

INSPIRATION

**AN ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' CONCEPTION OF INSPIRATION
IN ART AND DESIGN**

Pro Gradu Thesis

**University of Lapland
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Summary

This study aims to establish an analysis of the inspirational sources used in creative working by students of the Faculty of Art and Design of the University of Lapland. My hypothesis is that nature is the main source of inspiration used by the students in their creative work.

The information about inspiration is collected from eight students through a questionnaire consisting of ten open-ended questions. The questionnaire aims at the collection of information about the creative work of the students, their former place of study, and their inspiration in creative work. The group of informants is composed of four Finnish students and four international students – from Austria, Italy, Sweden, and Ukraine.

The categories of the informants' inspirational stimuli establish from the information given in the answers of the questionnaires. For the coding of the categories I use the thematic analysis. The categories are the starting point for interpretations, the main part of the analysis, and the summary of the information found in the answers to the questionnaires. The findings are combined with the theoretical background which is defined in the first part of the research. All these categories are important to describe the phenomenon of the inspirational sources of students of the Faculty of Art and Design in Rovaniemi.

The study shows that the social and the physical environment – which includes nature – are the most important sources of inspiration in the creative work of the students of the Faculty of Art and Design. All informants mention nature as source of inspiration in the questionnaire. I conclude that nature has an important influence upon the informants' creative inspiration, but it has no exclusive priority. More important is an environment in which the individual feels safe and comfortable to be able to work creatively.

Keywords: Inspiration, Art and Design, Thematic Analysis, Nature, Rovaniemi

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INTRODUCTION

»The arctic region with its severe conditions was [...] the home of a strong awareness of the interconnectedness of man, animal and all other nature, and of the connection of life with the sun, its light and warmth.«
(Hautala-Hirvioja 2008, 33)

My interest in the Lappish nature occurs not by chance. Since I moved to Rovaniemi in September 2012, I experienced all seasons in Lapland. Every time I was fascinated by the never-ending sunlight of the summer, the bright colors of autumn, the beauty of the cold, snow-covered landscape in winter, and the ugliness of the spring which shows a really beautiful side at the same time: when the snow is melting everything is gray and colorless, but people experience every day that life is coming back to the city of Rovaniemi and its surroundings. Before I was living in Rovaniemi, I had never been aware of the influence of light and darkness, warmth and coldness, the seasonal changes, natural colors, and different aggregation states of water upon my well-being and my artistic works. Nevertheless, the most influencing factor upon my well-being in Rovaniemi was the changing light conditions – as Hautala-Hirvioja describes in the quotation in the beginning: nature and the light influences the whole life in Lapland – as well as mine.

The topic of this research occurred to me one day in autumn last year while I was walking in the sunshine near the river in Rovaniemi, getting inspired by *ruska*, the bright colors of nature in Lapland in autumn. The colors of the trees varied between red, yellow, and orange. I was completely captivated by the richness of nature's colors and I got several ideas for creative projects. Before, I already had interesting conversations with Finnish and international students in Rovaniemi who were really excited about those powerful colors and their impact on their creative ideas at school and in their free time. From that moment I started to wonder: what kind of sources of inspiration do the students of the faculty of Art and Design of the University of Lapland use in their creative work? What kind of methods do they use to trigger inspiration for their creative work? Moreover, I wanted to find out if my hypothesis – nature is the main source of inspiration in the creative work of the

students of the faculty of Art and Design of the University of Lapland – is true or not.

In the first part, I will introduce the informants and explain the method of the study. In the second part, I will define the used terms of the study. I focus on the definition of the term *Inspiration*, which I describe shortly in its historical and scientific context. The third part deals with the presentation and analysis of the data. I will describe the impact of the cultural background of the students upon their creativity as well as the informants' definition of inspiration by using their given explanations. Subsequent follows the part about the informants' inspirational stimuli used in their studies and creative work in Rovaniemi, and methods how they gather ideas. The last part concludes the findings of the study and reflects critically the research.

1. Background of Informants and Research Method

Since nature and the seasonal changes play an important role in people's lives in Rovaniemi as well as in my personal life, I am asking myself the following questions: is nature the main source of inspiration in the creative work of students of the faculty of Art and Design of the University of Lapland? Which other factors are functioning as stimuli for their creative work? What methods do they use to get inspired? By analysing the students' answers I want to find out what is inspiring to them in relation to their studies and their creative work.

