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Interpretations of Nordic Culture

*A case study on conceptualisations of Nordic culture in
today's artistic and cultural field*

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Abstract

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The Nordic region is a geopolitical and cultural region known for its high living standard, democracy and equality, as well as for its innovative, green and sustainable lifestyle. Previous studies have primarily focused on the state and development of Nordic society and culture from a historical, economic, and political perspective, showing how different decisions and processes through history have contributed to the current state in the region. However, the focus has mainly been on general lines instead of showing individual interpretations and comprehensions of societal and cultural concepts in Nordic contexts.

Framed by the Nordic Culture Fund's development strategies and global ambitions, this thesis investigates the role of Nordic culture in the daily practices of artists and cultural practitioners who come both from and outside the Nordic region. By anchoring the case study on cultural and artistic understandings of Nordic culture, the thesis aims to analyse and discuss how the artistic and cultural field interpret and contribute to images of Nordic culture and what impact conceptualisations of Nordic culture have in cultural and societal contexts in the present. The thesis uses theories by Clifford Geertz, Stuart Hall, Kirsten Hastrup and Roy Wagner. It focuses on several analytical concepts, such as constructing culture, cultural identity and position of the cultural field.

Based on a cultural analytical project, the thesis explores the breadth and variety of Nordic culture. The empirical material has been gathered with the help of ethnographic methods, such as qualitative semi-structured interviews, focus group, observations and autoethnography. The gathered information and new insights illustrate and exemplify how Nordic culture is defined and interpreted in the artistic and cultural field. The thesis shows that Nordic culture is a fluid concept that is formed and developed in cultural and artistic practices both in Nordic and global contexts. Therefore, the thesis concludes that the concept of Nordic culture should not be taken for granted but as an ever-changing concept that constantly is invented and constructed in social contexts and situations.

Keywords: *cultural analysis; ethnography; Nordic culture; Nordic identity; artistic and cultural life; cultural field; Nordic Culture Fund.*

Abstract in Swedish

Tolkningar av nordisk kultur: En fallstudie om konceptualiseringar av nordisk kultur i dagens konst- och kulturfält

Panu Heiskanen

Norden som en geopolitisk och kulturell region är känd bl.a. för sin höga levnadsstandard, demokrati och jämlikhet samt sin innovativa, gröna och hållbara livsstil. Tidigare forskning har studerat utvecklingen av samhälle och kultur i Norden ur historiska, ekonomiska och politiska perspektiv med fokus på olika beslut och processer som har format regionen genom historien. Tidigare studier har särskilt fokuserat på att definiera en generell och enhetlig bild av Norden istället för att visa och analysera hur individer förstår och tolkar det nordiska i samhällliga och kulturella kontexter.

Denna uppsats tar Nordisk Kulturfonds utvecklingsstrategier och globala ambitioner som utgångspunkt för att utforska rollen av nordisk kultur i kulturella och konstnärliga processer bland konstnärer och kulturutövare som är verksamma både i och utanför Norden. Genom att förankra fallstudien i kulturella och konstnärliga förståelser av nordisk kultur, är syftet i den här uppsatsen att analysera och diskutera hur konst- och kulturfältet tolkar och bidrar till nutida uppfattningar om nordisk kultur, och vilken roll olika konceptualiseringar av nordisk kultur har i kulturella och samhällliga kontexter idag. I uppsatsen används kulturella och sociala teorier av Clifford Geertz, Stuart Hall, Kirsten Hastrup och Roy Wagner med fokus på konstruktion av kultur, identitetsskapande och fältbegrepp. Genom tillämpning av dessa teoretiska koncept, analyserar uppsatsen olika tolkningar av nordisk kultur och rollen av nationell och kulturell identitet inom konst- och kulturfältet.

Uppsatsen bygger på empiriskt material som har insamlats genom semistrukturerade intervjuer, fokusgruppsintervju, observationer och autoetnografi under ett kulturanalytiskt projekt. Materialet visar hur de olika aktörerna i konst- och kulturfältet skapar och tänker kring nordisk kultur. Studien klargör hur nordisk kultur som ett flytande koncept bildas i kulturella och konstnärliga handlingar i både nordiska och globala kontexter. Uppsatsens slutsats är att konceptet *nordisk kultur* inte ska tas för givet utan istället förstås som en kulturell idé som kontinuerligt tar nya former och gestaltningar i en rad olika sociala och kulturella handlingar.

Nyckelord: *kulturanalys; etnografi; nordisk kultur; nordisk identitet; konst- och kulturlivet; kulturfält; Nordisk Kulturfond.*

Abstract in Finnish

Tulkintoja pohjoismaisesta kulttuurista: Kulttuurianalyttinen tutkimus pohjoismaisesta kulttuurista osana tämän päivän taide- ja kulttuurikenttää

Panu Heiskanen

Pohjola niin geopoliittisena kuin myös kulttuurillisesti yhtenäisenä alueena on tunnettu sen korkeasta elintasosta, demokratiasta ja tasa-arvosta sekä sen innovatiivisesta ja kestäväan kehitykseen pyrkivästä elämäntyylistä. Aikaisemmat tutkimukset ovat lähestyneet Pohjolan yhteiskunnallista ja kulttuurillista kehitystä hyödyntäen historiallisia, taloudellisia ja poliittisia näkökulmia. Sen sijaan tutkimus, joka keskittyisi yhteiskunnallisiin ja kulttuurillisiin ilmiöihin pohjoismaisissa konteksteissa yksilön näkökulmasta on jäänyt vähemmälle huomiolle.

Tämän tutkielman tavoitteena onkin keskittyä kulttuurikentän ja sen yksittäisten taiteilijoiden ja kulttuurihenkilöiden tapoihin nähdä pohjoismainen kulttuuri osana kulttuurillisia ja taiteellisia prosesseja. Ankkuroitumalla Pohjoismaisen kulttuurirahaston kehitysstrategiaan ja globaaleihin tavoitteisiin, tutkielman tavoitteena on analysoida ja keskustella kuinka taide- ja kulttuurikenttä määrittelee ja tulkitsee pohjoismaisen kulttuurin käsitettä ja mikä sen rooli on osana tämän päivän yhteiskuntaa. Tutkielma hyödyntää analyttisesti konsepteja kuten kulttuurin uudelleen määrittäminen, identiteetin luominen ja kulttuuri yhteiskunnallisena kenttänä. Tutkielman teoreettinen näkökulma pohjautuu mm. Glifford Geertzin, Stuart Hallin, Kirsten Hastrupin ja Roy Wagnerin kulttuurillisiin näkemyksiin ja teorioihin.

Pohjautuen kulttuurianalyttiseen projektiin, tutkielma rakentaa laajaa ja monipuolista kuvaa pohjoismaisuudesta etnografisten tutkimusmenetelmien avulla. Tutkimusmetodeina on käytetty puolistrukturoituja haastatteluja, ryhmähaastattelua, observointia ja autoetnografiaa. Tutkimuksen tuloksena piirtyy kuva alati uudelleen muotoutuvasta pohjoismaisesta kulttuurista, joka syntyy ja kehittyy erilaisissa luovissa ja kulttuurillisissa konteksteissa niin Pohjoismaiden sisällä kuin myös niiden ulkopuolella. Tutkimus osoittaa, että pohjoismaista kulttuuria käsitteenä ei tule nähdä itsestäänselvytenä vaan konseptina, joka jatkuvasti muotoutuu ja saa uusia merkityksiä osana tämän päivän yhteiskuntaa.

Avainsanat: kulttuurianalyysi; pohjoismainen kulttuuri; pohjoismaalainen identiteetti; taide- ja kulttuurielämä; kulttuurikenttä; Pohjoismainen kulttuurirahasto.

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Panu Heiskanen

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1. Introduction

In Autumn 2020, I worked on a cultural analytical project at the Nordic Culture Fund in Copenhagen, Denmark. The project intended to gather new information from the artistic and cultural field to develop the fund's new global funding programme called Globus. A significant part of the project included meetings with individual artists and other cultural practitioners, such as art curators and creative directors in cultural organisations, to discuss how they interpret Nordic culture in their daily work. Besides my role as an intern and researcher, I have worked as a student assistant at the fund for over a year before the project started. In this role, my main tasks are to assist the fund's director and advisors in administration and other daily activities at the fund's secretariat. Although the research project was mainly thought of as a separate activity, it was clear that I could not just switch off the researcher in me when I was carrying activities as a student assistant. Moreover, as a regular member of the fund's staff, I approached the field more as an insider than an outsider when it came to analysing the fund.

As a Finn who has lived both in Sweden and Denmark, who communicates and works in Swedish and understands some Danish, and who always has been interested in different societal and cultural topics on the Nordic countries and Nordic cooperation, the research project became an interesting journey in which I got the chance to explore what the concept of Nordic culture means and symbolises for myself, the Nordic Culture Fund and the participating informants. Not only I could combine my academic interest with my work, but I could also approach the field by utilising my previous knowledge from my studies in dance arts and my short career as a dancer.

This thesis continues my journey in investigating, exploring, and pondering how people – both from and outside the Nordic region¹ – define, discuss, and interpret Nordic culture and identity. Nevertheless, it is also a work in which I get the chance to question, challenge and construct my ideas of Nordic culture. The overall purpose is to listen to individual voices and get deeper insights on Nordic culture amongst artists and cultural practitioners who work both within and outside the Nordic region. By analysing and discussing interpretations of Nordic culture in the artistic and cultural field, this thesis will show and exemplify how Nordic culture is understood in the cultural field and what role it has in the development of today's society.

¹ Based on the official definition by the Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers, the Nordic region consists of Denmark, Faroe Islands, Finland, Greenland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden.

1.1 What does Nordic culture mean?

This thesis will primarily focus on interpretations of Nordic culture in a particular cultural sector. However, before it is possible to question and rethink this societal and cultural concept, I will show different meanings behind the idea of Nordic culture. When looked at the Oxford English Dictionary (n.d.), the word *Nordic* is defined as an adjective that is “[o]f or relating to Scandinavia, the Scandinavian people, or their languages” or as a noun that is a “person of the Nordic type; a Scandinavian person”. In a Scandinavian context, the Swedish Academy Dictionary (1947) describes the word *nordisk* as something located in the North, something that can be characterised by or connected to the Northern part of Europe or something that primarily is connected to people and culture in the Nordic countries. When looked at today’s media and the internet, it is apparent that ideas and meanings of Nordic are connected to several societal topics and themes. For example, The New York Times discusses how the Nordic nations have become successful because of their equal education system (Brooks, 2020). Amongst many perspectives and topics on the Nordic countries, the Guardian analyses suitability of the Nordic welfare state model in a British context and the popularity behind the Scandinavian style (Bunting, 2008; Ferrier, 2016). The World Happiness Report has listed the Nordic countries as the happiest countries in the world for several years (Begley Bloom, 2021). The popularised concepts of the Danish *hygge*, the Swedish *lagom* and the Finnish *pantsdrunk* stand as particular cultural characteristics for the Nordic (Nikel, 2019; Parkinson 2015; Rantanen, 2018).

By only touching the surface of the different meanings of the word Nordic, it is possible to see that there is a tendency to see the Nordic countries and nations as similar kind of societal and cultural entities that then represent something different in comparison to many other regions and countries in the world. It is not only a cultural concept that is defined outside the Nordic region, but there are several different conceptualisations of Nordic culture within the Nordic nations. Cultural and political organisations, such as the Nordic Council of Ministers, the Nordic Council and the Nordic Culture Fund have contributed to a positive development of transnational cooperation for decades (see e.g. The Nordic Council and The Nordic Council of Ministers, n.d; The Nordic Culture Fund, n.d. -a). In politics, some parties in Nordic parliaments have harnessed the concept of Nordic culture as a rhetoric tool for connecting to particular cultural heritage (see e.g. SD, n.d.). While one actor perceives the concept as a way to improve the society to become more inclusive and tolerant, another party uses the concept as a tool to legitimise superiority over other cultures.

Nevertheless, all the different conceptualisations above participate in forming the image of Nordic culture in the present. The challenge that I have encountered is that these multiple and varying meanings can lead to confusion when people understand the Nordic culture from different perspectives. During my project at the Nordic Culture Fund, I had scheduled two meetings on the same day. I had agreed to first meet a Danish artist at his studio at Refshaleøen in Copenhagen. Afterwards, in the centre of Copenhagen, I met with a person interested in new working opportunities at the official Nordic cooperation. The artist was clear with his criticism towards what was called Nordic cooperation when it, in his view, encourages artists to focus on networking and collaborations instead of creating something new. He found it difficult to see himself as a global or even Nordic citizen when his artistic and creative starting points were well-grounded on his local Danish culture. The second meeting was then the total opposite of the first one. The person I met saw the importance of finding ways to work and communicate together in the Nordic region. According to her, it is necessary to develop and maintain cultural and political relations between the Nordic countries, which are threatened by globalisation. As I interpreted her sayings, it would be better to only work for Nordic cooperation between the Nordic states and not to include the world outside.

Both of these meetings were contradicting the views that the Nordic Culture Fund sees as essential for the Nordic cultural life. The fund supports projects that, in different ways, aim to promote and contribute to cultural cooperation and development in the Nordic region and globally. For example, with its new funding programme Globus, the fund aims “to meet artists where they are, support them with trust and with willingness to take risks, thereby making room for global perspectives on our part of the world” (The Nordic Culture Fund, n.d. -b). As it is possible to see here, the first person did not see creative and artistic collaborations as important as the fund does. Furthermore, the second one was sceptical of global ambitions. The two meetings showed me that Nordic culture does not only mean new possibilities and progressive development, but it can also be a factor that limits artists to create new. It was also obvious that not everyone interprets global influence and connections as something useful and needed for Nordic culture.

As I have intended to show in this part, the concept of Nordic culture can point out and mean several different things depending on the situation and context. Later on, this thesis will see Nordic culture as an open and fluid cultural concept that is formed through interpretations amongst people who work in and contribute actively to the Nordic cultural life. In this sense, Nordic culture is seen as somewhat more abstract than defined, but it is still important to keep in mind the various ways people perceive and comprehend the concept in the society.

1.2 Previous research

Nordic studies of society and culture are not new nor undiscovered area. Through common political aims for decades, the idea of forming and developing a culturally and societally uniform region has been politically relevant many times. In academia, the Nordic region has provided endlessly new sources for studying the Nordic society (see, e.g. Bakke, 2001; Duelund, 2003, 2008; Heikkinen, 2005; Mangset, Kangas, Skot-Hansen & Vestheim, 2008; Power, 2009). Studies have touched such themes as the political influence of the nationalistic movements called Scandinavism and Nordism (e.g. Haarder Ekman, 2010; Hillström & Sanders, 2014), transnational activities across the borders in the Nordic region (e.g. Berg, Linde-Laursen & Löfgren, 2000; Gustafsson & Sanders, 2006) and cultural continuity (e.g. Jönsson, Walette & Wienberg, 2008). Through different perspectives and with the help of several academic disciplines, Nordic culture and society constantly work as sources for analyses and studies, as well as societal discussions and debates.

When looking specifically at the Nordic region's cultural and artistic field and cultural policies, several authors have focused on comprehending and analysing different cultural and societal dimensions in forming a uniform cultural model for the Nordic region. According to Peter Duelund (2003, 2008), current cultural policies have been developed since the aftermath of the Second World War as the idea of a common Nordic area started to take form. In creating a modern welfare state, cultural policies saw culture as one of the cornerstones in building a democratic Nordic society. The cultural model in the Nordic countries consists of several elements that reflect the ideas and themes that have been central to the Nordic community. Including aspects of enlightenment, liberty and egalitarianism, and the welfare state and national aims, the Nordic cultural model has contributed to building the Nordic welfare society as people know it today (Mangset et al., 2008).

Nevertheless, despite interests in developing a shared cultural model, the Nordic countries have primarily focused on creating cultural models on a national level and, therefore, it is arguable to claim that there are differences between the artistic and cultural systems in the Nordic region (Bakke, 2001; Nielsen, 2012). As Heikkinen (2005) argues that there is no coherence between public cultural policies in the Nordic region, the different Nordic states value, prioritise and classify arts and culture differently. It has been problematic to assume that the model is supportive and modern when it does not fully recognise the diverse and heterogeneous reality in the present time (Nielsen, 2012; Power, 2009).

