes, and preferences. The Spring Festivities aimed with an ambitious vision to promote social, cultural, and linguistic inclusion across its surrounding communities in three different cities. However, dealing with such multidimensional and political topics requires a wide range of resources, not just to effectively develop and implement the project, but also to assess its long-term effects and outcomes. Additionally, the events in the three cities were scheduled within an intensive week, with only a few days between each. This proximity of the dates created difficulties for the marketing and outreach strategies, particularly for the second and third events after the premiere. Especially, when such projects target a new audience in different cities, allowing more time between events would create an opportunity for the project to gain greater visibility and potentially attract new audiences who might have missed the initial announcements.

I found it challenging to keep up the engagement for three different events, it's always challenging to keep the stamina and hype going - Emma Augustsson, The Swedish Cultural Foundation's Communicator

There were quite a lot of people from foreign backgrounds registered for the events in Vasa and Turku quite late, and I think that could have probably been because they saw people from within their networks participated in Helsinki, and then they came - Martina Landén-Westerholm, The Swedish Cultural Foundation's Communication Manager

4.5.4 Overcoming Language Barriers and Cultural Differences

Intercultural art projects are often developed collaboratively and collectively, ensuring the inclusion of diverse perspectives and cultural tastes. Unlike traditional art forms that emphasize preserving conventions, intercultural art is shaped by integrating multiple artistic expressions and cultural traditions to create new forms of art, while also promoting dialogue, mutual understanding, and collaboration between artists, producers, and

audiences from diverse cultural backgrounds. This complex nature of intercultural art makes its definitions and underlying concepts open to interpretation and can vary depending on personal perspectives.

Intercultural would feel like taking clear elements of different cultures and then combining them somehow. That's probably the most basic and foremost definition that comes to mind. But, again, it feels like it could be anything really. You can blend languages, traditions, and the most obvious things, but you could also blend conceptions and thoughts - Frida, an audience member

This flexible and dynamic essence of intercultural art makes it challenging to establish a clear framework for producing such projects. For example, *Linking the (Un)Known* brought together artists from various cultural backgrounds including Finland, Canada, Poland, Iran, Norway, Palestine, Russia, France, Hong Kong, and Taiwan who contributed to different elements of the program. This mix of cultural and linguistic backgrounds presented numerous challenges such as language barriers, cultural differences, and differing working styles. The diversity in cultural, linguistic backgrounds and artistic disciplines of the artists attracted a wide range of audiences. This multicultural environment within the creative team improved the project's practice of inclusivity. However, this diversity also brought up difficulties in the areas of communication and collaboration, especially during the transition phase when individual perspectives had to merge into a collective picture. Also, on the audience side, cultural and linguistic barriers prevented some participants from connecting with the artworks and performances, including non-verbal ones, as audience members brought various expectations and interpretations of what intercultural art means.

Chapter 5. Discussion of Findings

After reviewing the main findings of the intercultural art project *Linking the (Un)Known* and analyzing its statistical outcomes, this chapter explores the research questions by connecting the key elements that shaped the project's final results to the relevant theories discussed in Chapter Two. This thesis is structured around three research questions that

examine how audience development and social inclusion intersect during the implementation of intercultural art projects within Finnish arts and cultural organizations. In addition to that, this chapter seeks to understand how various aspects of organizing such projects influence the frameworks and strategies of arts and cultural organizations, particularly established and traditional institutions. Therefore, the discussion integrates findings from the interviews, along with the applicable responses from the surveys and data gathered through direct observations of the project's development process, in order to address the research questions.

5.1 How Intercultural Art Projects Influence Audience Development Initiatives in Finnish Arts and Cultural Organizations?