In the beginning, I read several articles which deal with the topic of inspiration, mostly in the field of design. With help of that background knowledge, I formulated the questions of the questionnaire. To conduct information for my research, I sent the file *Questionnaire "Inspiration"* (Appendix 1, pp. 63 f) consisting of ten open-ended questions via email to several students of the Art and Design faculty of the University of Lapland. Looking for students of the Faculty of Art and Design, I chose nine people – seven female and two male – by going through my "Facebook-friends". I wanted to get information of an equal number of design students and art students as well as foreign and Finnish students. Finally, I wrote a message to potential participants and asked them if they were willing to answer the questionnaire. The questionnaire aims at the collection of information about students' creative work, their former place of study, and their inspiration in creative work.

After I received five of nine answers, I started to send a message to another six students – four female and two male – to ask for their help in the same procedure as before. All in all, I received eight completed questionnaires – three from students of the design field and five from the art field. The length of those answers varies between two and a half to six pages in total. That is due to the fact that the questionnaire was sent electronically to the students, which provided them with the opportunity to write as many words as they wanted.

All informants are female, recently studying at the University of Lapland at the Faculty of Art and Design or about to graduate soon, and they are between 22 and 31 years old. Three students study Art Education, one Applied Visual Arts, one Environmental Art and Design, two Industrial Design, and one Graphic Design. The group of informants is composed of four Finnish students and five international students from Austria, Italy, Sweden, and Ukraine. Two of the Finnish students, who are living in Rovaniemi the longest, moved here in 2007 and the two students with the shortest duration of stay in Rovaniemi came here in January 2014 for their study abroad.

For the establishment of the codes and the themes of this study and the analysis I used “Thematic analysis”. Braun and Clarke (2012, 57 *f*) argue that thematic analysis is an important method that should be familiar to every researcher because it contains the basic principles of many other research methods. Furthermore, the researcher is obligated to offer transparency about the working processes to give the reader a better and easier way of understanding how the progress of work went during the research. The thematic analysis helps to find pattern in the data set and to categorize those findings to finally link them to the theory. (Braun & Clarke 2012, 58)

For conducting the thematic analysis, I used the *Six-Phases Approach to Thematic Analysis* by Braun and Clarke (see Braun & Clarke 2006, 60 *ff*). The first phase of the approach contains the researcher's Familiarization With The Data. When I received the first answers by the students via email, I read through all of them to get a first impression of their thoughts. After collecting all answers, I started to reread them in detail to familiarize myself with them. The second phase – Establishment Of Initial Codes – consisted of making notes to get an overall impression of the collected data. Many informants mentioned similar topics in their answers, and for the purpose of coding I highlighted the information that comprised conformable content in the same color. By collecting similar data, I conducted the third phase – Searching For Themes.

After going through all the answers again – phase four: Reviewing Potential Themes – I started the fifth phase with Defining And Naming The Themes of the inspirational stimuli found in the answers of the informants with help of the codes. All

these themes are important to describe the phenomenon of the inspirational sources of students of the Faculty of Art and Design in Rovaniemi. After several phases of editing, those topics are the final themes of the study about the inspirational stimuli of the participants.

After I formulated the categories of students' inspirational stimuli I started to combine those findings with the theoretical background (see also Aronson 1994). The Production Of The Report is the sixth and final phase.

The analysis contains the researcher's own reflections, thoughts, opinions, and experiences related to the information which was found in the informants' answers (Ramsenthaler 2013, 24). By combining the theory with the data, the categories emerged into themes about the inspirational stimuli of the informants and methods of finding inspiration. Themes are the »[...] *outcome* of coding, categorization, and analytic reflection [...]« (Saldaña 2009, 13).

Braun and Clark prefer to use the expression that researchers *find* the themes from the data and not that the themes *emerge* from the data. They state that the researchers are not passively waiting for the themes to arise from the data but that they shape those by themselves. After finding the initial codes and the finding of the preliminary themes, the researchers work in a cyclic way. In the phase of analyzing, they have to reformulate, rearrange, and edit the themes until they formulate the final themes. (Braun & Clarke 2012, 63)

The themes are inductive that means that their titles are created through the information found in the informants' answers (Ramsenthaler, 2013, 24) and that the data was coded without preliminary categories in which they have to fit in. For the analysis I conduct an experiential orientation towards the data and I use the “contextualist”¹ method

1 »[...] [A method] between the two poles of essentialism and constructionism. [...] [Acknowledgement of the] way individuals make meaning of their experience, and, in turn, the ways the broader social context impinges on those meanings, while retaining focus on the material and other limits of „reality“. Therefore, thematic analysis can be a method which works both to reflect reality, and to unpick or unravel the surface of „reality“.« (Braun & Clarke 2006, 9)

as theoretical framework. All three aspects limit the way the data is interpreted. (Braun & Clarke 2012, 58 f.)