Moreover, the role of the artistic and cultural field in political and economic discussions has not been clear. Despite the armlength principle in Nordic cultural systems, that the state should support arts and culture but not decide their form and practices, the autonomy and independence of the field are weakened in the latest years (Hvenegaard Rasmussen, 2018). Instead of functioning by its own rules and logic, the cultural field is controlled by other fields in society, such as politics and market economies. Vestheim (2012) describes that it is important to recognise how culture and politics as separate fields overlap each other. There should be more focus on how artistic and cultural fields are functioning in today's society. Furthermore, the Nordic cultural sector has needed to reposition its activities in society and redefine its relevance (Kann-Rasmussen, 2016; Kann-Rasmussen & Hvenegaard Rasmussen, 2019).

On an everyday level, the impacts of national identity on artistic and cultural activities are a constant source for previous studies. Antonisch (2009) analyses how a cultural and racial idea of Nordic superiority has formed in the latest centuries and why the modern concept of multiculturalism can be perceived both as a positive and negative effect in society. McIntosh (2015) criticises how there is a tendency of believing that today's society wants to see Norwegian cultural identity as multicultural and tolerant. Still, in practice, people do not recognise structural problems and homogeneity in the local culture. According to Lundström and Teitelbaum (2017), this is also a case in Sweden, where cultural protectionism has recently increased. As an earlier example, Hastrup (1992) has analysed the relation between Nordic people and other cultural and ethnic groups that have lived in and shared the Nordic region. The ideal image of Nordic culture seems to be more fragile and non-coherent than different political actors and marketing companies have wanted to show.

1.3 Problematisation

As described above, previous studies in Nordic society and culture have focused on historical, economic and political aspects and themes. The political and cultural unity between the nations and regions in the Nordic region has been questioned, explored, and analysed. Although previous research has shown differences between the Nordic countries and illustrated various cultural and societal images of the region, I think that the Nordic region is often perceived as a uniform entity that exists naturally without any clear hesitations. But because of the varying definitions and interpretations of the Nordic culture, I see it both interesting and essential to dig deeper into cultural meanings behind this cultural and societal concept. There is a need to analyse the various meanings of Nordic culture that are formed in the society.

Hvenegaard Rasmussen (2018) argues that the cultural field in the Nordic region should be studied further, and there is room for new empirical research for analysing and discussing the current state in the field. Moreover, the American anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1973) argues that anthropology is not always about answering society's most profound questions but recording the said. Therefore, I see my task in this thesis as two-folded. I bring in new insights on how Nordic culture is interpreted and what impact it has both within and outside the Nordic cultural field. Furthermore, as the cultural anthropologist Roy Wagner's (1981) conceptualisation of culture to be socially invented, I will focus especially on cultural and social aspects that contribute to renew the image of Nordic culture. This will be done by focusing on the Nordic Culture Fund and its initiative of connecting Nordic culture to global contexts. Even more, the thesis will include voices of contemporary artists and cultural practitioners, such as people who work in artistic and cultural institutions, curators and researchers. Hence, this thesis will primarily focus on the artistic and cultural field – its institutions and people – but it will also touch on themes and topics on a broader scale in relevant societal and cultural-political discussions.

1.4 Aims & research questions

As stated earlier, the objectives in this thesis are to investigate the concept of Nordic culture – what it does and what role it has – in the artistic and cultural field today and to discuss possibilities in using and integrating its fluid interpretations in the society. Therefore, this thesis aims to capture multiple meanings of Nordic culture and discuss the importance they have in the cultural sector. The thesis will look at how the Nordic Culture Fund and its global ambitions, as well as artists and cultural practitioners, understand, interpret, experience and express concepts of Nordic culture and identity. It will examine why it is relevant to broaden views on Nordic culture and what role the artistic and cultural field has in defining the Nordic both within and outside the Nordic region. For being able to explain relevant theoretical and methodological frameworks and to keep the focus on both interpretative and applied dimensions of Nordic culture, this thesis poses the following research questions:

1. How do different cultural and artistic practitioners define and interpret Nordic culture and identity as a part of their daily practices?
2. What is the role of Nordic culture in today's artistic and cultural field?
3. How do the cultural concepts of Nordic culture and identity contribute to constructing and developing today's society?

1.5 Disposition

In the following pages, I will describe the fieldwork behind this thesis and present a theoretical framework. I will then analyse and discuss Nordic culture and identity with the help of empirical material by lining up the study in the research questions that I presented above. The thesis is structured followingly:

In **chapter 2**, the methodology and chosen ethnographic methods will be presented and discussed. The chapter will illustrate the cultural analytical ground for the study, and it will demonstrate how the empirical material has been gathered. Furthermore, the chapter will discuss the ethics and limitations that this study has needed to notice and adapt with along the research process.

Chapter 3 will present theories that will contribute to analysis and discussions of the findings later in the thesis. The chapter will open up how culture as a cultural and societal concept is defined differently in anthropology and other disciplines. Also, theories that focus on explaining the role of cultural and national identity are discussed in this chapter. The theoretical framework is formed by applying theoretical and analytical concepts of Clifford Geertz, Stuart Hall, Kirsten Hastrup and Roy Wagner.

The two following chapters will present the results and analysis of the empirical material. **Chapter 4** will focus on the Nordic Culture Fund's development strategy and global ambitions, based on interviews, a focus group session, and autoethnography. **Chapter 5** will then deepen into individual interpretations and conceptualisation of Nordic culture and identity, based on interviews and meetings with participating artists and cultural practitioners.

Finally, **chapter 6** will connect the findings from the previous chapters by discussing how the gathered and analysed knowledge can be used and applied outside the artistic and cultural field. The chapter will highlight the role of Nordic culture and identity in broader societal contexts, and it will connect the findings to relevant topics in culture policies. Also, the chapter will touch on the question of the autonomy of the cultural field. **Chapter 7** will conclude the study, and it will present suggestions for the application of the new knowledge and further studies.

2. Methodology and empirical material

This chapter will present and discuss the methodology and research strategies that I have chosen to suit best for this study. Because this thesis wants to investigate and analyse interpretations of Nordic culture and identity as socially constructed concepts, the overall focus will be on elaborations and conceptualisations made by the participating informants from the artistic and cultural field. In this chapter, I will first base the methodology on theories of conducting cultural analysis. Afterwards, I will present the fieldwork and chosen strategies that have contributed to the process of gathering the empirical material. I will also touch on ethical considerations and limitations regarding the research process and gathered research material.

2.1 Conducting cultural analysis

Throughout my studies in applied cultural analysis, I have learned that a cultural researcher should aim to gather knowledge that focuses on the qualitative and cultural sides of everyday life by focusing on every possible detail and nuance. Everything can be meaningful. Everything can make sense when looked at in a right angle, connected to relevant and suitable contexts and situations. Both Graffman and Börjesson (2011) and Löfgren (2014) describe that the general interest in ethnographic research methods that reveal cultural aspects in everyday life has increased. Ethnography is a research method and a qualitative way to gather knowledge that focuses on what individual persons think and do. It is about finding relevance in the dynamic, constantly changing world. It reveals things in everyday life that otherwise would not be visible – things that have been taken for granted (Ehn, Löfgren & Wilk, 2016). This thesis focuses thus on exploring and investigating interpretations and perceptions of Nordic culture that otherwise might not be seen or realised in the society.

One strategic starting point in studying culture is to see the field as socially constructed. With this premise, it is clear that there is no neutral, natural or objective form of social reality, but everything is comprehended by people in various social and cultural contexts. In this actor-based perspective, Aspens' (2009) theory of *empirical phenomenology* can work as a theoretical and methodological guideline for studying socially constructed realities. By grounding the core idea of phenomenology – that is, to base an analysis on the lived, dynamic world, not assumptions of an objective world – on empirical approaches, empirical phenomenology focuses on explaining theories by those meaning structures that one has identified and conceptualised from empirical material. In other words, knowledge is produced in a sort of zigzagging movement between theories and the physical world. Aspens' approach gives room to explore possibilities and modify methodology both in theoretical sources and

empirical evidence from the field. As Wagner (1981) describes the process of studying culture, an anthropologist bases his or her analyses on phenomenal existence, grounded on observations and participation in the field.

On a more concrete level, cultural analysis is a tool for conceptualising and explaining what happens in the social world. It is then not only about understanding what happens in the physical world but, depending on particular research, it is necessary to collect relevant material in those places – both physical and non-physical – that suits them best (Hirvi, 2012). According to Löfgren (2014), cultural analysis is a methodological tool that can “capture dimensions of actions that are hard to verbalise” (p. 79). By not only focusing on academic aspects and tools but a bricolage can also help to combine the most suitable and relevant sources and material for research. As Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1995) argues that everyday life does not exist by those labels and boxes that different academic and scientific approaches aim to construct, it is crucial to recognise complexity in the studied world. It is about improvising and seeing what is out there instead of being bound to certain previously defined rules.

One often repeating theme in discussing research methodology and strategies touches the question of subjectivity and objectivity. As Wagner (1981) argues, an anthropologist needs to deal with certain relativity in his or her work. He or she will relate to his or her own culture while observing other cultures. Instead of aiming for objectivity, the researcher cannot see the social world neutrally or objectively. It is necessary to understand how the researcher self is positioned in the field and which things are taken for granted. Bourdieu (2003) reminds that there will always remain subjectivity in social research. Furthermore, Holt (2003) argues that ethnography always includes autobiography, and it is thus reasonable to be reflexive when analysing empirical material. When I choose to work with ethnography and conduct cultural analysis, I include myself in the research process. The produced knowledge is thus bound to particular social and cultural situations, and even though one would aim to reach a certain level of objectivity in her or his study, in the end, there remains subjectivity (Skeggs, 2012).

A cultural researcher experiences and participates in the studied field. He or she interprets and describes the social world from his or her point of views, and the new knowledge is situated in the contexts where he or she is conducting the study (Geertz, 1973; Conquergood, 1991). In this light, it is necessary to understand the researcher’s position in the field and have self-reflective considerations when doing ethnography (Davies, 2008). As in the case of this thesis, my study is highly based on my experiences and daily activities at my workplace. Similarly to Hoebler’s & Kerwin’s (2013) discussion of self-ethnography, I am an insider in my organisation where I construct personal meanings and narratives based on my several identities

that contribute to producing new knowledge. As a researcher, I participate in the social world that I am about to observe (Bourdieu, 2003).

Lögfren (2014) describes everyday life as a constantly changing machinery constructed in an assemblage of co-existing things, which will always remain partly a mystery for an ethnologist. With the methodological base that I have described and discussed above, this thesis will conduct a cultural analysis on Nordic culture and identity by basing the analysis on empirical material gathered through ethnographic methods. Even though it will focus on the thoughts and interpretations that participants and interviewees have expressed, this thesis is also my contribution to explaining what Nordic culture could be.

2.2 Gathering new knowledge

As presented earlier, this thesis is based on my cultural analytical project at the Nordic Culture Fund in Autumn 2020. My main task was to help the fund develop a new funding programme Globus, which aims to support artistic and cultural projects in global contexts. The core idea in my work was to gather new knowledge and information from the field that would help me to show individual perceptions of artistic and cultural practices both within and outside the Nordic region. In practice, I met several artists and other cultural actors for hearing how they comprehend and interpret Nordic culture and identity, as well as global influences and contexts in their daily work. In the meetings with the participants, I asked them how they work with the idea of Nordic culture and how they relate their creative practices to global themes and contexts. As a result of the project, my analysis could show that the Nordic Culture Fund had successfully listened and communicated with the field by adapting and developing funding programmes and other activities after the demand in the field. It was seen as an important and proactive action to focus more on the global when several actors were active outside the Nordic region. Furthermore, several participants also saw it necessary that the fund and other cultural organisations establish and carry on with a continuous and interactive dialogue in the artistic and cultural field. The direction was right, but the fund should continue with the process.

I started the research project by searching for informants from the field who could meet me for an interview and talk about their perceptions and understandings of Nordic culture and identity. Like in a snowball effect, I was first struggling with finding just a few people for participating in the study, but within a few weeks, I had my calendar fully booked for meetings with several artists and cultural practitioners, as well as interviews with my colleagues at the Nordic Culture Fund. Inspired by Asper's (2009) concept of non-structured interviews, I created an interview guide (see Appendix A) with several categories but not in a particular

order. Davies (2008) describes that ethnographic interviews need to build on social and cultural knowledge of the researched field. My purpose was thus to create a model for interviews reflecting both on the fund's aims and the contexts that the informants are working and living in their daily lives. Creating the interview guide was a self-reflective process for me in which I approached the artistic and cultural field from several points of view. I was not only an interviewer, but I was a representative for the fund, a student who researches the field and a Nordic citizen with great interest in the Nordic. Moreover, I could benefit from my background as a dance artist as I had some knowledge of the practical circumstances in the artistic field.

Although I had planned not to follow any particular structure in the interviews, I ended up following the same order in discussions. Nevertheless, the semi-structured interviews gave me essential and deep-going insights into individual perceptions and interpretations. Most of the interviews took place online partly because of COVID-19, partly because of the long distance between the informants who lived across the Nordic countries and outside the Nordic region and me. Stewart and Williams (2005) discuss that social research online can give more flexibility for planning and possibilities to get in the field than research in the physical world, but, at the same time, it can be challenging to reach the wanted informants. The latter might withdraw themselves from the research at the last minute. Despite the possible challenges and risks in doing research online, I found it natural to meet the informants through Zoom or Google Hangout. Although the interview sessions were not similar to the physical ones, I got a great chance to record the meetings for later use. Also, I think that the global pandemic had taught the participant to communicate via online channels. Therefore, the online interviews did not seem to be awkward or difficult for the informants.

The fieldwork was not only about conducting interviews, but I attended several internal and external meetings at the fund where the focus was on other topics but still relevant for my project. Similarly to Alvesson's (2003) and Kerwin's and Hoerber's (2015) ideas of doing ethnography in a familiar place, the fieldwork was about recognising my position in the field and comprehending my possibilities as an insider. To keep track of this, I wrote a field diary to document my thoughts and feelings when I participated in daily activities at the Nordic Culture Fund. Instead of having challenges in getting access to the field, I needed to recognise the effects of being an insider in the organisation that I aimed to study.

In January 2021, it was clear to me that I wanted to continue studying the same themes and aspects that I had worked on in the project at the fund. I thought that the empirical material that I had gathered earlier still had more to tell and that there was room to deepen the cultural analysis in academic dimensions. At the same time, I found the earlier material too familiar

and bound to the questions that the Nordic Culture Fund had set. To grasp some new ideas and thoughts from within the fund, I arranged a focus group meeting with my colleagues in February 2021. One clear advantage of organising a focus group session instead of individual interviews is that participants can stimulate and interact with each other (Davies, 2008). The situation can feel more open and accessible for discussions when there are several participants. Also, the researcher does not need to direct the conversations as much as he or she needs to do in one-to-one interviews or, even better, the researcher can recruit a moderator to lead the discussion, letting the researcher stay as an observer in the group session (Davies, 2008; Fallon & Brown, 2002). By following these principles, I arranged an online group session with my colleagues where I had asked a friend from the MACA programme to lead the meeting as a moderator while I could focus on taking notes and observe the situation.

Besides the fieldwork described above, I have gathered empirical material by conducting netnography. As a part of my everyday life, I have followed interesting and relevant discussions on social media and read news about Nordic culture. Also, I attended the Swedish cultural-political convention *Folk och Kultur 2021* in February 2021, where I could observe and gather information from discussions that touched on culture policies in Sweden and the Nordic countries.

2.3 Working with the empirical material

The empirical material in this thesis consists mainly of 16 interviews and one focus group session with my colleagues at the Nordic Culture Fund. In order to make this clear, all the meetings with the informants are listed in the table below (see table 1). Twelve of them are conducted with artists and other cultural actors, while three of them are conducted with my colleagues at the fund. In addition, the analysis and discussion in this thesis will lean on the field notes from the research project and my general thoughts and elaborations as an employee at the Nordic Culture Fund. I will also include material from the Internet to add more inspiration and relevant information for this paper.