The analysis of the data extracted from individuals who attended *Linking the (Un)Known* reveals that such initiatives have significant potential in developing and expanding the audience composition. European traditional arts and cultural organizations have long focused on building and maintaining relationships with their loyal audiences. To boost the experience of these devoted supporters, organizations initiated various projects tailored to their evolving tastes and demands. However, this persistent and unquestioning focus on fulfilling the desires of a homogenous audience has resulted in different side effects. The drawback of concentrating exclusively on the existing audience has prevented these organizations, or at least significantly slowed their progress, in addressing the needs of potential future audiences who may not necessarily share their institutional conventions. Moreover, the conservative methods of programming, outreach, marketing, and communication have confined them within tight frameworks, where any actions aimed at exploring beyond their comfort zone are met with internal and external resistance. These internal forces often appear as inadaptability and inefficiency within the organization's framework, leading to a rejection of change or uncertainty in decision-making regarding potential changes. On the external side, the commitment of loyal audiences to the activities of these organizations is unwavering, reflected in their passionate and curious participation, as they are fed with custom-made cultural products and art programs rooted in their

interests. Consequently, these dedicated individuals also display reluctance or disappointment once they are offered different projects beyond their expectations and familiar zones. Their longstanding status as a primary audience, along with a strong sense of responsibility and ownership, leads them to provide the organizers with negative feedback, warning them that breaking boundaries and repeating such inconveniences may result in their disengagement. Glow et al. (2024, p. 300) also highlight that "the lack of diversity within arts audiences is the result of limited organizational capacity and resistance to change" (Harlow, 2014; Lindelof, 2015, as cited in Glow et al., 2024). Therefore, the decision-makers and leaders of these arts and cultural organizations find themselves in a vulnerable dilemma. They have to choose whether to maintain their conventions and satisfy their traditional audience while addressing the challenges of audience aging, or to confront both internal and external resistance, and dare to explore new ways of attracting new audiences, at the risk of backlash from their institutional forces and traditional supporters.

In this binary situation, some organizations attempt to find a balance between satisfying traditional audiences and engaging new groups with their activities. Launching Intercultural art projects is one strategy to find that balance. Due to their multifaceted and multicultural aspects, these projects influence different dimensions and sectors of arts and cultural organizations, particularly those operating within a traditional framework. Reviewing the analysis of *Linking the (Un)Known* demonstrates that the effective implementation of these projects heavily relies on establishing strategic and relevant partnerships. These partnerships should engage surrounding communities, organizations, and individuals active in the intercultural field to collaborate with the main organization in shaping the development of programming, marketing, and communication. This collaborative approach helps organizations to better define their target audience and identify their needs and preferences. The Swedish Cultural Foundation adopted a similar strategy in organizing the latest edition of the Spring Festivities by partnering with an organization experienced in intercultural projects. This strategy aligns with Kawashima's (2000) theory of a 'target-led' audience development approach. Accordingly, instead of focusing on the 'product-led' approach which emphasizes the autonomy of the arts and its power to bring people together, the target-led approach begins by defining the target audience and then offering a program designed to meet their needs and cultural tastes. To further explain, the objective

of *Linking the (Un)Known* was to connect individuals from different cultural backgrounds, languages, and age groups, particularly new generations by developing an intercultural art project. Therefore, instead of commissioning works, the program creators were selected through an open call based on their relevant experiences. This led to the creation of an unconventional program featuring innovative elements such as technology-oriented and new media artworks, combined with interdisciplinary elements, and multicultural performances. These characteristics were also showcased in the marketing materials and the project's announcements. Additionally, the partner organization, Flux, and the chosen artists from various cultural backgrounds and disciplines promoted the project across their networks. As a result, the event was attended by a diverse range of audiences, including returning attendees, individuals familiar with the event who had not previously attended, as well as newcomers discovering it for the first time. Moreover, this collaboration increased the visibility of the Swedish Foundation within the field of intercultural art, which could potentially lead to the future engagement of multicultural audiences and creatives in other programs offered by the foundation, such as grant programs and residencies, to name a few. As an added point, following the Spring Festivities, some of the foundation's traditional audiences have started connecting with Flux's social media and activities. This interaction could gradually influence their cultural tastes and expectations, resulting in greater openness among the traditional audiences in response to the Swedish Cultural Foundation's future intercultural projects with non-conventional programming.

5.2 What Role Do Intercultural Art Projects Play in Fostering Social Inclusion and Addressing Intercultural Needs in Finland?