I chose a qualitative research method because it is a way to understand how the world around us works (Rubin & Rubin 2005, 1). For the question of the inspiration of students of the Faculty of Art and Design of the University of Lapland it was a suitable approach because the information remains in their original context, and it is possible to relate the obvious to the explicit facts (Rubin & Rubin 2005, viii). Ramsenthaler (2013, 23) writes in her definition of qualitative content analysis that the main aspect is to analyze the text (here the answers of the informants) systematically by dividing the material into categories which are then linked to the theory. The categories are the starting point for interpretations, the main part of the analysis, and the summary of the information found in the questionnaires. During this procedure, the overall meaning of the text remains constantly the same (Ramsenthaler 2013, 23).

The analysis of the answers of the questionnaires establishes a portrait of the students' conception of inspiration in art and design with help of their sources of inspiration as well as the methods of finding inspiration for creative work.

2. Definitions

2.1 Nature in Art – A short Introduction

The first time *nature* became the motif of Western art was in the 19th century, even though it had already been well established in the Dutch art of the 17th century.

Before, artists were focusing on humans and their representations. Nature was considered as a feature of secondary rank. (Leuthold 2011, 173.) Art was a tool to show perfection of people and of objects, and was not used to represent their natural and “imperfect” appearances (Preziosi 2009, 55). The explanation for this approach was that

»[...] nature served the role of a backdrop for historical, religious, or mythological work but was not the subject of art in its own right. [...] People in the West have a history of viewing nature as something that is “out there”: separate, distinct, and something to be conquered. Historically, nature has been seen as a threat that must be controlled« (Leuthold 2011, 173 f).

Furthermore, Leuthold (2011, 179) writes that the appreciation of nature as inspirational source in art has changed by giving the example of mountains and the countryside. Both have been seen as mysterious, unpredictable, and intimidating by people, because these are places that human kind has no power and no control over.

There is no scientific explanation that nature has always been an important source of inspiration in art and design. However, famous people like Leonardo da Vinci were highly influenced by nature in their doing as well as architects like Anton Gaudí and Alvar Aalto. They found their ideas for buildings in natural shapes. Furthermore, many Finnish artists name nature as their main inspirational source in art, as for instance the painter Reidar Särestöniemi and the contemporary artist Hilikka Ukkola (see Hautala-Hirvioja 2008; see Hautala-Hirvioja 2013; see Ilvas 2000).

In this research the term *nature* is defined as something which is not human-made (Maleuvre 2006, 223), such as flora and fauna, landscapes, water, stones and mountains, and so forth.

2.2 Art vs. Design

»What is art? Art is defined in dictionaries and encyclopedias as “works resulting from creative activities which communicate forms, ideas, and emotions and bring about reactions from viewers.”« (Costache 2012, xvi)

Costache (2012, xxiv) states that art is a tool through which people are communicating with each other about everything that concerns them: ideas, thoughts,

emotions, and problems. Art is to make people think. Pye (1978, 107) states »that design is an art, not simply a problem-solving activity and no more.« Design is meant to beautify the environment and to serve people through its functionality (Pye 1978, 107). That means that art makes people communicate with the art work, with themselves or with other people, and design is to serve people's needs.

A lot of studies have been done to help to understand inspiration in the field of design and less in the field of art. In my opinion, there is only a difference in the usage of inspirational stimuli in art compared to the usage in design. It could be said that designers use inspirational stimuli as a help to deal with a given task and artists get their first ideas for a project or art work from inspirational stimuli.

All in all, I want to emphasize that inspiration in both fields helps to overcome barriers and to develop novel ideas in a person's mind. In my research, I sometimes refer to designer and sometimes to artist, because the theory I conduct is focusing either on artists' or on designers' ways of working. As Pye (1978, 94) states: »Design is neither a problem-solving activity nor an art. It is both.« There is no need to distinguish both fields exactly, because the main focus of this study is the inspirational stimuli the students use in general in their creative work.

Finally, I want to refer to Costache (2012, xix) who writes that art is a concept that is influenced by the culture and the origin of many individuals and institutions. In my opinion it is the same with design.

2.3 Aesthetics

Following the fact that art was understood to show *beauty* and not an object's or a person's natural appearance, I will shortly introduce *aesthetics* in art history.

The term *aesthetics*, which is dealing with the terms of beauty and taste (Preziosi 2009, 572), was first introduced by Alexander Baumgarten in 1735 (Elkins 2006, 4).

Besides Baumgarten, other philosophers like Kant, Hume, and Plato dealt with *aesthetics* (Elkins 2006, 4.; Nehamas 2006, 153 f). In the twentieth century people started to use the term *aesthetics* as synonym for the “fine arts” (Preziosi 2009, 572).