Table 1

Interviews and focus group session in a chronological order

Type	Date	Informant(s)	Role
Interview	2020-08-31	Frederik	Theatre director from Denmark
Interview	2020-09-04	Andrea	Cultural expert from Greenland
Interview	2020-09-07	Albert	Cultural expert from Denmark

Table 1*Interviews and focus group session in a chronological order*

Type	Date	Informant(s)	Role
Interview	2020-09-09	Jennifer	Art curator from the United States
Interview	2020-09-10	Katrine	Director for a Danish cultural organisation
Interview	2020-09-15	Liv	Employee at the Nordic Culture Fund
Interview	2020-09-16	William	Employee at the Nordic Culture Fund
Interview	2020-09-17	Saara	Employee at the Nordic Culture Fund
Interview	2020-09-17	Jaana	Artist and cultural actor from Finland
Interview	2020-09-18	Magnus	Visual artist from Denmark
Interview	2020-09-23	Josefine	Fashion writer and researcher from Denmark
Interview	2020-09-29	Emma	Fashion writer from Norway
Interview	2020-10-09	Lily	Art curator from Canada (lives in Denmark)
Interview	2020-10-12	Tyler	Artist from the United States
Interview	2020-10-13	Sakari	Director for an artist programme in Finland
Interview	2020-10-15	Erik	Circus artist from Sweden (lives in Denmark)
Focus group	2021-02-04	Liv, Minna, Peter, Saara, William	The personnel of the Nordic Culture Fund

This study has taken approximately one year, starting with preparations for the cultural analytical project at the Nordic Culture Fund in June 2020 until the writing of the thesis in Spring 2021. The empirical material is thereby gathered and processed continuously for several months. A significant part of this process has been about noting, transcribing and translating the material from the recorded interviews with artists, cultural actors and the personnel of the Nordic Culture Fund. Bucholtz (2000) discusses that there is no one correct or right way to transcribe spoken worlds and that one should pay attention to what is transcribed and how this is done. Instead of seeing transcriptions as a standardised and neutral way to put spoken words in a written form, a researcher needs to consider if the purpose of transcriptions is to represent or interpret the said. Moreover, it is not always simple to decide if the transcribed words reflect the actual everyday language or if the transcription is literalised, making the process of transcribing invisible. But, as Bucholtz (2000) argues, “[w]e are not machines, but interpreters of texts and our transcripts must necessarily select out the details most important for our analysis” (p. 1461).

Following Bucholtz' principle, my purpose with transcriptions has been to focus on the aspects that I find relevant for this thesis. I have not focused on linguistic details or particular characteristics in speech, but my main interest has been in the content of the interviews. Because of this, the final transcriptions have mostly saved the spoken words as I have caught them in recordings. Because the interviews are taken either in Swedish, Danish, Norwegian, Finnish or English and while the purpose of my work has been to write this thesis in English, I have needed to interpret more or less freely the said words and translate them to suit in the final text. As Rendall (1997) has translated Walter Benjamin's thoughts of the translator's task, "a translation [...] cannot have any significance for the original" (p. 153), but, still, it is more than directly transformed message and communication. Although a translation is bound to the original version, it is a rewritten work with its own significance.

In October 2020, when I was writing analysis and summarising the research project for the fund, I worked with post-it notes to categorise, group and filter the information I had received from the informants. Lined with the purpose of producing knowledge that helps to improve and develop funding programmes, I looked at the material through four main categories: Nordic, global, funding and future. This systematic way seemed to suit well when I intended to show clear results and suggestions for future development. On the contrary then, during the process of writing this thesis, I have wanted to keep particular concepts and categories more open while, at the same time, I have aimed to narrow my focus on the content that deals with the questions of Nordic culture and identity. Still, as Davies (2008) discusses, ethnography is about jumping between necessary generalisations and creative choices for showing the experienced life. What is needed is to maintain a self-reflective mindset and critical connection to theories chosen for the study (Aspers, 2009; Davies, 2008). The empirical material in this thesis is constantly processed, reflected to and related over different theoretical perspectives and societal happenings in the surrounding world.

For me, cultural analysis is a constant process in which a researcher aims to catch the lived life and experiences. At the same time, I am bound to transform and produce material that is relevant, informative and helpful for my client or other audiences, such as academia and other professionals. Similarly with Aspers (2009) and Davies (2008), who describe this process as a constant negotiation and adaption between the researcher, theories, and the real world, I have continuously handled the empirical material, even while writing this thesis. Therefore, I intend to show and analyse the results and findings as transparently and clearly in the following pages that it is possible to see where the final analysis and discussions come from.

2.4 Ethical considerations & limitations

Lined with Ellis' (2007) idea of *relational ethics*, which “recognizes and values mutual respect, dignity, and connectedness between researcher and researched, and between researchers and the communities in which they live and work” (p. 4), I have aimed to be respectful and faithful to the original material and sources when I analyse and discuss the empirical material in this thesis. Although no one who has participated and contributed to this study has found the discussed themes and topics too personal and intimate, I find it necessary to be careful when using the material based on individual sayings and elaborations.

In practice, the empirical material used in this thesis has been gathered with the full consent of every informant. Before the meetings, I had asked them if they were okay with me recording the discussions for later use in the research report for the Nordic Culture Fund and my master's thesis. Therefore, every informant has given their approval for using their opinions and sayings as a part of this research. Moreover, before I started to go through the empirical material again in January 2021, I mailed the participants and sent them a letter of agreement to inform them about the thesis and my wish to continue using their interviews. In this second round, only one person wanted to withdraw her participation in the study.

To make sure that everything I will write about in this thesis will focus on the content in the empirical material instead of the individual persons behind it, I have anonymised every informant by giving them pseudonyms. Most participants have not wished them to be anonymised when the topic is not too intimate or personal for them. Still, I see it necessary not to focus on particular persons but rather on their thoughts and the cultural and artistic field. Davies (2008) discusses that it is the researcher in the end who interprets the material. Therefore, I consider it more suitable for this thesis not to emphasise informants. The thesis will instead focus on the content that is comprehended and written by myself.

One clear aspect of ethics and ethnography is recognising and being critical towards the researcher's role in the field (Davies, 2008). In my case, I have had a particular insider position at the Nordic Culture Fund as a researcher and student assistant. Furthermore, I have approached the field as a Nordic citizen. Both of these positions had provided me with a certain knowledge of the field before I entered it. I have had relatively easy access to the relevant and essential sources and people. However, this position has also challenged me to observe and analyse the field and the gathered material from new perspectives when I find some automatic habits and manners to lead my choices during the process. Also, I need to admit that my insider position at the fund makes it challenging to see everything from a critical perspective. But as

Alvesson (2003) discusses that an insider position can provide deeper insights in the researched field, I have aimed to recognise my position and distance myself from the studied objects by leaning on theories, other external material and self-reflection.

Regarding some limitations in this thesis, I have needed to adapt the project to the surrounding world and happenings that have affected the field. As an essential premise for empirical phenomenology, Aspens (2009) advises that fieldwork should include both observations and interviews for securing that the study consists of both theory and actors' perspective coherently. Also, as Löfgren (2014) exemplifies that bricolage can be fruitful in ethnographic research, I have intended to find the most relevant material in several different places. My original plan for the research project at the Nordic Culture Fund included physical meetings and observations and meetings online with those who live outside Denmark and Southern Sweden. The idea was to follow artistic practices and organisational activities together with more extended discussions with the participants. However, as the global pandemic has been a part of everyday life for over a year now, I could not fulfil my project plan when, first, I could not travel to planned meetings and, secondly, I could not work at the fund's office when guidelines in Denmark advised everyone to stay and work at home.

Davies (2008) discusses that interviews cannot provide direct knowledge of social life, but they are more about interactions and interpretations between the interviewee and interviewer. Related to these ideas, I need to admit that this study could have had broader ethnographic and cultural material for being able to provide valuable and generative knowledge. Still, by gathering the empirical material in the current situation with the pandemic, I see that I have done my best to adapt my work to the circumstances. Although the analysis is leaning heavily on the interviews, I think that I have been able to form a study that provides new interesting and valuable knowledge for future activities and studies.

3. Theoretical framework

The word *culture* itself can be defined and analysed in many different ways, depending on context and situation. In anthropology (see, e.g. Wagner, 1981; Geertz, 1973; Hastrup, 2010), culture is a general determiner that helps with articulating and framing the studied phenomenon or object. In turn, cultural and political actors might need to frame and categorise culture to include certain forms and expressions. As described earlier, this thesis will base on the premise of understanding culture to be socially constructed in different daily practices. But as Hacking (1999) argues that it is too simple and self-evident to see everything as social constructions, it is necessary to define what Nordic culture means in the context of this thesis. In order to grasp the interpretive, context-bound concepts of Nordic culture and identity more coherently, this chapter will present central cultural theories and frame them in two theoretical concepts: (1) variation of culture and (2) construction of cultural identity. Whether it is about analysing and decoding symbols, making sense of semiotic meanings or diving into the sea of cultural identities, this thesis will look at social and cultural phenomena as constantly forming and changing instead of being stable and fully defined realities.

3.1 Varying concepts of culture

The American cultural anthropologist Roy Wagner (1981) describes the word *culture* as a general definer for anthropologists that “studies the phenomenon of man, not simply man’s mind, his body, evolution, origins, tools, art, or groups alone, but as parts or aspects of a general pattern, or whole” (p. 1). Culture is a general concept that includes several meanings and interpretations – from a foreign culture to be studied to someone’s personal life. The word is so broadly and generally used that Wagner discusses that anthropologists use it with hope or faith. Similarly, while this thesis will discuss and analyse interpretations of Nordic culture and identity, it is also hoping that it can broaden and redefine specific definitions, comprehensions and conceptualisations of these ideas. Although there are several national, regional and institutional ways to define the Nordic, there are also more varying ways to picture the concept when individual people perceive and interpret it daily. As Geertz (1976) describes that art is not only about meaning, but it exists by its own rules, there are several ways of defining what Nordic culture is. It is a system full of symbolic meanings that take form in daily practices.

According to Wagner (1981), culture is both a social and personal concept. It is possible to analyse culture through culturally and socially shared and well-known concepts, conventions as he calls them. While still, everything can be culture, the ways people understand it and make it meaningful are bound to particular patterns and forms in their shared and common social

reality. The familiar and conventional participates in forming both individual and social definitions of culture:

Any given symbolic element can be involved in many cultural contexts, and the articulation of these contexts can vary from one moment to the next, from one person to another, or from one group of people to another. Yet communication and expression are possible only to the extent that the parties involved share and understand these contexts and their articulations. (Wagner, 1981, p. 38)

Although the concept of culture is arbitrary and non-predictable on a certain level, it is still produced and made visible through everyday social and cultural contexts and associations. At the same time, culture is individually comprehended and contextualised in different social situations. Similarly in Nordic culture, new definitions and interpretations are related to previous conventional comprehensions and thoughts. Without the shared dimension of culture, it would not be possible to make sense and understand new, varying forms of culture.

One might think that culture as a concept is constructed and formed in a stable, organic and neutral way – every human being is free to interpret and define what culture, or a specific form of cultures, means to him or her. However, the process of comprehending culture is not that conscious or straightforward as it might seem. Bourdieu (1980) discusses that culture, seen in his case as somewhat more aesthetically defined, is based on a specific aristocratic hierarchy. Based on cultural qualifications and educational premises of describing a particular culture to be proper and correct, certain art forms and cultural expressions are seen to be purer and culturally accurate than others. Furthermore, this class-based institutionalised system prefers usually form to function, which strengthens the distinctions between varying interpretations of arts and culture in different social classes (Bourdieu, 1987). Thus, it is essential to understand by whom ideas of Nordic culture are decided and what influence various national and governmental institutions have had on constructing cultural images of the Nordic region.

Lined up with Wagner's (1981) idea that culture – or cultures – are realised in processes where a researcher can only define something to be particularly culture if he or she can recognise own culture, it becomes reasonable to understand the Nordic culture by asking how individual people relate their cultural being and belonging to other surrounding people and things. Culture does not only exist but is constructed and realised through different cultural and social happenings and contexts. As Geertz (1973) emphasises that descriptions of other cultures are always interpretations, almost fictional in this way, Nordic culture cannot be seen as a stable

and unchangeable entirety. Instead, it is recognised by conventions in society and constructed as new through different social and cultural processes and expressions. This thesis will approach Nordic culture as interpretations that recognise conventional definitions from the past while comprehending the concept more openly in cultural and societal contexts. By following Wagner's thoughts of culture, Nordic culture can be seen as a cultural concept which constantly is formed and invented in people's everyday life.

While basing the idea of culture on cultural theories, for example, by Wagner and Geertz, the concept of culture seems to symbolise several different things in society. Definitions of culture are dependent on social and cultural contexts in which a researcher observes, analyses and defines them to be a particular culture. As Hastrup (2010) describes this analytical perspective as familiar for anthropologists and other social scientists, it is crucial to notice that meanings of culture can be narrower in other areas. For example, from the perspective of culture policies, culture can be seen as a representant for a particular societal field amongst other political players (see, e.g. Marker & Rasmussen, 2018). Culture policies tend to idealise culture as open for interpretations as possible, but in practice, this political field focuses on cultural activities instead of defining culture (Harding, 2010). While this thesis aims to keep the definition of culture open for every direction, it still needs to understand how and why people define and frame certain cultural phenomena and objects to be a particular culture.

3.2 Construction of cultural identity

The Danish anthropologist Kirsten Hastrup (2010) describes culture as an element in the social world that contributes to people's identification processes. It is a way to define the past and gather knowledge that helps to understand what is meaningful. Culture connects people, and it is formed in social and cultural encounters and meetings as a part of everyday life. As one of the multiple dimensions in the concept of culture, identity and social structures create and contribute to defining particular cultures. Especially in the empirical material, this thesis touches on these aspects in the following pages, where the informants discuss and elaborate Nordic culture through different cultural and societal structures and ways to identify themselves amongst other people and cultures in the world.

It becomes central to understand how and why a nation or region contribute to forming cultural identity in this context. In a broader meaning, it is important to acknowledge that the process of identifying a nation is an ideological and imagined community that is grounded on commonly recognised cultural roots (Anderson, 1991). In many cases, common traditional symbols are collected and found for building a common national culture that would liberate

from previous colonial influences. Geertz (1973) discusses that the will and activities that have led to nationalistic movements in previously colonised nations have originated from a wish of becoming free. Not only independence was enough after a colonial power had left the place, but there were political and cultural needs to identify the new reality through unity and integrity. "Nationalism came to mean, purely and simply, the desire – and the demand – for freedom", Geertz (1973) explains (p. 239). According to this, an identity based on nationalistic thoughts seems to be significant for people in defining their belonging.

It is not the same thing to speak about a nation or a country. As Geertz (1997) exemplifies, there are usually conscious activities to build a national and cultural entity that can be associated not only as a nation but also as a country or a state with a coherent and integrated society. It is about creating a shared, historically significant image of the nation:

There is also a deliberate attempt, indeed a desperate one, to suppress this and force the word in toward a semantic coincidence with the others, to produce, whether as "country," "people," "society," "state," or "nation," a generic unit of collective agency—bounded, nameable, single, and consistently defined: an historical self. (Geertz, 1997, p. 236)

National identity is then about someone's personal comprehension of historical, political and cultural factors that are collectively seen as common national attributes. Although Geertz' research and theories are based on his observations and studies in non-Western nations where the relation to previous colonial powers is somewhat different compared to the Nordic region, I see his ideas helpful when comprehending the concept of national identity. As he discusses that collectively shared images of a common nation are based on systems in which different collectively important symbols get national meanings, Nordic culture and society share values and ideas and cultural expressions and systems that are believed to be shared in the region.