The emergence and development of intercultural art projects often involve addressing culturally sensitive topics, particularly those related to social inclusion and cultural diversity. These projects are shaped by integrating various components, including artworks, performances, and programs influenced by various cultural elements while engaging artists and cultural practitioners from different backgrounds. As these projects aim to engage a wide range of individuals with differing cultural tastes and varying levels of interaction

with art and cultural capital, their programs are developed and refined often through the lens of social inclusivity. Therefore, they function as bridging platforms that not only facilitate collaborations between artists, practitioners, and organizations with diverse backgrounds but also connect culturally diverse individuals and communities attending these events. Participation in these projects offers a valuable opportunity for minority and underrepresented groups to establish contact with organizers, local communities, and one another whether through short-term events or continuous projects. Moreover, traditional arts and cultural organizations often lack sufficient information about non-participating audiences. These intercultural projects provide valuable data on new potential audiences and their cultural preferences, which can be used to inform the development of further initiatives.

Although Finnish society is evolving rapidly in terms of culture and is expected to host more immigrants in the coming years, the Finnish arts and cultural sector remains largely shaped by the dominant culture, with limited resources and facilities dedicated to the presentation and development of other cultures. Saukkonen & Pyykkönen (2008) enumerate the promising efforts of the Finnish government and its cultural policy in facilitating the integration process of minorities into mainstream culture, as well as the allocation of resources such as grants, spaces, and facilities. However, the specific characteristics of Finnish communities, particularly the historical isolation from foreign cultures, have contributed to the slower integration of non-native individuals into the mainstream culture. While some organizations are dedicated to promoting cultural diversity, intercultural art projects initiated by traditional arts and cultural organizations may have a greater impact on linking minority groups with the local population. These organizations, with their strong ties to the local communities, have a significant potential to serve as intermediaries and bring immigrant groups to the native groups. As (Glow et al. (2024, p. 316.) argue, organizations with strong networks within their local communities and substantial resources have a greater capacity to initiate intercultural projects that deliver social values, facilitate intercultural dialogues, and promote intergenerational interactions. Unlike governmental institutions, these organizations can react more quickly to external changes outside their walls and are less constrained by political and social pressures.

Additionally, they can have a significant impact on smaller organizations, being a source of inspiration and encouraging them to contribute to creating a more inclusive society.

Considering the current concerns raised by Finland's Ministry of Education and Culture regarding the increasing number of foreigners and the growing demand for cultural facilities, along with the insights gathered from interviews, there is a clear need for intercultural dialogue and encounters within Finnish society. In this situation, intercultural art projects can act as catalysts for establishing reciprocal connections between local communities and the foreign population residing or arriving in Finland. These projects can foster a sense of appreciation for otherness and diversity within a multicultural society. Moreover, based on the interviews' key points and on-site observation, intercultural art projects can create opportunities for expanding social networks, thereby contributing to personal empowerment, social inclusion, and integration of participants from different cultural backgrounds. This aligns with Barraket's (2005, p.13) argument that "social inclusion is, in part, determined by the diversity of networks available to individuals, groups, and communities". It is also important to highlight that, in addition to providing collaborative spaces for artists, these projects, especially those with interactive and participatory elements, can function as creative platforms that encourage self-expression and artistic interaction of participants.

5.3 What Challenges and Opportunities Arise for Finnish Arts and Cultural Organizations in Implementing Intercultural Audience Development Strategies?

It goes without saying that organizing intercultural projects draws arts and cultural organizations into addressing complex topics across various contexts. While these projects can lead to opportunities and open doors to underexplored territories, many face challenges during their development and implementation processes as well. To further elaborate, as suggested by the term itself, intercultural refers to the merging of several cultural elements in a generalized context. However, working with culture involves interacting with many unknown and unfamiliar aspects that require careful and responsible consideration. Moreover, as Kawashima (2000, p. 3) argues, from a sociological perspective, culture plays

a key role in creating distinctions and divisions between different groups within society. Consequently, culture has been used as a tool by the dominant culture to establish exclusive activities, practices, and lifestyles. This condition can also be recognized in the context of socially inclusive initiatives launched by arts and cultural organizations. To expand on this, when the cultural territories of the dominant culture become accessible to all, Kawshima (2006, p. 66) explains that the resistance from dominant culture arises often by forming a new cultural identity to exclude those newly included communities. This raises these important questions of how can such initiatives create lasting and meaningful connections between local and non-native communities? How can these projects contribute to social cohesion when the dominant culture continues to seek new ways of exclusion in order to distinguish its cultural identity?