Stuart Hall (1989) discusses that there are two ways to approach the concept of cultural identity. First, identity can mark someone's belonging. It is a marker for one's position in a cultural continuation. At the same time, this identification process reveals another way to comprehend identity. When one position himself or herself, the person will also identify the difference between other people and things. It is then up to identification processes afterwards to decide whether the identified difference means something positive. In global contexts, the process of self-identification becomes even more evident when different cultural images and beliefs partake in forming cultural and national identity. What is essential to understand is to

realise, as Hall (1997) argues in this discussion, that “every identity is an exclusion” (p. 14). Identity includes certain people and cultural elements while, at the same time, it distances them from others.

When it comes to the field of arts and culture, Hall’s theory of cultural identity is a helpful tool to understand why and how identity influences and participates in forming cultural representations. In the context of Caribbean cinema, Hall (1989) discusses and illustrates several ways to read historically and culturally bound expressions:

I have been trying to speak of identity as constituted, not outside but within representation; and hence of cinema, not as a second-order mirror held up to reflect what already exists, but as that form of representation which is able to constitute us as new kinds of subjects, and thereby enable us to discover who we are. (p. 80)

Artistic and cultural expressions, such as films, are tools for artists and other cultural actors to connect to their cultural past and work with and produce new ways to identify their culture. In this way, arts can be seen as media for transforming a culture that makes new in commonly shared contexts (Hall 1997). Hence, in Nordic culture, it can be helpful to ask which expressional and representative elements are essential for the Nordic. What is included and excluded? Why? Which meanings and symbols come up in people’s associations with Nordic culture? These are questions that can reveal by which terms and rules certain forms and ways of doing arts and culture are understood to belong to understandings of Nordic culture.

This thesis will continue to present findings and analyse how Nordic culture is defined and interpreted in the artistic and cultural field in the following pages. Culture in this context is perceived as an open and fluid concept. It is also defined in relations to particular social contexts where this concept participates in forming cultural and national identities.

4. The Nordic Culture Fund

Before this thesis focuses on analysing and discussing how artists and cultural practitioners define and interpret Nordic culture and identity in their artistic and creative work, I want to frame the topic by presenting the Nordic Culture Fund and its strategy to rethink and renew definitions of Nordic culture. By doing this, I believe that it is possible to understand more clearly how the informants in this study comprehend their participation in the field and their role in constructing contemporary images and expressions of Nordic arts and culture. Furthermore, the chapter can be seen as an example of a Nordic organisation that actively contributes to forming and promoting Nordic culture.

In the following pages, I will present how the Nordic Culture Fund contributes to new interpretations of Nordic culture and how the fund aims to encourage artists and cultural actors to rethink this concept in their creative work. The chapter also focuses on the role and responsibility that the fund has in the cultural field today.

4.1 Finding Nordic relevance both within and outside the Nordic region

The Nordic Culture Fund (n.d. -a) was founded in 1966, and since then, it has aimed to promote and support the development of artistic and cultural life in the Nordic region. Although the fund is part of the official Nordic co-operation together with the Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers, it has a somewhat more free position in relation to official cultural-political systems and institutions than other Nordic organisations, such as Nordic Culture Point. The Nordic Culture Fund has awarded grants for artistic and cultural projects relevant to cultural life in the Nordic countries through the years. Relevant for this thesis, in the past years, the fund has become more active in renewing comprehensions and understandings of Nordic culture by focusing more on global dimensions and contexts where artists and other cultural practitioners redefine and reinterpret Nordic culture in new ways. Also, the fund has aimed more than before to participate actively in cultural-political contexts than before.

In my work both as a researcher and student assistant at the Nordic Culture Fund, I have regularly encountered questions by applicants regarding assessment criteria for their applications. They find it often challenging to perceive an idea of Nordic culture that meets the fund's criteria. Previously, the fund required clearly that granted projects should include at least three collaborators from different Nordic countries. This concept secured that the projects would contribute to both new and existing co-operations in the Nordic region. However, afterwards, the Nordic Culture Fund has grounded this criterion on a more open and interpretative concept than before. Instead of focusing only on the number of Nordic

participants and collaborators, the fund focuses on the concept called *Nordic relevance*. The fund describes this on the assessment criteria for the Project Funding followingly:

The Fund assesses Nordic relevance on the basis of, for example:

- How the Nordic countries or Nordicism are included in the project.
- The degree to which the project is created and implemented by relevant players anchored in various locations in the Nordic countries, and possibly outside the Nordic region.
- The substance of the collaboration: the roles of partners and their involvement in the project.
- How the project promotes art and cultural life locally, in the Nordic countries, and possibly outside the Nordic region.
- How the project promotes exchange and interaction among artists and cultural players.

(The Nordic Culture Fund, n.d. -c, What is Project Funding?, Assessment criteria)

According to these criteria, Nordic relevance can mean several things. It is not only about the type and number of participants in a project. Neither it is about specific themes or topics. Instead, the fund emphasises the importance of a project's effects and contribution to contemporary artistic and cultural life that is anchored to Nordic themes and the concept of Nordicism. According to my colleague Liv, one reason for basing the requirement for support on the interpretive concept of relevance is about moving the whole idea of Nordic culture away from definitions that are based on geographical or national ideas. Instead, it emphasises more abstract and interpretive dimensions in creating and making Nordic culture:

When I started to work here at the fund, there was still this requirement of Nordic collaboration between three different Nordic countries. The actual co-operation was seen as more important than the idea of the Nordic. There was almost a nationalistic tone in it. It was based on something old and conventional. So, instead of this, we try to see something positive in the Nordic. What is it really about? How does it relate to the world? (Interview with Liv)

Liv discusses that during her time at the fund, the idea of Nordic culture has been changed to be more critical towards certain tendencies in the surrounding world, such as nationalism. Premises for Nordic culture felt outdated and irrelevant, especially for those artists and cultural actors who applied for support from the fund. The requirements for Nordic grants did not enable the development of arts and culture, but they defined too much which type of projects artists

and other actors should focus on. I have to admit that I used to understand collaborations between two Nordic countries to be Nordic enough. However, the longer I have worked at the fund, the more I have started to comprehend Nordic culture as something more abstract. It is not only about travelling and meeting people in another Nordic country. As my colleague William describes, Nordic culture should be seen as a somewhat more open concept than before:

The Nordic is a geographic region. Furthermore, it is an image of a region, and there are several ways to comprehend and value this image. It is then an abstract construction with different meanings. It symbolises a type of community. And it is more this direction that the fund is working for – it becomes more interesting then. [...] The Nordic is a central part of the projects that we support. They are free to formulate their ideas of the Nordic, basing on their own thoughts and values of the concept. It is thus clear that the definition of the Nordic is not the same nor universal. (Interview with William)

To see Nordic culture in various ways is not only about recognising how it has been defined before and where specific ideal images of Nordic culture have come from. Still, as the concept of Nordic relevance emphasises, it is also about acknowledging Nordic culture in new cultural and societal contexts and situations.

In comparison to earlier, Nordic relevance is defined more through artistic and cultural activities and practices than by the fund's definitions of the Nordic. It is the idea of Nordic culture in various aspects – both concrete and abstract – that should be considered instead of historical, national or geographical definitions. As my colleague Saara describes, the fund wants to give more room for artists and cultural practitioners to interpret Nordic culture in today's society:

Regarding the arts, we want to support activities that contribute to new broader comprehensions of Nordic art and culture – to add in new voices and comments. We want to strengthen the voice of those actors who we had not been heard before. We want to encourage to think in new ways. (Interview with Saara).

As it becomes clear here, the concept of Nordic relevance aims to open up definitions of Nordic culture. According to Liv, it is about to approach Nordic culture as an abstract and fluid idea instead of basing the concept on national or geographical determiners: "We see the Nordic more as an idea than a region when we talk about Nordic cooperation. We should see the Nordic

as an idea that goes beyond national premises.” Similarly to Hastrup (2010), who describes a culture in anthropologic terms as varying and dependent on societal and cultural contexts, the concept of Nordic relevance is open-minded and hopeful for new comprehensions of Nordic culture. There is a hope of providing artists to broaden their views on and expressions of the Nordic. A hope of Nordic culture as a fluid idea, not politically or geographically defined entity only. Although the term Nordic will always point to a geographically defined region, there are plenty of different, more abstract ways to construct and comprehend the idea. Nordic relevance does not limit or frame the Nordic to mean particular things, but it is constructed and interpreted in various ways in today’s artistic and creative practices. As Antonisch (2009) argues, opening up conceptualisations of national identity, in this case, Nordic relevance, is a tool for artists and cultural practitioners to examine and develop their personal approaches to Nordic culture. It might make definitions and imaginations of the Nordic more unclear and abstract, but, at the same time, it gives the cultural field a chance to comprehend, form and frame Nordic culture in new ways and to include something that is not perceived as Nordic before.

One clear aspect of the concept of Nordic relevance is about comprehending Nordic culture outside conventional approaches of the Nordic region. Embedded in the fund’s current strategy, this aspect is about to contribute to the Nordic culture that is connected to global contexts:

[...] we aim to ensure that culture can be without borders and open to encounters – so that all Nordic citizens, both new and established, can enjoy the same right to participate in cultural civil society, and so that Nordic relevance can be enhanced and renewed, with a global focus in mind. (The Nordic Culture Fund, n.d. -a, p. 4)

Ideally, the concept of somewhat more global culture would go hand in hand with the Nordic when they can be relevant for contemporary artists and other actors in the field. To be global can be a way to connect one local societal reality to other cultural concepts and systems in the world. Although it might seem that the global draws attention outside the local and Nordic cultures to the world, the fund sees it as a concept that can emphasise local cultural and artistic activities. By observing Nordic culture from a new point of view and questioning conventional premises in the Nordic, the fund sees it both valuable and necessary to look at global aspects and dimensions in relation to Nordic cultural life. Being global does not mean being less Nordic.

I see the global as a counterpart for the international. It is not based on the constructed borders between nations but it sees the world as a whole without borders. It is thus also important to see the global in local contexts. More we can think globally in local contexts, the more we can support positive development. Something can be both global and local. [...] Topics and themes are often somewhat global. They comment the society and touch societal challenges that cannot be found in single countries but they are shared in the global world. (Interview with Saara)

As Saara describes above, the global is not a stranger or enemy threatening our part of the world. Neither it is excluding local or Nordic dimensions in the artistic and cultural life but, instead, it gives new varying meanings and emphasises that several topics and themes are shared with other people in global contexts. The global perspective sees beyond national borders and focuses on cultural phenomena that are both local and global at the same time.

Similarly to Wagner's (1981) thoughts of socially constructed culture, the fund recognises historical roots in Nordic culture. Still, it is essential for Nordic relevance not to be bound to conventional, national or geographical premises. People do not have only one identity but multiple depending on their cultural position and context (Hall, 1997). As my colleague William discusses these global ambitions, the fund recognises how Nordic culture is related to global influences and contexts in the field:

We are working with something more artistic here. We see that we are connected to the world through humane aspects and communities. There are things that happen simultaneously all around the world. So the fund is also a part of this bigger world where artists see beyond national borders. Although they would work locally, for example, in peripheric areas, they still are related to and inspired by the rest of the world. (Interview with William)

For the fund, Nordic culture exists in several places. Instead of defining the Nordic by conventional and national premises, the fund contributes to new interpretations through the concept of Nordic relevance. It is a way to think new in terms of creating and expressing Nordic culture that is not bound only to the physical Nordic region. It is crucial to recognise and support artistic and cultural activities that take place and are formed both in local and global places. Nordic relevance means more than transnational collaborations between the Nordic countries. Instead, it can be found outside the Nordic region, defined by artists and cultural actors, not only by national and political institutions.

4.2 Freedom comes with responsibility

The Nordic Culture Fund is active on several levels in today's cultural support systems. It is related to other Nordic – both governmental and non-governmental – organisations. It is also located along the side of different cultural and artistic foundations. For example, the official Nordic cooperation is run and administrated politically by the Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers (n.d.). The Nordic Culture Point (n.d.) supports arts and culture in the Nordic and Baltic region. The non-governmental Norden associations focus on promoting transnational cooperation between the citizens in the Nordic region (Pohjola-Norden, n.d.; Foreningerne Nordens Forbund, n.d.). On a national level, national and private foundations support arts and culture in the Nordic countries, such as the Danish Arts Foundation, Swedish Arts Council and Arts Promotion Centre Finland. Also, there are several cultural Nordic foundations that support on a bilateral level, such as the Swedish-Finnish Cultural Foundation.

In its strategy, the fund describes the importance of acknowledging and working through different networks and relations to strengthen the artistic and cultural life in the Nordic region. “There is also a demand for a player who can bring together the national artistic and cultural institutions across the Nordic region and ensure that they meet and exchange knowledge and experience”, the fund states in its strategy (Nordic Culture Fund, n.d. -a, p. 12). The fund recognises how political and cultural institutions are basing their idea of Nordic culture on the cultural model that has been formed and developed since the aftermath of the Second World War (see, e.g. Duelund 2003, 2008; Frenander, 2010). In this model, Nordic culture is strongly connected to the Nordic geographical region, where certain cultural and political coherence has been shared for centuries. Somewhat natural relations justify co-operation between the Nordic countries without questioning the relevance and reasons behind them. According to my colleagues, the cultural image of the Nordic is not always as diverse as it should be, but old and outdated rhetoric and comprehensions are maintained instead. In the focus group session with the fund, my colleague Peter has described clearly the fund's position in the Nordic cultural system:

The fund is positioned both within and outside the system. And it is this outsider perspective that is needed, I mean within the official Nordic co-operation. We are not against the official system, but we look at it in a different way. Our task is to supplement by acting independently outside national agenda. We provide alternative images. (Peter, focus group session with the Nordic Culture Fund)

In the same session, William elaborates on the topic of the fund's position in the field. Although the fund is a part of official Nordic co-operation, it still wants to challenge the system:

It might be reasonable to describe our work to be paradoxical. While we are a part of the official Nordic co-operation, we want to challenge it at the same time. But we do not have clear aims in this, but we are testing and experimenting. So it is possible to see us to be a part of the traditions, but we still want to renew them. (William, focus group session with the Nordic Culture Fund)

As Hvenegaard Rasmussen (2018) questions if the Nordic cultural field is having an autonomous position amongst other cultural fields, and similarly with Harding's (2010) critique to the Nordic cultural model to be too narrow with its definition of culture, the Nordic Culture Fund identifies critically its position in the field where culture policies decide what kind of culture and arts is qualitative enough and worth of the society's support. By recognising its free position, the fund also sees that it is responsible for using and developing its freedom and representing the artistic and cultural field in societal and political contexts:

We have a unique role within cultural politics. We are active in several fields at the same time. We have an independent board that provides great freedom for our activities. We are free to express ourselves as we wish. We are thus responsible for utilising the knowledge of arts and culture that we gather in cultural political contexts. (Interview with Liv)

The fund's cultural-political strategy aims to identify relevance in societal contexts and react to the happenings and changes in the cultural field. It is about harnessing and utilising the possibilities that the independent position gives for the fund. Not every person or organisation in the field has the same opportunity to act as freely as the Nordic Culture Fund does.

The fund sees the development of cultural policies as an essential part of its strategy: "The changing conditions of culture and society emphasise the need for cultural policy to constantly act on an informed basis, and to engage in contexts that go beyond national borders." (Nordic Culture Fund, n.d. -a, p. 14) Here it is possible to notice how the fund wants to promote and develop an artistic and cultural life that is not limited to the national political agenda but to see the field as a broader entity. It is, therefore, necessary to recognise the role of cultural policy in this discussion. According to Liv, it is about strengthening the voice of culture in culture policies:

Culture is a vague part in politics. It is challenging to establish cultural-political discussions. And in the end, the fund is a relatively small player within this field. And then the discussions used to mainly focus on climate and sustainability, but then arts and culture are forgotten to include in these discussions. (Interview with Liv)

The fund finds today's political discussions of arts and culture to be vague and overshadowed by other topics and issues. Climate change and sustainable ways of living are almost natural and self-evident parts in critical discussions, while arts and culture are not noticed as much. Similarly with Hvenegaard Rasmussen's (2018) worries of the cultural field losing its autonomy, the fund is critical on how much the field can have an impact on today's political discourses. Despite the armlength principle that has been an essential part of culture policies in the Nordic countries (Frenander, 2010), arts and culture have become more dependent on other societal and political fields. As Peter describes political aspects in Nordic culture, it is crucial not to follow conventional and national definitions. There is nothing wrong with carrying with traditions, but Nordic culture policies should reach further from national politics:

Arts and culture are political, but it is challenging for us at the fund to point out and recognise them in today's political discourses and discussions. It is about providing new places and chances for renewal that does not only see the Dalecarlian horse but can include it with other aspects. I am not afraid of traditions but the future where nationalism is hiding. (Peter, focus group session with the Nordic Culture Fund)

The fund seeks new places, forums and relations that can help it to reach a more distinct and remarkable voice in current political discussions. Similarly, with its criticism towards criteria that emphasises national premises of arts and culture, the fund sees a threat of hiding nationalism behind politics today. Therefore, it aims to be an essential player in political discourses that touches the broad field of arts and culture. The fund identifies itself to be a Nordic organisation that does not follow official governmental and national strategies. Instead, the fund wants to adapt its strategy to the demand in the field, supporting the positive development of arts and culture and contributing to new interpretations of Nordic culture.

As shown in this chapter, the Nordic Culture Fund aims to renew definitions and comprehensions of Nordic culture by opening up its requirements for artistic and cultural support and increasing the strategic focus to global contexts. Through the concept of Nordic

relevance, the fund is willing to let artists and other cultural actors decide how to conceptualise Nordic culture and express Nordicness in the cultural field both within and outside the Nordic region. On a broader scale, this is also a way for the fund to reposition itself amongst other cultural and political institutions and actors in the Nordic scene, where it aims to act as a representative for the artistic and cultural field in societal and political discourses. According to Saara, the fund wants listen and follow artists and cultural practitioners in the field:

It is our ambition of supporting actors and their needs which differentiate the fund's work from the others. We listen and adapt our strategy to the demand in the field. (Saara, focus group session with the Nordic Culture Fund)

Wagner (1981) sees culture as a social and cultural concept that constructs new meanings through dialectal processes between conventional definitions and new cultural interpretations. Similarly, the Nordic Culture Fund recognises how the past has formed Nordic culture and encourages finding new ways and contexts for implementing it. In parallel with Hastrup's (2010) hopeful comprehension of culture that lives and constantly changes in social contexts, the Nordic Culture Fund aims to renew Nordic culture by opening up the ways of expressing the Nordic and finding new Nordic relevance in the field.

As an employee at the fund, I can understand the thoughts and ideas behind the concept of Nordic relevance. It is a way to let artists and cultural practitioners define and interpret Nordic culture more freely than before. However, several applicants have expressed confusion and criticism towards this criteria. Despite the fact that they could define and express the Nordic in their project in ways that do not follow any previous conceptualisations, they find it sometimes challenging with comprehending the concept. From their point of views, the Nordic Culture Fund is only one of other Nordic foundations and organisations that gives support for artistic and cultural activities. They do not know or see the more free position that the fund has and, therefore, they assume that the fund's definitions of Nordic culture are similar to other institutions. For them, the fund does not look like a cultural institution that works for strengthening their position but an author that does not understand their creative ideas.

For being able to illustrate how artists and cultural practitioners think and interpret Nordic culture, I will now switch the focus from the Nordic Culture Fund to those who work creatively and culturally in the field. They have applied for grants from the fund, or they are related to the fund in other ways. The next chapter will thus narrow the gap between the cultural actors in the field and the Nordic Culture Fund.

5. In dialogue with artists and cultural practitioners

As presented and discussed in the previous chapter, the fund aims to work for artists and cultural practitioners by listening to them and adapting its strategy after the demand in the artistic and cultural field. Also, the fund wants to be a central actor in cultural-political contexts to represent practitioners from the field. At the same time, the fund is a cultural organisation that assesses different project ideas whether or not they meet assessment criteria. This means that not every application are seen as valid for getting support from the fund.

In this light, it is necessary to focus on those who work, create and interpret the Nordic in the artistic and cultural field. Artists and cultural practitioners who apply for funding and stipends for their artistic and cultural works participate in creating and constructing the artistic and cultural Nordic. Every day several artists (e.g. painters, writers, designers and artists) and other cultural actors (e.g. curators, leaders and other professionals in cultural and cultural-political organisations, academics and journalists) articulate and express the Nordic as a part of the surrounding society. Especially when they apply for support from Nordic organisations and institutions, they need to elaborate on what Nordic means to them. Not always they are free to interpret Nordic culture, but they need to adapt their work to different requirements and definitions of the Nordic, defined by political and societal actors above them.

This chapter will focus on individual perceptions, definitions, and interpretations of Nordic culture and identity. By showing how different artists and cultural actors comprehend the Nordic in their work, this chapter will investigate and discuss the diverse and varying image of Nordic culture, made and constructed outside – but still related to – official national and political definitions of the Nordic. The chapter will also look at the future by discussing how the participating artists and cultural actors wish to develop their field.

5.1 Perceiving Nordic culture from within

When talking about Nordic culture with artists and cultural practitioners, I have found it interesting to ask them how they relate themselves to Nordic themes, aspects and identity when they aim to create new works in this context. Especially cultural and Nordic identity – the ways the informants see themselves in relation to the Nordic society and culture – come up in the discussions. Hall (1989) argues that identity that is defined by cultural factors are usually seen as stable and commonly shared. According to him, one “should think, instead, identity as a ‘production’, which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation”. (Hall, 1989, p. 68) He means that cultural identity as representation is constantly formed and articulated in specific cultural contexts in a particular time and space.

As discussed earlier in this paper, the Nordic countries share a common history that has formed ideologies and official co-operations based on today's Nordic society (see, e.g. Duelund, 2003; Harding, 2010; Kurunmäki & Strang, 2016). Similarly, in most of the interviews, the informants started with approaching the idea of the Nordic as a coherent system in which people across the Nordic nations shared similar values and where the higher living standard was maintained and taken care of by the society. Andrea, a cultural expert from Greenland, discusses characteristics in the uniform Nordic society followingly: "On a practical level, it is about having a similar system in such areas as health care and education." On a cultural level, several informants interpret Nordic culture as a way to frame a common shared community. It is a concept that connects people. Because of the similar societal and cultural background, it feels natural to work and collaborate with people from other Nordic countries. According to Josefine, a fashion writer and researcher from Denmark, Nordic culture symbolises almost like a hope of belonging together:

It is a cultural fellowship. An imaginary community. We would like to create a community.
[...] I see that there is a distinct way to define Nordic fashion. Of course, there are both similarities and differences, but we still are both proud and happy for the shared community.
(Interview with Josefine)

As I understand Josefine's thoughts here, the Nordic can be seen as an imaginary community that helps people identify a shared cultural reality. Although Nordic people are not similar, the shared community can contribute to the feeling of belonging together. Her reasoning fits in Hall's (1999) conceptualisation of a shared national identity, inspired by Benedict Anderson, that "depends on the cultural meanings which bind each member individually into the larger national story" (p. 4). By having an idea of shared culture, people create an imagined community based on particular shared cultural meanings and roots (Anderson, 1991). As Hall (1997) discusses, this imagined community becomes visible through cultural representations, which are seen as ways to express common ideas and create social cohesion. Also, it is about identifying oneself in relation to others outside, even though the focus would be directed inwards. "Identification, the moment when we invest in how we are hailed from outside", Hall (1997) describes this (p. 12). Not only the Nordic means to be connected to people within the Nordic countries, but it is a way to relate to the world outside. For Katrine, a director for a Danish cultural organisation that works with cultural export, Nordic culture becomes more apparent when she works internationally:

In international contexts, it is possible to realise one's Nordic identity – we are quite similar. We share the same democratic traditions, which strengthen equality. Already in European contexts, it is possible to see the Nordic. [...] In the global, we can see clearly the Nordic; the community shared between us. (Interview with Katrine)

As Katrine describes, the feeling of being particularly Nordic becomes visible when she is acting outside the Nordic region. When I discussed with her, it seemed clear that there are values and characteristics in Nordic culture and society that are unique in international contexts. This same understanding was shared by Jennifer, who works as an art curator in Los Angeles, USA:

It's just the fact that I feel like there's a sort of collectively minded ethos. Especially, for a lot of the artists I met, they would often work with a collective and have an independent practice. And I don't see that as widespread in the United States. And I don't know if it's a cultural thing. But it's something I have a lot of respect for, and I think it is really important when you're facing something like a pandemic, or all these other crazy things. You really need that kind of collective mindset in order to strengthen the larger creative ecosystem on what you work on. (Interview with Jennifer)

For Katrine, cultural and societal similarities are emphasised when Nordic culture is seen outside the Nordic region. Furthermore, as Jennifer discusses, the Nordic symbolises a certain collective mindset that is not as common in the United States where she comes from. Cultural identity and its representations are connected here to specific contexts where people constantly proceed and position their identity to ideas of shared culture and oneness and identify how they are different from others (Hall, 1989). Similarly, according to Katrine and Jennifer, it is possible to identify elements that are unique for Nordic culture, which then contribute to creating the feeling of a shared Nordic community.

So far, Nordic culture have symbolised coherency and community. However, although most of the informants saw it natural to belong to the Nordic society, some of them have argued that it is problematic that the Nordic as a cultural and political concept is often taken for granted and perceived as something stable and never-changing. Frederik, a director for a Danish theatre, is critical towards old definitions of Nordic culture: “It is something that existed before, something homogeneous. One should see the Nordic as something more complex to make it more interesting.” He thinks it is essential to recognise the diversity and multiculturalism that

the local, regional and Nordic cultures are connected to. As a creative person who works daily with new productions in performing arts, he sees that this mindset contributes to the renewal and new interpretations of Nordic culture. In a similar way with Frederik, Sakari, an artist and director for a cultural organisation from Finland, approaches critically the ways Nordic culture is defined in the society:

Earlier in my life it was something more clear for me. During the 90's I had a lot of different projects, connected strongly to the Nordic countries. Then there was this clear idea of a Nordic welfare state. This idea has been blurred since the millennium, partly because of me not having as much connection as before. [...] It is probably a political issue whether we should strive for the common Nordic. Right now it is not so strong. (Interview with Sakari)

For Sakari, it had been earlier a central and natural part to work artistically with other people from the Nordic region, partly because of being more active in Nordic projects and partly because of different cultural and political structures 20 years ago. He thinks that there are not as many political or societal interests to contribute to long-lasting cooperations between the Nordic countries as they used to be. There are no organisations or institutions in Nordic states that would encourage artists to promote and develop artistic and creative collaborations in other forms than project funding. Nordic culture is more like an outdated and non-prioritised element in today's societal and political discourses.

Geertz (1997) discusses how cultural identity can be perceived and defined differently depending on the words and expressions used. It is about a constant redefinition in which people look for coherence and similarity. However, Wagner (1981) ponders that culture – in an anthropological meaning – will never be only one culture but a constructed, invented concept that becomes meaningful depending on social contexts. On a more concrete level in the artistic and cultural field, a correct way to express culture is not decided equally in the society, but certain actors in the cultural system possess more influence and power than others (Bourdieu, 1980; Hastrup, 2010). Nordic culture and identity are then not only about finding a coherent, shared community, but there are different relations and dynamics behind that generate variation and differences in people's interpretations and definitions of the Nordic.

Not only definitions of Nordic culture are criticised for being unchangeable, but the informants are calling for more variation, especially in cultural meanings and definition of the concept. Andrea, who has worked with arts and culture in Greenland for several years, criticises how the Arctic region is usually left out in definitions and interpretations of Nordic culture:

When looked at from the perspective of Greenland, it is not that coherent culturally. There are different dynamics than in the relations between Sweden, Denmark and Norway. The Arctic North means something else. So, the Nordic can mean something negative for Greenland because it is then the Danish culture that dominates in decisions. (Interview with Andrea)

As it becomes clear here, the ways the society defines and comprehends Nordic culture is often focusing more on cultural activities that happen in the midst of the Nordic region. Jaana, an artist and cultural expert from Finland, shares this criticism towards the narrow image of the Nordic:

I am interested in the Nordic as something broader that includes minorities, such as the Sámi people and culture. Too easily it is usually connected only to Finland, Sweden and Norway. The Nordic Culture Fund has actually contributed to increasing the visibility of minorities, but this work should be supported even more, including Kven people, Finnish-speaking minority in the Swedish Lapland and immigrants. (Interview with Jaana)

While in Greenland, Josefine sees that the Arctic is not included in definitions of Nordic culture, Jaana from the Finnish Lapland criticises how the Nordic tends to forget minorities and people in the periphery. According to Lundström and Teitelbaum (2017), cultural segregation – based on racial constructions – is surprisingly high in the Nordic region, although the Nordic countries have worked with cultural tolerance and integration of non-white inhabitants and citizens. One reason for maintaining specific cultural images based on the majority, mainly white people, is for a feeling of nostalgia. Either people feel nostalgic when the population was not as multicultural as it is today, or then, at least, people are missing the times when racial questions were not on the surface, but people saw the Nordic society as morally superior, tolerant and progressive. As I would call it, this nostalgic burden can be one reason for the cultural exclusion of minority cultures in today's artistic and cultural field.

The more the discussions with the informants go deeper in thematic and critique, the more I start to see problems in the old ideas of seeing the Nordic region as culturally coherent. According to Lily, a Canadian curator living in Denmark, as an outsider who has lived in the Nordic countries for several years, the Nordic cultural model seemed first in the beginning as something better than many cultural systems outside the Nordic region, but after a while, she has started to see the model more critically than before:

It's kind of interesting because I feel like my understanding of Nordicness changes a lot [...] I think the longer I've been here, I mean, the more you get to being in a supportive environment, the more you can also start to see gaps in the structure and kind of room for improvement, even among one of the most supportive frameworks globally. (Interview with Lily)

Not many artists have stable and well-secured incomes, but many creative and artistic people are dependent on the periodical, project-bound wages allocated by cultural and governmental supporting institutions. Lily's critique of the artistic and cultural system in the Nordic countries can be lined with Hall's (1999) thoughts of how and why certain cultural elements are seen as nationally more critical than others. Although certain cultural and artistic expressions are seen as stable building blocks for a national culture – British culture in Hall's case – they are still relatively newly included in the shared national culture. According to him, it is possible to reconstruct a culture bound to particular national or regional ideas by understanding and recognising the roots of cultural representations. In the Nordic cultural scene, it is essential to be critical towards institutional and political definitions from within. As Lily sees that there are always aspects that could be developed in the Nordic cultural system, it is necessary to look critically at how the concept of Nordic culture is used in today's society.

It seems that Nordic culture becomes a problematic concept when it is connected to conventional definitions. Neither it is good if the society will not see the concept critically and have the will to develop it. According to Frederik, one clear issue is that Nordic culture is seen more as a historical concept than something that would contribute to future development:

I have it difficult to define Nordic identity. Usually, it is interpreted a bit in an old way. Theatres are repeating old drama and narratives, like Vikings, and they show old stories. But what does the Nordic identity mean in the future? (Interview with Frederik)

Also, it turns out that the Nordic is not that central or important itself for some informants, but it is integrated into other cultural aspects in their work.

Here in Lapland, the northern parts of Sweden and Norway are closer to us than Helsinki [Finland's capital]. It is usually this shared culture of Lapland which works as inspiration, although it is not only about the Nordic. More it is about local everyday life. Through this thought I would like to broaden meanings in Nordic identity – as something that is part of people's everyday life. A natural interplay between each other. (Interview with Jaana)

To create, make and express the Nordic, it is sometimes too restrictive, unreformed and conventional, almost exclusive, so much that some of the informants find it challenging to work in Nordic ways. Despite the shared imagined Nordic community, as Andrea describes this, it is important to see how the Nordic is defined from within the Nordic region – who is deciding the right way to be and make Nordic and which values and cultural aspects are included:

It is challenging to work only with the idea of Nordic and to find collaborations within the Nordic region. If you only keep focusing on the Nordic, Nordic, Nordic, there is then no room for variation. There is no room for including other things than the Nordic focus. (Interview with Andrea)

Similarly to the Nordic Culture Fund's concept of Nordic relevance, it becomes clear how varying and fluid the idea of the Nordic is amongst artists and cultural actors in the field. In various contexts that are depending on particular time and space, the image of Nordic spills in several pieces. Before it is possible to gather these different fragments of the Nordic, this thesis will deepen in perspectives that are generated in global thoughts and contexts.