Furthermore, Hayes & Slater (2002, p. 16) warn that initiating inclusivity-driven projects that neglect the established values of the traditional audience may ultimately result in fragmenting the arts and cultural organizations' loyal body of audience over time. They further emphasize that if such initiatives fail to reach beyond the regular audience, the sustainability of those organizations' activities could be at risk. The signs of these alerts were evident in the survey responses from the traditional audiences of the Swedish Cultural Foundation who participated in the last edition of the Spring Festivities.

Intercultural art projects when organized by traditional art and cultural organizations, often target a broad range of audiences and attempt to take a balanced stance in satisfying both existing and new audiences. To attract new potential audiences, these organizations offer programs that diverge from the criteria of their conventional programming. However, such a shift in programming can lead to negative responses from traditional audiences, depending on how radical the change is. In intercultural projects with an inclusivity mission, maintaining a balance between driving change and preserving the core values that are fundamental to the traditional audience presents significant challenges. Since these projects often involve culturally sensitive components such as language, visual heritage, and artistic expressions, there is the potential for backlash, particularly from traditional audiences who have been engaged in programs that have consistently celebrated their social and cultural values and identities through more conventional art forms. Additionally, the

creation of intercultural art projects, from both the artistic and production sides, demands close collaboration among a diverse team to effectively carry out the project. For this reason, building mutual understanding and a shared vision among all stakeholders and individuals involved in the project can be difficult due to cultural differences, language barriers, and differing disciplines.

Moving beyond challenges and difficulties, inclusive audience development initiatives open up several opportunities. As these projects are initiated to target a wide range of individuals with different backgrounds, one of the primary benefits is the diversification of the audience composition of the organizations involved. By delivering social values to society, these initiatives also improve the organization's public image and promote the positive visibility of their activities within their surrounding communities and beyond. Moreover, the partnerships and collaborations formed through these initiatives expand the networks of arts and cultural organizations, connecting them with artists, cultural practitioners, and communities that were previously outside their reach. This connection also works in reverse, as these new contacts may approach these organizations for future collaborations. Additionally, organizing such multifaceted and complex projects improves the organization's production expertise, equipping them with the intercultural skills necessary for executing similar projects. Lastly, the effective implementation of intercultural audience development initiatives requires the organizations to be prepared to adjust their internal framework. This readiness enables them to push the boundaries of their different sectors and improve their resilience in response to external changes outside their organizational framework.

Chapter 6. Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 Summary of Findings

This thesis has explored the intersection of audience development and social inclusion through a case study of *Linking the (Un)Known*, an intercultural art project organized in three Finnish cities. The project was initiated as part of a strategic shift within the Swedish

Cultural Foundation's framework with the goal of influencing its audience composition while responding to the increasing cultural diversity of Finnish society. Like many other developed countries, Finland's cultural landscape has been shifting from a homogenous culture to a multicultural society, and this transformation is expected to continue in the coming years. In response, Finnish cultural policymakers and leaders of established arts and cultural organizations have been developing initiatives and policies to address the demands of diverse communities. Despite numerous efforts and the notable availability of art programs for all, the audiences of traditional organizations remain largely confined to native communities, with limited participation from non-local individuals. Unlike the extensive research conducted in the UK and other Nordic countries on this widespread issue in European cities, studies investigating the underlying reasons and proposing solutions in Finland have remained limited. This thesis positioned itself within this context to contribute to the field of audience development by connecting and highlighting the issues of social inclusivity within this field.