5.2 Nordic culture in global contexts

As the last part has shown, Nordic culture and identity can be defined and interpreted in various ways when observed and analysed inside the Nordic region. Depending on whom you ask and wherein the participant is active, the image of the Nordic takes several forms other than political definitions based on the shared past. Nevertheless, the Nordic is not only made inside the Nordic region, nor it is constructed only by people who identify themselves as Nordic. For this reason, this part focuses on presenting and analysing how artists and cultural actors relate their idea of the Nordic to global contexts and themes.

As Hall (1989) argues that cultural identity is not stable or coherent but a constant movement and transformations of positions in the society, Nordic culture and identity can be perceived from the world outside and connected to other cultural realities in international and global contexts. For Katrine, who works with cultural export of Nordic culture, it is clear that global relations and activities contribute to form a more coherent image of the Nordic:

In global arenas, the Nordic becomes more meaningful. The ideas and themes of common culture become more visible in global contexts. [...] If we only perceive the Nordic from within, we can only see differences. While we work with the global, we can see the common culture for real – things that we share together. (Interview with Katrine)

When asking Katrine what are the reasons for her to emphasise the importance of developing Nordic culture outside the region, she answers that it is challenging to find a common point of views if the focus only remains inside the Nordic sphere. It becomes then more visible to work with Nordic aspects and themes when she is active in global contexts. Similar to Hall's (1989) thoughts of identifying the other in cultural contexts, Nordic culture can be defined more clearly when positioned in global contexts. In this case, Nordic culture becomes the other. Moreover, when Nordic culture is comprehended in broader global contexts, it is possible to identify several new cultural identities that contribute to renewed images of the Nordic (Hall, 1997).

For Josefine, a fashion writer and researcher from Denmark, the global symbolises a connection to other people: "It is important to understand that the global is not about exclusion. We are all global, we belong never to one nation." Correspondingly to the Nordic Culture Fund's aims of working for a borderless cultural field, Josefine wants to emphasise that globalisation does not need to be seen as a threat to local culture. When discussing the role of Nordic culture in Josefine's work, it becomes very clear that she does not see global relations and influences as something different or stranger for Nordic aspects. Instead, she forms an idea of Nordic culture that is naturally an active part of the global world. In parallel with Hall (1997), Josefine sees the global as a way to reposition and redefine culture in local, national and Nordic contexts.

Furthermore, Nordic culture can be a part of global phenomena and processes that contribute to develop and diversify ideas and images of the Nordic cultural life. Frederik, a theatre director from Denmark, discusses that being global can contribute to developing the local art scene by bringing more contrast and variation in creative processes and productions: "I get more insights and inspiration in global contexts. The field of performing arts in Denmark is quite homogeneous while there are more contrasts in global scenes." Similar to Antonisch's (2009) thoughts, where the perception of national identity becomes thicker when it is taken to global contexts, Frederik thinks his artistic and creative work must get out from his home base to the field outside the Nordic region. Not only is he able to meet new people and other cultural actors, but he has the possibility of renewing his methods and practices. As Geertz (1976) sees that arts and culture exist everywhere in society where they can contribute to the development of culture, it seems to be natural for Josefine and Fredrik to think that Nordic culture is not different from global cultures. According to them, Nordic culture should not try to ignore global thoughts and impact but, instead, utilise and take advantage of new influences that can contribute to diversify local, national and Nordic cultures.

In the peripheric Arctic region, thoughts of a more global Nordic culture contributes to the reimagined local culture in relation to general comprehensions of the Nordic region. According to Andrea, the cultural scene in Greenland has been able to find new connections in global contexts:

The global binds us to broader contexts. For me it is about to realise that we are not different from each other in global contexts. [...] We can identify ourselves in new communities – such as aboriginals – where we can find shared cultural perspectives. In the Nordic context, we from Greenland and Sami region are not noticed in a same way. So the global might provide us certain proudness. (Interview with Andrea)

Previously, people had placed culture in Greenland somewhere underneath in Danish and Nordic culture policies. Greenlandic people and their culture are different from the common cultural scene. In this cultural landscape, Greenlandic arts and culture are then identified primarily as representing a minority culture, being then a factor for even stronger differentiation than before. According to Andrea, global development and connections have helped the local culture in Greenland to find new ways to relate to the surrounding world. While in Nordic contexts, Greenlandic artists have found it challenging to establish an equal voice amongst other Nordics, global contexts have contributed to discovering other indigenous people and minority communities who deal with similar kind of post-colonial issues. Here it becomes clear how Hall (1999) means that newly repositioned comprehensions of an imagined community can challenge old conventional structures in the society. In the time of globalisation, people in Greenland could have reimagined their cultural identity and expand it beyond old comprehensions that have been influenced by Danish and Nordic culture.

With the help of global connections, Greenlandic artists and cultural practitioners have been able to identify their work on a higher level than before. However, according to Jaana, the Arctic region might have moved from the cultural periphery towards the centre, but it does not mean that the social cohesion to the global world would be non-problematic: “In comparison to how southern indigenous people are seen, UNESCO does not notice the Arctic people in the same way.” It seems like local cultures and people in the periphery need constantly strive for visibility, inclusion and equality in different arenas, whether it is about national, Nordic or global dimensions. As Geertz (1973) exemplifies how the process of creating new national identity in post-colonial communities is about striving for freedom, and by reminding Wagner’s (1981) idea of culture as a constantly reinvented concept, Nordic

culture and identity are constructed and comprehended in various ways both in local, national and international contexts. Culture in the periphery is also a part of this development in which today's definitions and interpretations are still depending on the past despite new interactions in global contexts.

Global perspectives can clearly challenge and create new interpretations of Nordic culture. As in the discussions described above, the idea of becoming more global looks like a movement from the familiar to new places. While Frederik and Josefine see new possibilities in taking their work from the centre of the Nordic cultural scene to international and global places, Andrea and Jaana demand for more inclusion of the Arctic region and indigenous people. For Albert, a cultural expert who has worked within the field for several decades, this need for cultural movement is about renewing and expanding ways to perceive Nordic identity:

If we assume that there is a Nordic identity – no matter how broad it is then – it is connected and developed in institutions and other places. In this light, it is then good that it is perceived from global perspectives. Especially when everything happens in the Nordic region. By doing this, it might be possible to reach broader cultural exchange, and maybe even political, to something that has not existed before. (Interview with Albert)

Albert is critical towards conventional and narrow definitions of Nordic culture that does not recognise global connections. For him, it is necessary to interact and work with cultural exchange outside the Nordic region if we wish to form an inclusive and diverse Nordic society. Instead of taking distance from the world outside, global interactions can broaden local and Nordic cultural fields and bring in new inspiration and joy. In the field of fashion and design, this kind of development is already visible:

Several cultural fields here have just blossomed, such as fashion. There is a certain momentum at the moment. We can be a part of green solutions by integrating our culture in global processes. (Interview with Josefine)

In the line of cultural exchange, the global can encourage people in the Nordic region to direct their focus towards the world outside instead of only working with internal societal topics and issues.

While global connections can open up and diversify the Nordic cultural field, correspondingly to the Nordic Culture Fund's elaborations of responsibility, it is crucial to

identify how Nordic arts and culture can contribute to central issues and problems in the global context:

I think it is so sad that we Finns think that we cannot afford or think other countries. Of course we can! We are affluent and healthy in comparison with many other countries. We have great possibilities to find our way to influence instead of thinking that we are too small. We need to see and believe in our ability to make good things happen. (Interview with Jaana)

Erik, a circus artist from Sweden, shares Jaana's ideas. Not only in the artistic and cultural field people need to acknowledge the social responsibility but, even more, globalisation brings the Nordic society to global issues that cannot be ignored:

It is a global issue. We cannot only find solutions within the Nordic region, but we need to do this together with the world. The challenge for people is to accept that they need to compromise and share their comfort with others in the world. (Erik, a circus artist from Sweden)

When the Nordic region is not isolated from the world but is an active part of it, arts and culture must reflect on the topics and issues found and produced by people in global contexts. Nordic arts and culture can thus encourage new thinking and participate in finding solutions to global problems. It is also essential to realise what is exchanged in cultural interactions. As Conquergood (1991) discusses, anthropology and science have become a central part of today's society, and its communications, Nordic culture can work in a more self-reflective way. According to both Jaana and Erik, the Nordics have much to offer to global questions and issues, but the potential still needs to be found and defined before this is possible. Here, arts and culture can help realise and reflect on what the Nordic society can bring as solutions for relevant societal issues globally.

Another critical aspect in the artistic and cultural life that becomes more and more globalised is about hegemonic relations in the field. Tyler, an artist who works with digital media, feels that it is not problematic to become more global, but it is crucial to remain critical to structures and tendencies that direct the development of the global cultural field:

The criticism is kind of easy. It is about seeing the web as something capturing people, influencing our communication and networks. The biggest risk is that culture is driven by hegemonic ideas. (Interview with Tyler)

In a digitalising global world, it is necessary to understand how power and influence are divided amongst societies, communities and people. According to Tyler, it is about recognising if hegemonic actors and groups drive specific social structures and patterns. When it comes to Nordic culture and identity in global contexts, it is even more important to be critical of official and political definitions of the Nordic. Although national identity can become thicker and more profound in global contexts, there is also a risk of becoming narrow with perspectives (Antonisch, 2009). If the global is seen as a threat, local or national culture can become exclusive, differentiating the people within and leaving so-called others outside. It is thus crucial that global activities and interactions are not seen as too ideal and naïve but that the cultural and political institutions and actors remain critical to happenings in the world outside.

As this part has shown, several informants find it natural, even necessary, to work for a more global Nordic culture. However, when discussing topics of Nordic and global culture, Magnus, a Danish visual artist, finds it challenging to identify himself or his creative work as Nordic or global:

I think it is very difficult. I tried to think of this before – if I can identify myself as Nordic or global. And the global feels strange for me. [...] Through cultural references, I identify my work mostly to be Danish. It is difficult to move to a new place where you do not know cultural references. The small nuances make your culture exciting and cool. It is challenging when all the small details are taken away from you. (Interview with Magnus)

For an artist, it is crucial to find cultural connections and references that contribute to creative processes. As Magnus discusses his artistic approaches, not everyone can or even want to find inspiration from Nordic or global contexts. Instead, he identifies himself through his personal life and history, characterised by local cultural references. Being global is not then about working on an idea level but finding help in practicalities. Especially in connection to the Nordic Culture Fund, Magnus questions how the fund and other funding organisations tend to focus on supporting artistic quality and collaborations, forcing then artists to create a particular type of art. In global contexts, this aspect becomes even more critical when he, as an artist, needs connections and practical help instead of starting something new. There is no doubt that the cultural scene is becoming more and more global. Still, it is not a straightforward process or movement to take Nordic culture to global places, but it is essential to remain critical with any action. The concept of Nordic culture is formed both in local, national and global contexts.

5.3 Role Nordic culture within the artistic and cultural field

The image of Nordic culture and identity has become more varying and complex after discussions with the participating artists and cultural practitioners in this study. According to them, Nordic culture as a cultural concept is often connected to political, historical, and geographical approaches. At the first look, there is no doubt of trustworthiness in conventional and old comprehensions. However, when Nordic culture is analysed further on a deeper level, the coherent image of the Nordic culture becomes more fragmented. In the artistic and cultural field, the official definition of Nordic culture tends to limit artistic and creative interpretations. It is seen as an outdated conceptualisation that is characterised by a nostalgic sense of the Nordic. Furthermore, it excludes some people and ignores cultural diversity in the Nordic region. In this light, the concept of Nordic culture should be seen from new perspectives.

One way to open up and broaden the views on Nordic culture is to focus on global places and contexts where it is possible to interpret the Nordic in new ways, hope renewal, and see Nordic culture amongst other cultures and societies. For artists and cultural actors, the global field is full of new possibilities and inspiration for their creative work. The global lets people find new connections and reposition themselves in global places where it is possible to learn from other people and develop cultural exchange outside of the Nordic region. Furthermore, it is possible to direct the focus inwards and look critically at the inner societal and cultural life. Global mindset can therefore provide alternative ways to reconstruct the image of the Nordic culture. At the same time, as some of the informants have discussed, there are challenges in working with global themes and aspects. For example, globalisation takes focus from individuals and local cultures. It is also challenging on a structural level where people need to be careful with the authority and legitimacy in the artistic and cultural field.

In the discussions with the informants, I can see that both Nordic culture and identity are woven together in multiple and varying interpretations. As a fluid concept, Nordic culture can point simultaneously to collective and individual comprehension, making the concept abstract. More than that, I would like to see the Nordic in this context as a way to strive for new interpretations of Nordic culture and identity. Wagner (1981) argues that culture as a concept is constantly invited while, at the same time, it is always connected to definitions of the past. It is thus reasonable that Nordic culture has its burden with the past but, if wanted, it can take new forms. Hastrup (2010) discusses how the concept of culture can be approached and defined from several perspectives. For her, culture is preliminarily an anthropological concept that emphasises culture more as a social relation than only being connected to

education, cultivation or arts. In the Nordic context, the ways artists and cultural actors discuss and interpret their perceptions and comprehensions of Nordic culture, I see similarities to Wagner's and Hastrup's optimistic idea of a culture that endlessly get new meanings in various contexts. Similarly, some decided definitions of Nordic culture are set by societal and political actors, while the creators and doers in the cultural sector work for new comprehensions and interpretations of expressing the Nordic. In their daily work, they question, analyse and identify their relations, thoughts and social positions in contexts connected to Nordic culture.

By interpreting Nordic culture, the artists and cultural practitioners in this study approach the surrounding society in similar ways with ethnographers. They observe and analyse what happens in the world and position themselves amongst other people in society. By remembering my short career as a dancer in Finland, I start to think about how I was encouraged in the University of the Arts Helsinki to sense what happens around myself in the society – both on an abstract, societal level and a more concrete, physical level. In one production, I went out with others in the creative team for exploring a suburban area where we aimed to approach the surroundings through all our senses. In another production, this time dance theatre for children and young people, we dancers were collaborating with children by examining how we adults could act and move so that the children would get the feeling of being a part of the particular scene. Like an ethnographer who has all the senses open in the field and aims to observe every little detail around him or her, as a dancer, I used to sense and gather all the spacious and kinaesthetic nuances to be decoded in my bodily movements.

Back in the present, the artists and cultural practitioners who participated in this study are approaching the surrounding world in similar ways. They comprehend and relate the concept of Nordic culture to relevant happenings and the context around them. In this way, Nordic culture works as a tool or perspective to negotiate the relevance of arts and culture in society. As Erik discusses, Nordic culture can be about finding solutions to societal and humane issues that are shared in the global world:

So, we all are human beings. We must unite and confront together challenges out there.

Although we would have the same challenges than people have in Africa, USA or Asia, we can still learn something new. We should take that we have learned here in Scandinavia with us to the world outside. We should not create the world as Trump has done or to behave as China does with its minorities. The world should be characterised by inclusion and social cohesion. We exist here for being able to help each other. In this way, we can make the world a better place. (Interview with Erik)

The concept of Nordic culture works here as a way to identify the position of the Nordic society in the world. It is then not only about making arts and culture that are relevant for the cultural sector, but it can directly contribute to people's thoughts across different societal fields in the society. As the discussions of Nordic culture in global contexts show, this concept does not need to be seen only as a conventional and outdated qualifier for Nordic arts and culture. Jaana describes nicely how the idea of global culture is equally relevant with Nordic culture:

I'd like to think about the globe as a symbol for the global. There are many projects that are focusing on sustainability. I think globally and act locally. This is a relevant and nice way to direct my thoughts to those issues and people that I want to work with. It is about realising the size of the globe in my work although the concrete activities would take place in local contexts. (Jaana, an artist and cultural actor from Finland)

There are many possibilities in making arts and culture that still are relevant in Nordic contexts, although the works would not show Nordic culture in the same way as political actors and national institutions would like to show it. Instead of Vikings or stories of brotherhood between the Scandinavian countries, artists and cultural practitioners are inspired by things that happen around them in their daily life.

After this chapter, one might wonder if there is such a thing as Nordic culture. Depending on an artist or cultural actor, Nordic culture and identity are approached from different points of view. Both the Nordic Culture Fund and the informants in this study are agreeing that Nordic culture should be seen and interpreted more openly than in old and conventional definitions. In line with Wagner (1981), who emphasises the importance of comprehending culture as a continuously newly invented concept and similarly to Hastrup's (2010) idea of approaching the concept openly and full of hope, Nordic culture has several meanings in the artistic and cultural field. It is not only about connecting the Nordic countries, but it is a cultural concept that contributes to creating and developing an imagined Nordic society that is in constant movement. As Anderson (1991) defines the concept of a nation as a way to define or invent the existence of a particular community, Nordic culture can be seen as a concept that forms a feeling of belonging to an imagined Nordic community. However, as the findings in this thesis have shown, for the Nordic Culture Funds, artists and other cultural practitioners, Nordic culture is not about exclusion, but there is a hope of connecting the Nordic society even stronger to people and cultures both within and outside the Nordic region.

6. Nordic culture in today's society

This thesis has presented and analysed different ways to approach and define Nordic culture. By starting from the perspectives of the Nordic Culture Fund, it seems necessary to find new ways to comprehend and construct images of the artistic and cultural life in the Nordic region. On an abstract idea level, the fund aims to broaden the views by anchoring thoughts and definitions on the concept of Nordic relevance that is not based on conventional and old ideas and then encourages artists and cultural actors to interpret Nordic culture more freely than before. On a strategic level, the fund aims to renew forms of supporting arts and culture by listening to those who work actively in the field. Also, it seeks to reposition the Nordic in new places and contexts both culturally and societally. When having a dialogue with the participating artists and cultural practitioners, the question of defining Nordic culture is seen as formed by the society and political actors. Although there are hopeful dreams and thoughts of creating a shared imagined Nordic community, the prevalent definitions are not recognising the cultural diversity in the Nordic region. Instead, the official images of Nordic culture are characterised by homogenous, hegemonic and conventional ideas. For changing and renewing ideas of Nordic culture, the informants have identified new possibilities in global and international contexts where the Nordic can take the position of the other. It is central to recognise how cultural identity and representations contribute to today's image of the Nordic.

In the line of this study, it looks like that the dialogue between the Nordic Culture Fund and the participating artists and cultural actors ponders and creates a space for new thoughts and ideas. The fund recognises the need of listening to people in the cultural field while the cultural and creative actors find new relevance for Nordic culture in new contexts both within and outside the Nordic region. In this relatively small space, the Nordic cultural field seems to be borderless and full of hopes for renewal. But is the situation as ideal as it looks like? Instead of sharing an equal position with individual artists and cultural actors in the field, it is clear that the fund has the power of choosing who can receive support for his or her artistic and creative activities. Furthermore, the fund is also dependent on external actors despite the somewhat more autonomic position amongst other cultural institutions and organisations.

With these thoughts, this chapter will take the fluid concept of Nordic culture to the world outside the artistic and cultural field. This chapter will discuss and focus on identity politics and the autonomy of the Nordic cultural field. By doing this, it will bring the analysis and discussions from the previous chapters together and conceptualise the Nordic culture as an important player in today's society.

6.1 Fear of nationalism

In her doctoral thesis that analyses cultural Scandinavism in Nordic literature from the 19th century, Kari Haarder Ekman (2010) discusses how the image or understanding of a Scandinavian person started to take form 200 years ago. It was not enough to identify oneself as Swedish, Danish or Norwegian, but the question of being Scandinavian became central in cultural and political contexts. For Haarder Ekman, the broad historical concept of cultural Scandinavism focuses on the cultural movement that aimed to form a cultural connection and community in Scandinavia. It was about seeing beyond nationalistic ideas by focusing on expanding culturally across the borders. The informants in this study have approached the concept of Nordic culture in their artistic and cultural work in a similar way. They are critical towards nationalistic and political definitions that do not recognise the diverse cultural life in the Nordic region. They wish that there would be a borderless cultural society looking at possibilities in international and global contexts. The artistic and cultural field seems to interpret and reconstruct the Nordic as a possibility of building up a common culture without excluding others in this process. However, as I understand the core idea of Scandinavism and the later political concept of Nordism, these ideologies are more or less about creating a societal and cultural coherence between the nations in the Nordic region. Certain people and cultures are seen as more Nordic than others (Wickström, 2017).

In February 2021, I attended the Swedish cultural-political convention *Folk och Kultur*, held online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. *Folk och Kultur* has been arranged yearly since 2018 in Eskilstuna. Its overall purpose is to bring together different societal, political and cultural actors for discussing, debating and experiencing cultural and cultural-political life in Sweden (Folk och Kultur, n.d.). Positive and constructive promotion and development of cultural policies make the core of the convention. On Friday, 12 February, I followed a discussion where cultural representatives from each political party in Sweden's parliament elaborated ideas and strategies regarding culture policies on the national level in their party. In this discussion, several representatives shared the concept of national cultural life that meets the people, encourages learning, contributes to the development of people's inner life and supports the cultural system. Their message was that freedom in the artistic and cultural field needs to be secured. Besides these positive and hopeful thoughts, I found great differences in the speech by a representative, Aron Emilsson, from the Sweden Democrats, a nationalist and right-wing populist party. He approached the national cultural policy from a Nordic point of view instead of focusing on the cultural and political life within Sweden. According to him,

culture means heritage that is grounded on Nordic ideology and the Nordic cultural model. It is a collective memory telling people where they come from. Inspired by the Danish Culture Canon, Emilsson proposes that Sweden should also have a culture canon based on a specific Nordic ideology and infrastructure. The party describes cultural heritage as a vital element for holding the nation as one and building Swedish identity (SD, n.d.). As I understand this, for the Sweden Democrats, the Nordic symbolises nationalistic thoughts and a concept that strengthens Swedish culture. As both McIntosh (2015) and Lundström and Teitelbaum (2017) raise awareness of reproduced inequality in Nordic societies, it seems like nationalism and nostalgic longing for the past contribute to some people's idea of today's Nordic culture.

Nordic culture can be seen in this context as a political determiner for strengthening nationalistic ideologies and voices while, at the same time, the artistic and cultural field sees transnational relations and connections as a key for renewal, openness and cultural tolerance. One of the informants sees that the more open and tolerant approach is not a general thought amongst Nordic people, but only a few people can stand behind this ideology:

When looking at it from a broad point of view, I think that the Nordic is connected to prejudices. And then there is a tiny elite that can talk about democracy, freedom of speech and openness and participation and associational organisations and many other different aspects. But quite many people are only defining this by their nations – that they come from Denmark, Norway or Sweden. Especially in Denmark and Norway is the definition quite nationalistic without any curiosity or further knowledge. [...] Then there are many political ways to use it. Too many Danish politicians are xenophobic and against the things that happen in Sweden. Finland does not exist in maps in Denmark. Maybe, I don't know if Denmark exists in maps in Finland either. (Interview with Albert)

According to Albert, who has worked with arts and culture across the Nordic region and globally, many people are not interested in interacting with their Nordic neighbours, but when they talk about the Nordic, they approach the concept from a nationalistic point of views. This nationalist ideology challenges the more open, creative and reconstruction-driven view on the Nordic culture that both the Nordic Culture Fund and the participating informants defines as the purpose of the Nordic. According to LaCapra (1988), an ideology is a separate cultural system that involves mystification, and generalisations that serve the interest of a specific group of people. It presents variable historical happenings as universal truth and is based on hegemonic order. An ideology as a social concept tends to seek meanings in chaos. When

compared LaCapra's elements of ideology to the conceptualisations of the Sweden Democrats, it is possible to see how Nordic culture as a political instrument can legitimise thoughts of maintaining, almost protecting, the Nordic as cultural heritage. As I interpret this nationalistic longing for the past, the Nordic symbolises here something old that is disappearing in Swedish society. It is here a mystic piece of history that connects Sweden to its brothers in Scandinavia and the Nordic region. Nordic culture in the present is not seen or valued as high as this cultural-historical perspective that focuses on protecting heritage.

The earlier discussion of the role of cultural identity and representation becomes even more critical here. While cultural identity helps people to define and connect themselves to the world they are living in, it is also an act that causes exclusion of certain people and cultures (Hall, 1997). Similarly, the nationalistic perspective on Nordic culture aims to strengthen Nordic cultural life but, by leaning on cultural heritage and nostalgia, it takes the risk of excluding a particular group of people from the collective and shared culture. Hall (1999) describes this selective and excluding character of collective cultural heritage followingly:

Like personal memory, social memory is also highly selective, it highlights and foregrounds, imposes beginnings, middles and ends on the random and contingent. Equally, it foreshortens, silences, disavows, forgets and elides many episodes which — from another perspective — could be the start of a different narrative. This process of selective 'canonisation' confers authority and a material and institutional facticity on the selective tradition, making it extremely difficult to shift or revise. (p. 5)

The problem in a canonised, collectively defined culture is that it tends to base its existence on elements that do not recognise broadness and diversity in the common shared culture. In the cultural context of Sweden, I critically think if the Swedish Culture Canon that the Sweden Democrats are promoting would include the cultural heritage of the minorities, such as people and culture in Sápmi, Roma people and people with Finnish roots. As this thesis has discussed earlier in the Nordic context, similar kind of cultural tensions can be found in the Arctic region. In this light, it seems harmful and narrow-minded with such ideas that aim to use Nordic culture as a way to exclude others.

Hall (1997) argues that “[u]nless we are going to identify' ourselves as nothing but members of the human race, every other identification leaves something out. To leave something out is an act of power” (p. 14). The Nordic culture that is connected to culture and identity policies is then, without any doubt, a question of power. As it seems to be for the

Sweden Democrats, it is a political tool for determining the correct cultural heritage that needs to be preserved and spread across the nation. The cultural connection and belonging to the Nordic society is a tool of valuing what kind of culture should be considered in the Swedish culture policies. A similar type of rhetoric in national cultural policies can also be found in other Nordic countries. In Finland, the Finns party has defined that it aims to support cultural activities that strengthen Finnish cultural heritage and identity (Perussuomalaiset, 2020). In Denmark, the Danish People's Party wants to protect the shared common Danish culture from today's tendencies that the party sees as threatful identity politics (Dansk Folkeparti, 2021). Although these nationalist parties write that they are working against identity politics, it is evident that the use of the concept *culture* and *national culture*, is a political tool for building an image of a national or Nordic identity rooted in the past and cultural heritage.

For Foucault (2001), power does not exist per se, but it is made and maintained through relations between people and things. Power exists because of the ties that people have with each other. In the cultural field then, as I interpret this, Bourdieu (1980) discusses that there is no neutrality in the field but, through hierarchies and relations between people and groups, it is possible to define a certain aristocracy or elite who has the power of deciding what kind of culture is right or pure. In Nordic culture, the question of a right or pure form of the concept becomes a central element when discussing what Nordic means and how it should be understood and used in society. Without going too much deeper into the discourse of power, I want to argue that identity politics connect the artistic and cultural field to several current political aspects and discussions. But, although several informants and the Nordic Culture Fund sees it necessary to talk about politics in cultural contexts, the definition of Nordic culture can seem confusing when the meaning of it varies depending on the societal and cultural context. As Erik discusses this, there is a fear of losing openness and tolerance in the Nordic society:

The openness that we have had before is disappearing. As an artist, I can see differences between the Nordic countries. Although the Nordic Culture Fund has contributed to promoting co-operation between them, it is challenging to understand certain topics – e.g. the definition of Nordic relevance. It depends on interpretations. What is Nordic relevance for me?
Something can be relevant both in Nordic and global contexts. (Interview with Erik)

As I see his struggle in deciding what Nordic means, Erik recognises different tendencies of using Nordic culture and identity in today's society. Instead of being straightforward or simple, it seems to be a tool for other actors to promote their core message. For him, the earlier

mentioned Nordic Culture Fund's concept of Nordic relevance is confusing. Although it has great potential to open up interpretations of Nordic culture, it is sometimes unclear if the idea behind Nordic relevance is to connect people or strengthen individual interpretations. The challenge is to find common ways to work with different definitions of Nordic culture so that it will remain open and tolerant but as a factor that strengthens the common Nordic community.

It is possible to see how power and political aspects actively participate in forming and interpreting Nordic culture. The cultural field is not isolated from other fields. As Gunnarsson Payne (2017) describes, politics is all about the existence of human beings. It is reasonable to discuss power and politics in cultural contexts to understand the role of Nordic culture in today's society. When there is a talk about power relations, there can be found certain social entities that are superior to others. By recognising hegemonic power relations, there is potential to find and question the existence of specific values, norms and practices. Although the more open concept of Nordic relevance seems to secure creative freedom within the cultural sector, outside then, it also provides a tool for others to limit the Nordic.

6.2 Artistic freedom and the position of the cultural field

Nordic culture is almost something threatening for the progressive development of the society when it leans toward nationalistic ideologies. Although this tendency is recognised by both the Nordic Culture Fund and the informants in this study, their idea of today's Nordic culture is hopeful and open for renewal. Moreover, there is a will, especially at the fund, to strengthen arts and culture amongst other societal actors in politics. As mentioned earlier, the Nordic Culture Fund sees that it has somewhat more free room to act independently in the cultural field in comparison to other cultural actors and organisations.

I think that the fund is a trendsetter. We find ourselves at the forefront where we are free to test and experiment. By doing this, we can be modern. And there are several foundations looking at us. They might not work with the same things as we do but they follow us. (Peter, focus group session with the Nordic Culture Fund)

This freedom gives the fund also more responsibility to act for the artistic and cultural field. However, as several informants in this study see the situation in the field today, the fund still is a cultural organisation that values and prioritise artistic and cultural projects over each other. When looking at the situation outside the cultural field, it seems that arts and culture are not recognised amongst other societal fields. At the same time, especially in the context of Nordic

culture, the artistic and cultural field is seen as politically essential to build a particular national and Nordic identity. Therefore, it is clear that there are several tensions both within and outside the artistic and cultural field that contribute to the position and role of the field in society.

The artistic and cultural field in the Nordic countries is one of the most suffered sectors in the Nordic society when COVID-19 has spread around in the world (The Nordic Council of Ministers, 2021). Almost ironically, the pandemic has emphasised how artists and cultural practitioners are dependent on societal and political systems that decide and allocate economic support for the cultural field. As Duelund (2008) and Frenander (2010) describe the Nordic cultural model, it has been central for the development of the Nordic system that the states contribute to the artistic and cultural field but, at the same time, it should not be politicians who make decisions of support and grants. This so-called arm's length principle has been built on the principle that professionals and other branch-specific experts would stand between the state and the artist (Østerby, 2019). Although this system has been seen as a working model in the Nordic countries, the global pandemic has shown it to be slow to react in the current situation. Several artists and cultural actors who have participated in this study say that it has been challenging to get enough support for their creative activities when several funding programmes by cultural organisations have been slow to react to the changed situation. Also, it is problematic with funding programmes that only support new project ideas and initiatives instead of securing somewhat more continuous support for the artists and cultural practitioners.

In the context of Nordic culture, the question of artistic and creative freedom is even more critical after the discussion of identity politics in the last part. As Duelund (2008) describes the Nordic cultural model after Habermas' theory, there is a tension between institutions and the living world when the first one aims to systematise and control the second one. At the same time, the living world works for reaching more freedom from institutional structures. Similarly, Nordic institutions and organisations, such as the Nordic Council of Ministers, the Nordic Council and the Nordic Culture Fund, define and construct Nordic society by believing in positive development through transnationality while people in the society do not always find themselves in official and institutional comprehensions of the Nordic. While artists want to have more freedom in creating Nordic culture, at the same time, nationalistic actors, such as political parties, want to control and frame national cultural life by ideologic images of the Nordic. Instead of providing more freedom for creative and cultural practitioners, they see it necessary to re-evaluate contemporary art and culture by conventional principles. It is almost ironic with this view that it looks like nationalist parties want to open up comprehensions of culture to something broader than before. As an opposite for Wagner's

(1981) invention of culture and Hastrup's (2010) hopeful construction of culture, the nationalistic idea of Nordic culture does not want to provide more artistic freedom, but creativity should be limited to particular ideological constructions of national identity. Similarly, Nielsen (2012) describes that the Nordic cultural policy can be seen as controversial when one strategy is striving for a clear, coherent image of Nordic culture and, at the same time, another one wants to highlight and promote cultural diversity. One apparent problem is that the Nordic nations focus more on their national culture policies instead of looking for transnational cooperation in the cultural field.