Investigating the data collected from the interviews, surveys, and observations revealed that intercultural art projects, particularly those launched by traditional arts and cultural organizations, can significantly impact the audience's demographic profile. In Finland, particularly in the city of Helsinki, there are designated organizations that serve as platforms for showcasing the art and cultures of foreigners and immigrants. However, these platforms do not have the same capability as traditional organizations to balance native and non-native audiences, as many of their programs are primarily attended by foreigners. On the other hand, traditional arts and cultural organizations face a similar issue with their audience mainly consisting of natives. However, the statistics from the Swedish Cultural Foundation's Spring Festivities indicated that a fundamental change in audience development strategies can lead to significant transformation. Since traditional arts and cultural organizations have already established strong connections with their surrounding communities, an inclusivity-oriented audience development approach through intercultural art initiatives results in a diversification of their audience.

However, despite the positive outcomes, survey responses reveal that such initiatives may provoke negative reactions from loyal audiences. These dedicated individuals have long

supported these organizations and have contributed to the establishment of key values and identities. Therefore, activities that disregard established conventions could not only lead to complaints but, over time, might disintegrate loyal audiences. Earlier, I explained that the Swedish Cultural Foundation is a non-profit cultural organization with extensive resources, and it particularly promotes the arts and cultural activities of the Swedish-speaking population in Finland. Consequently, the Foundation's core audience participates in its annual programs to support the preservation of the Swedish language and culture. In 2024, when the foundation organized the last Spring Festivities with a program primarily in English, this new direction received negative feedback regarding the absence of the Swedish language. However, there were also responses from Swedish-speaking participants who praised the Foundation for its bold decision and supported it for offering a non-conventional program this time. In this situation, the organization faces pressure to maintain a balance between traditional audiences, who expect their values to be respected, and those who are enthusiastic about change and eager to engage more with similar activities of the Foundation.

Furthermore, traditional arts and cultural organizations tend to employ staff with more conservative views or culturally similar backgrounds. This entrenched recruitment policy enables organizations to align their activities and institutional values with their audience expectations and cultural preferences. With this in mind, according to Glow et al. (2024, p. 316) audience development initiatives are usually launched when an external force strikes organizations to make a change. Alternatively, leaders with non-conventional views take the risk of reforming the organizational frameworks and thereby impacting the audience demographic. The realization of the intercultural art project *Linking the (Un)Known* was perhaps a result of both factors. The analysis of archival records demonstrates that the Swedish Cultural Foundation has been following the current social and cultural trends within Finland and other European countries. Building on its recent investments in promoting multiculturalism and multilingualism, this time, its leaders sought to take a more fundamental approach to addressing the evolving cultural diversity of Finnish society by reshaping their core festivities to engage a diverse range of audiences.

However, addressing the issues of audience development is a broad topic, and effectively tackling it requires solutions that go beyond the scope of arts and cultural organizations' activities. Accordingly, policymakers play a crucial role in shaping cultural policies and decisions at higher levels, where they have the authority to integrate cultural diversity into all aspects of society. Emphasizing policies that promote social inclusion across all areas of society's cultural arena can encourage traditional arts and cultural organizations to review their strategies and formulate holistic and inclusive audience development initiatives that can attract a diverse range of individuals to their programs. As Finnish cultural policy researchers Saukkonen & Pyykkönen, (2008, p. 59) once suggested, one positive approach is to integrate cultural sensitivity across all cultural activities of society and cultural policy, which could lead to the inclusion of immigrant and minority cultures into mainstream culture and the reconfiguration of urban cultural landscape, with cultural diversity as its "normal feature".

6.2 Recommendation for Arts and Cultural Organizations and Policy Makers

Through the analysis of key points from the interviews, coupled with the statistical data on audience participation in the project, it is evident that the traditional arts and cultural organizations, particularly those with established networks and extensive resources, have unique strengths in diversifying their audiences inclusively. European societies will continue to become more culturally diverse, and this diverse range of individuals holds great potential as future audience members. Adopting strategic approaches that influence the framework of these established organizations and influenced by the needs of individuals, can lead to extending the body of their audience and networks. Many organizations already utilize these approaches through additional projects parallel to their main activities and programs. However, audience development initiatives carried out as extra programs may not have the same impact as those embedded within the main programs. Due to institutional barriers and plausible resistance from the traditional audience, the leaders of these organizations often face challenges in implementing changes across different segments of their organizational framework. Avoiding these confrontations usually drives leaders to avoid making changes and preserve the status quo. However,

unquestionably prioritizing the traditional audience's expectations while overlooking the evolving needs and interests of new generations and their increasingly diverse communities could lead to a precarious future for sustaining their activities. Therefore, it is recommended that these organizations strive for a balanced approach and holistically integrate social inclusion practices into their audience development initiatives and all aspects of their frameworks, including staffing, partnership, programming, communication, and marketing. This means comprehensively addressing the intergenerational and intercultural gaps dividing their existing and potential audiences while improving the overall experience of their devoted supporters. Although it may seem intimidating to push the boundaries of established conventions, developing initiatives through partnerships that represent both native and non-native communities, along with employing intercultural communication and coordination methods could reduce the disintegration of existing followers and engage hard-to-reach audiences.

From a broader perspective, policymakers also hold an influential position in impacting and encouraging arts and cultural organizations to adopt inclusivity-driven approaches in implementing their audience development strategies. Developing cultural policies that underscore the needs of underrepresented groups and minority cultures, and integrating them into mainstream culture, can ultimately propel traditional arts and cultural organizations to adjust their frameworks and strategies and contribute to the evolution of more inclusive societies. Through the allocation and prioritization of funding for intercultural art initiatives aimed at engaging diverse members of society, arts and cultural organizations benefiting from these public resources are prompted to embrace more inclusive approaches in reaching their audience. Furthermore, given that social inclusion is a multidimensional issue, its effective integration into mainstream culture requires extensive cooperation among all stakeholders in the arts and cultural sector. By granting financial support and removing legislative barriers, policymakers could encourage organizations of various sizes to collaborate on tackling social exclusion within their activities, while involving artists, creatives, cultural practitioners, and producers from different cultural backgrounds in the conception, development and implementation of their programs.

6.3 Suggestions for Further Research

Although much research has been conducted in the field of audience development, particularly in the UK, the topic encompasses several dimensions that remain to be explored and examined. In Finland, however, there is still a notable shortage of studies addressing the field's current development and issues related to social inclusion, cultural diversity, assessment methods, and underlying theories. By analyzing the case of *Linking the (Un)Known*, I examined how inclusivity-driven audience development approaches can influence the composition of the traditional arts and cultural organizations' audiences. Despite the valuable knowledge gathered through the interviews with stakeholders, decision-makers, and the audience, there are still areas that need to be assessed. This thesis analyzed a single case study consisting of an event organized in three Finnish cities. Additionally, a feedback survey conducted by the Swedish Cultural Foundation collected data shortly after the final event, which was used for an internal evaluation report on the project's outcomes. However, assessing the intersection of audience development and social inclusion is a topic that requires a long-term approach, one that can investigate the results for both the foundation and the participants. Similar to many other initiatives, resource constraints prevent the conduct of comprehensive research that could provide a broader perspective on the impact of the project on both audience behavior and the foundation's framework, as well as the future relationship between the two. This is especially important to investigate whether the new audience continues to engage with future activities and whether the Foundation maintains its new strategy for executing future Spring Festivities, despite receiving negative feedback from its traditional audience. Furthermore, examining the crucial role of non-profit organizations in balancing the composition of arts audience and advocating social values in the era of growing polarization, anti-immigration tendencies, and cultural budget cuts in European countries is a valuable topic for further research.

Moreover, although the pandemic's catastrophe significantly damaged the relationships between audiences and arts and cultural organizations, and the repercussions of such turmoil are yet to be fully recovered, we have witnessed the emergence and growth of digital audiences. Due to the impossibility of physical interaction during the pandemic,

nearly every organization sought to continue their activities in digital format and maintain their connections with their audiences. Although the tragic circumstances limited many aspects of live events, a new dimension was opened for engaging with digital audiences. These virtual participants can take part in the activities of organizations regardless of their location. Since digital engagement is still a relatively new phenomenon, its various aspects require in-depth examination, including digital accessibility, inclusivity, privacy, and data protection of the digital audience, as well as emerging technologies that are rapidly reshaping the engagement methods employed by arts and cultural organizations.