When looking at the cultural field after Bourdieu's field theory, it is possible to analyse whether the cultural field is independent enough to act amongst other fields in society. According to Hvenegaard Rasmussen (2018), Bourdieu argues that it is possible to differentiate several societal fields in society. These fields have their values and logics – for example, the academic field functions partly by its own rules and structures while, at the same time, it is related to other fields in society. When it comes to the cultural field, especially in the Nordic countries where arts and culture are more or less dependent on governmental and public support, it is reasonable to look at how much the field can function independently and how much it needs to follow the logic of other fields. From this perspective, it seems like the cultural field is losing its independent position when other fields, such as the economy and market logics, seem to decide more of a cultural value today. Kann-Rasmussen (2016) argues that cultural institutions and actors have needed to redefine their purpose and relevance in today's society by rethinking their strategies to meet demand and expectations in the surrounding society. Paradoxically, the cultural field needs to adapt to other societal fields' logics, losing then some autonomy while it also seems to have more freedom from decision-makers and politicians, having the chance of making decisions that are not dependent on actors outside the cultural field (Kann-Rasmussen & Hvenegaard Rasmussen, 2019).

The question of being relevant connects back to the Nordic Culture Fund's concept of Nordic relevance. Instead of defining what Nordic is, this concept aims to give artists and cultural practitioners more room for interpretations. Similarly to the paradoxical model by Kann-Rasmussen and Hvenegaard Rasmussen (2019), the fund has recognised that there are tendencies of others getting more control over the cultural field and the ways Nordic culture is used and shown in the public while, at the same time, the fund aims to support new ideas that can promote and develop Nordicism that does not follow political and societal norms. According to this model, it is possible to conclude that the artistic and cultural field in the Nordic context might need to follow standards and structures of other fields, while within the

field, there is more room for new interpretations of Nordic culture. The Nordic cultural sector does not implement identity politics of political authorities, but the field contributes to the Nordic by its own rules and structures. In this light, it seems that the concept of Nordic relevance is a tool for artists and cultural actors to reposition and redefine their comprehensions of Nordic culture that is not bound to political and institutional images of the Nordic.

Vestheim (2012) argues that the cultural field cannot be isolated from other fields in the society because of overlapping relations and mutual need for each other. Therefore, the Nordic cultural life cannot exist without the surrounding society. The field needs to give up some parts of its independence for being able to develop more relevance and freedom inside (Kann-Rasmussen & Hvenegaard Rasmussen, 2019). Furthermore, as Nielsen (2012) discusses that Nordic culture is in the first hand comprehended from national perspectives in today's culture policies, I see it challenging in rethinking the Nordic until it is about something more than building and strengthening national identity. Sakari, a Finnish artist and director for a cultural promotion organisation in Finland, sees that the cultural field should not follow the rules and structures set by the economy:

For me, it is important that culture is not controlled by the economy. Funding systems should not decide how culture develops. In this way I wish there would be stronger cultural discourses and that diversity would follow after this time of uncertainty. (Interview with Sakari)

The artistic and creative freedom of the field remains in a paradoxical position with other fields in society. While artists and other cultural actors, including the Nordic Culture Fund, aim towards new interpretations of Nordic culture, it needs to be supported by other societal actors. Still, as this thesis has shown, there is hope for a renewal of the Nordic cultural system and the will to construct new rules and norms within the artistic and cultural field. Artists and cultural practitioners need to deal with other societal and political actors who do not see or recognise the cultural field as equal always. Also, interpretations of Nordic culture emphasises how institutions and other actors in society approach the concept differently and causes then confusion and tension between different actors. However, as Geertz (1976) sees arts and culture to be a natural part of the society, Nordic culture can contribute to relevant topics and issues – both within and outside the Nordic region – if it acts as a relevant participant in the forming of today's culture and politics.

7. Conclusions

Similarly to Hastrup (2010), who discusses that culture is a social concept that is both complex and flexible at the same time, Nordic culture develops and alters old understandings and images of the Northern cultural reality while it also takes new forms in individual interpretations and expressions by actors in the Nordic cultural field. In broader meanings, culture is a way to frame social and cultural reality and connect people and their past, present and future (Hastrup, 2010). It is a way to position oneself in relation to other cultural entities and realities, usually defined by society (Wagner, 1981). Nordic culture is not only about making a politically coherent region nor branding certain cultural images of the Nordic region. Instead, as this thesis has shown, both the Nordic Culture Fund, artists and cultural practitioners approach Nordic culture as something more flexible and fluid. While there is a will to reconstruct cultural and societal understandings of the Nordic, it also becomes an identification process for each individual person who elaborates new ideas and interpretations of Nordic culture.

The new thinking and conceptualisation of the Nordic relevance by the Nordic Culture Fund, as well as the criticism by the artists and cultural practitioners that have contributed to this study, are revealing the importance of understanding what Nordic symbolises and means today and why it matters to see critically old conventional constructions of Nordic culture. As the concept of the common shared culture and society in the Nordic region is nothing new, but it has been growing for decades, it becomes necessary to expand the cultural analysis of Nordic culture from the artistic and cultural field to broader societal and political concepts. It is about analysing and comprehending the imagined, commonly created and shared Nordic community.

This thesis has aimed to capture a number of ways to comprehend Nordic culture by focusing on the Nordic Culture fund's concept of Nordic relevance and global ambitions, as well as interpretations of Nordic culture amongst artists and cultural practitioners, such as art curators, cultural and artistic directors, and researchers. The thesis has investigated how Nordic culture is comprehended and what role it has both within and outside the artistic and cultural field. By analysing interpretations of Nordic culture both in Nordic and global contexts, the thesis has shown how fluid and ever-changing this concept can be. In comparison with conventional definitions of the Nordic, in which it is mostly seen as a natural and stable element that connects the Nordic countries and region, the interpretations in this thesis broaden understandings of the Nordic society and culture in the present time.

The thesis has shown how Nordic culture can be comprehended and interpreted differently, adding more variation in official and branded ideas of the Nordic. The informants

have criticised the narrow and outdated definition of Nordic culture, which does not recognise diversity, local cultural activities and global influence. According to the artists and cultural practitioners in this study, Nordic culture should be reconstructed to include several voices and expressions of contemporary arts and culture. Furthermore, in the discussions with the informants, the role of cultural identity and its complexity in positioning arts and culture is a repeating theme. While one artist finds Nordic relevance in her or his local cultural surroundings, another cultural practitioner needs to go to global and international places where it is easier to identify Nordicness. Nevertheless, these different ways to work with the concept of Nordic culture are showing how this concept is in a constant movement and that its role varies depending on contexts and situations.

By taking the individual interpretations of Nordic culture to broader contexts outside the cultural and artistic field, the thesis has discussed the role of including the fluid and complex image of the Nordic in such societal contexts where the national or Nordic identity has recently emphasised. Especially, the thesis has discussed that the Nordic is an essential part of today's cultural-political field where it gets varying meanings in topics of national culture and cultural heritage. Nordic culture is not always seen as open and fluid within culture policies as the cultural field wants it to be. The thesis has also discussed the role of Nordic culture within the artistic and cultural field itself, where it can participate in processes of realising independence from other societal fields. The fund's concept of Nordic relevance can work here as a tool for exploring contemporary meanings and expressions in the Nordic cultural field.

The thesis argues that the concept of Nordic culture should not be taken for granted. It should not be seen only as a determiner for cultural activities and expressions to strengthen conventional, political and geographical images of the Nordic region. As the Nordic Culture Fund's concept of Nordic relevance aims to open up for new comprehensions of Nordic culture, the participating artists and cultural practitioners define and interpret this concept in similar ways as a part of their creative and artistic work. They do not want to follow the ways that different institutions and authorities frame the idea of the Nordic, but they find it necessary to have more artistic freedom in defining Nordic culture in today's society. It is thus relevant to broaden understandings of the Nordic culture and see it from new perspectives. One clear way is to focus more on global contexts where the concept is related to other societies, communities and cultures in the world. Instead of giving any absolute answers to the question of what Nordic culture means, the thesis concludes that Nordic culture is a fluid concept that is connected to the past of the Nordic nations but which can mean more than that. It is up to people both within and outside the Nordic region who participate in creating images of the Nordic culture.

7.1 Applicability

This thesis works as an example of a case study that is conducted in a cultural organisation. It points out how the artistic and cultural field relates to other areas in the society and what role cultural concepts such as Nordic culture and identity have in cultural and artistic processes. It emphasises a sector or field where interpretations and definitions of culture become a central factor and determiner. Moreover, the thesis grounds its analysis on discussions with people who work in the cultural field and look critically at cultural and societal processes in the surrounding society. The main focus is on interpretations of Nordic culture, but the discussions of national and global culture and cultural identity can be used in broader contexts in the cultural field.

Therefore, the thesis can be applied in similar kind of projects within the artistic and cultural sector where different definitions and interpretations of culture are relevant for future development. Cultural organisations, such as foundations, arts promotion centres, galleries, and museums, can in a similar way investigate and explore how people in society approach and interpret the different type of cultural realities. Debates and criticism towards funding models are relevant for those who want to create and develop systems that meet the demand of artists and cultural practitioners. Moreover, municipalities and development projects at the local, regional and national level can use the study as an example of topics and issues artists and other cultural practitioners are working with. The role of culture in peripheric areas and the importance of connecting with others are relevant topics in the globalising world.

On a practical level, the thesis shows how to approach and discuss with the actors in the cultural sector and what aspects and themes are important to include in the development of this field. Furthermore, on a more abstract level, the thesis exemplifies why questions of culture are necessary for processes where cultural organisations and institutions aim to understand and renew societal and cultural structures. This thesis gives analytical points of views and discussions on the role of arts and culture, especially in Nordic contexts but even in other cultural contexts where such topics as national and cultural identity, reconstruction of culture and global influence are central. Also, I see that this thesis can work as an example of cultural and ethnographic research which touches on relevant themes in other political and societal areas. For instance, culture politics can utilise the discussions of fluidity and independence in the creative field for understanding better why it is essential to see arts and culture as essential players in decision-making and processes of building a modern society.

7.2 Further research

This thesis has mainly focused on gathering information and analysing the material with the help of ethnographic research methods. Still, as the current situation with the COVID-19 pandemic is affecting people's everyday life, it is clear that there is room for getting deeper into the cultural analysis of Nordic culture. I could imagine that there are exciting and fruitful places for gathering new knowledge in the artistic and cultural field that could be explored further, for example, in observing daily processes and practices in creating and interpreting Nordic culture. In the cultural sector, there are possibilities in exploring and recording what expressions contemporary arts and culture use for Nordic culture and how the people in public interpret these works. One can see, feel, touch or, maybe even, smell Nordic culture in various creative and artistic contexts.

This study is strongly based on a short-term research project in a cultural organisation. There is thus great potential in taking the research to other cultural and artistic contexts where different happenings and situations can be studied without being bound to one organisation. Depending on the aims and objectives of future studies, I see potential in observing and studying different cultural organisations and institutions, such as museums, galleries, theatres, and scenes for performing arts, as well as societal and political organisations that deal with national, transnational and international aspects of today's cultural field. For example, the aspects of cultural and national identity can be explored further. The field is not limited only to the artistic and cultural field, but Nordic culture and its role can be studied further in other contexts, such as marketing, tourism and education. When the world becomes more and more globalised, Nordic culture is an interesting and central factor in analysing and discussing the role of cultural and national representations and identities in people's everyday life.

When it comes to specific topics and themes in the concept of Nordic culture, I can see several specific areas where to continue this study. Future research could study such themes as intersectionality and the role of minority cultures in the Nordic context. As discussed in this thesis, the Arctic region and indigenous people find their cultural and artistic impact as invisible in the Nordic cultural field. Reasons and ideas for improving the situation are great starting points for applied cultural analysis in the future.

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8.2 Interviews

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- Andrea (2020-09-04). Interviewer Panu Heiskanen.
- Erik (2020-10-15). Interviewer Panu Heiskanen.
- Emma (2020-09-29). Interviewer Panu Heiskanen.
- Frederik (2020-08-31). Interviewer Panu Heiskanen.
- Jaana (2020-09-17). Interviewer Panu Heiskanen.
- Jennifer (2020-09-09). Interviewer Panu Heiskanen.
- Josefine (2020-09-23). Interviewer Panu Heiskanen.
- Katrine (2020-09-10). Interviewer Panu Heiskanen.
- Lily (2020-10-09). Interviewer Panu Heiskanen.
- Liv (2020-09-15). Interviewer Panu Heiskanen.
- Magnus (2020-09-18). Interviewer Panu Heiskanen.
- Saara (2020-09-17). Interviewer Panu Heiskanen.
- Sakari (2020-10-13). Interviewer Panu Heiskanen.
- Tyler (2020-10-12). Interviewer Panu Heiskanen.
- William (2020-09-16). Interviewer Panu Heiskanen.

8.3 Focus group

The Nordic Culture Fund (2021-02-04). Participants: Liv, Minna, Peter, Saara, William.

Moderator: Trine Lycke Borgstrup. Observer: Panu Heiskanen.

9. Appendices

9.1 Appendix A. Interview guide

Namn
Position
Generellt

Hur förstår du ...?
... Norden, nordisk och nordisk identitet?

Roll i ditt liv och arbete?
→ Inspiration?
→ Stöder eller ej?

Hur förstår du ...?
... det globala & globalisering?

Definition?
→ roll i ditt liv & arbete?
→ möjligheter?
→ brister? saknas det något?

Norden vs. det globala

GLOBUS
intervjuguide

Globus

Är du bekant med Nordisk Kulturfond och dess generella strategi och stöd program?

FRAMTIDEN DÅ?

Har du hört om Globus?
(visa kort information)

- vad tycker du om det?
- hur avspelar Globus i dina egna (globala) idéer och behov?
- Globus och dess roll/position i dagens konst- och kulturfält?
- saknas det något? vad skulle du vilja utveckla i Globus?

- Arbetar du digitalt? För- och/eller nackdelar?
- Hur har du blivit påverkad av COVID-19?
- Har du kommit på några mer tankar, idéer eller kommentarer?

9.2 Appendix B. Table 1: Interviews and focus group meeting**Table 1***Interviews and focus group session in a chronological order*

Type	Date	Informant(s)	Role
Interview	2020-08-31	Frederik	Theatre director from Denmark
Interview	2020-09-04	Andrea	Cultural expert from Greenland
Interview	2020-09-07	Albert	Cultural expert from Denmark
Interview	2020-09-09	Jennifer	Art curator from the United States
Interview	2020-09-10	Katrine	Director for a Danish cultural organisation
Interview	2020-09-15	Liv	Employee at the Nordic Culture Fund
Interview	2020-09-16	William	Employee at the Nordic Culture Fund
Interview	2020-09-17	Saara	Employee at the Nordic Culture Fund
Interview	2020-09-17	Jaana	Artist and cultural actor from Finland
Interview	2020-09-18	Magnus	Visual artist from Denmark
Interview	2020-09-23	Josefine	Fashion writer and researcher from Denmark
Interview	2020-09-29	Emma	Fashion writer from Norway
Interview	2020-10-09	Lily	Art curator from Canada (lives in Denmark)
Interview	2020-10-12	Tyler	Artist from the United States
Interview	2020-10-13	Sakari	Director for an artist programme in Finland
Interview	2020-10-15	Erik	Circus artist from Sweden (lives in Denmark)
Focus group	2021-02-04	Liv, Minna, Peter, Saara, William	The personnel of the Nordic Culture Fund