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Appendices

Interview questions with Mia Smulter, Martina Landén-Westerholm, and Emma Augustsson (2.1.2025)

1. Introduction and Role Can you briefly describe your role at the Swedish Cultural Foundation and how you were involved in the Linking the (Un)Known project?
2. Motivation for Change What motivated the Swedish Cultural Foundation to change its approach for the 2024 Spring Festivities, particularly in terms of engaging more diverse audiences?
3. Open Call Criteria When the Foundation issued an open call for a new partner to create an intercultural program for the Spring Festivities, what key factors were you looking for in the proposals?
4. Standout Proposal What made the Linking the (Un)Known project stand out among other proposals during the open call? Were there specific elements of the concept that caught your attention?
5. Audience Reach Potential How did you assess the potential of this proposal to reach new and diverse audiences, including non-native speakers and minority communities?
6. Role in Project Development Once Flux was chosen, what was your role in shaping the vision and content of the project? Were there specific elements that you wanted to ensure were included?
7. Collaboration Challenges Can you describe any key decision-making moments or challenges of collaborating with Flux?
8. Balancing Traditions and Innovation What was the Foundation's stance on balancing traditional elements (including Swedish-speaking activities) with new intercultural aspects in the festivities program?

9. Outcome Assessment How do you assess the outcome of *Linking the (Un)Known* in terms of audience development, engagement, and impact on intercultural dialogue and multiculturalism? What specific metrics did you use to evaluate the project's outcomes?

10. Insights and Recommendations Based on your experience with this project, what insights or lessons did the Foundation gain that could inform future projects focused on intercultural dialogue, multiculturalism, and inclusion? What recommendations would you have for other arts and cultural organizations in Finland looking to promote intercultural dialogue and attract diverse audiences?

Interview questions with Jens Heinström (20.12.2024)

1. How did the idea for *Linking the (Un)Known* come about, and what motivated Flux to propose this project to the Swedish Cultural Foundation?
2. Given your experience as a co-artistic director, what specific strategies were developed to engage new, diverse audiences for this project?
3. How did you approach balancing the engagement of traditional audiences with new, culturally diverse groups?
4. What were the key challenges you faced during the planning and execution of this intercultural art project?
5. From your perspective, how did the project contribute to fostering intercultural dialogue and social inclusion in Finnish society?
6. As a co-artistic director, what were some key lessons learned from the project that you believe could benefit other cultural organizations looking to create similar initiatives?
7. How would you approach such a project differently if you were to do it again, based on your experiences with *Linking the (Un)Known*?
8. Based on the audience's response to the events, what do you think were the most highlighted aspects of the project in terms of audience engagement and experience?
9. Were there any challenges in ensuring the program was inclusive and accessible to all language groups and cultural backgrounds?
10. Given the experience of *Linking the (Un)Known*, do you think there is room for further intercultural and multilingual initiatives within Finnish cultural events?

Interview questions with Frida (27.12.2024)

1. How did you first hear about Linking the (Un)Known and what motivated you to attend the event?
2. What were your expectations going into the event, and how did you feel about the concept of an intercultural art experience?
3. Can you describe your overall experience at the event? What aspects of the program stood out to you the most?
4. The event aimed to bring together people from different languages and cultural groups. How did you experience the intercultural atmosphere at the event?
5. How do you think the event contributed to social inclusion and understanding between different cultural groups?
6. How did you interact with other participants or artists at the event? Did you have any memorable conversations or encounters with people from different backgrounds?
7. How did the event impact your understanding of Finnish cultural diversity or intercultural dialogue?
8. Did the event inspire any new thoughts or reflections about your own cultural identity or how you relate to other cultures?
9. What were the key takeaways for you from attending Linking the (Un)Known? Did you learn something new or gain a new perspective on cultural or social issues?
10. Would you say the event changed your view on the role of art in promoting social inclusion or multiculturalism? How so?
11. What do you think could be improved or added to future events to enhance intercultural dialogue and inclusivity?
12. How do you think programs like Linking the (Un)Known can contribute to a more inclusive and multicultural society in Finland?