First of all, it is important to understand that every person has a different perception of *beauty*. Sometimes it seems incomprehensible to other people, but Preziosi (2009, 55 f) explains that beauty is conceived by our *taste* which is an »*extremely clear sense perception*«. Kant (Preziosi 2009, 64) stated that »[t]he judgement of taste, therefore, is not a cognitive judgement, and so not logical, but is aesthetic – which means that it is one whose determining ground *cannot be other than subjective*.«

That the perception of *beauty* is changing over the time is naturally because people's tastes change (Nehamas 2006, 148). What is seen as “great art” nowadays might be seen as “ugly” decades ago, and vice versa. That means that the feature “beautiful”, which is seen as equal to “looking good”, is historically conditioned (Nehamas 2006, 147).

Plato does not agree to the approach that “beautiful” and “looking good” are the same. In his opinion, the word *beauty* builds up a much stronger connection between the “thing” and the person who thinks that it is “beautiful”:

»Plato called that desire *eros* – love – and said that its object was beauty. So, beauty is neither the property of looking good nor an empty compliment: it is simply the object of love. What we find beautiful – person or objects – is what we want to make part of our life because we love it – not just because it is interesting, important, or even a great work of art. [...] It is what moves us, and what, as we pursue it through life, gives our lives direction and shape and helps us become who we are.« (Nehamas 2006, 153 f)

Even when I agree with Plato's approach, I define the word “beautiful” in this research as correlation with “looking good”.

2.4 God and Muses – Inspiration in Religion and in Greek Mythology

Inspiration is a mystique aspect of the creative process (Stein 1974, 22). It is not easily describable and comprehensible for an individual, because inspiration is the result of an unconscious process. Moreover, it is also related to as an “awe-inspiring” moment (Stein 1974, 22). In Greek mythology the creative individuals were always cooperating with a muse, they were said to “have their muse”. They were not able to explain what inspiration was and where it was coming from. The explanation was that the idea was originated from a muse who injected it into the individual's mind.

In a religious context the creative individuals were chosen “to do God's work”. The muse or God himself were the creative ones who were choosing a person as an instrument to fulfill their work. In that way the responsibility for the creative individual's work lay upon the muse or God and not on the person who was acting passively. The creative persons accomplished only what they were told to do and could not be blamed or praised for their novel ideas and thoughts. Stein defines novelty as an aspect which involves *difference*. People often equate *difference* with a challenge, with the questioning of the validity of a system or the power of a person. When creative individuals were held liable for their work, they could blame the muse or God for the ideas they expressed. That helped them not to fall out of the social frame. (Stein 1974, 22 f)

After a shift of the locus of creativity from God and the muse (“outside men”) to the individuals themselves (“inside men”), people were seen as the indicator themselves for being creative. Moreover, the creative individuals had to accept their own responsibility for their works and doings. (Stein 1974, 22)

2.5 Inspiration in the Field of Art and Design

Creative ideas seem often to occur, when people's thoughts tend to be occupied in many different directions or when the individuals are in a relaxed state of mind, in other words, they are not thinking at all (Boden 2004, 25). This unconscious process is often associated with inspiration or intuition. Inspiration is one of the mystiques of creativity, besides intuition² (Stein 1974, 196). Creative individuals work either in an inspired state of mind or act intuitively (Stein 1974, 222).

There are different definitions of the unconscious process of inspiration in the creative process. Some definitions claim that inspiration is fostered by an aspect from the inside of the creative individual, others submit that it is stimulated from the outside of the person or that it is influenced by both aspects. In general, inspiration is defined as

»[...] ‘the process that takes place when somebody sees or hears something that causes them to have exciting new ideas or makes them want to create something, especially in art, music or literature’.« (Hornby & Wehmeier 2000, 673)

Inspiration (from the Latin *inspirare* – to animate, to breathe life into something) is a scientific or artistic idea that occurs suddenly in the mind of an individual. This inspiring outburst is thought to be influenced by an aspect which is outside of the individual but it is the result of a phase of unconscious problem solving and formation of hypotheses. In the creative process by Wallas from 1926 this phase is called incubation. Inspiration occurs in the phase of illumination which follows incubation (see also 2.7 The Creative Process). (Kwiatkowski 1983)

2 Kwiatkowski 1984: Intuition is an accomplishment of the intellect, even if it is not based on an accountable mental effort. It contains an apparently spontaneous transformation of the content of internal perception and notion, which the individual experiences as an evident knowledge acquisition. It is a necessary aspect in the realization of an artistic intention as well as in the reception of art works. Furthermore, intuition is used as medium to communicate artistic statements which are otherwise elusive. Stein (1974, 203) defines intuition as »a method of formulating or solving a problem in which the person has no conscious awareness or knowledge of how he arrived at the answer or what stimuli led him to it.«

Generally, people tend to believe in an unconscious burst of inspiration which occurs to the creative individual (Sawyer 2006, 215 f). Stein describes the phenomenon as a mystery, »the feeling of excitement or exhilaration«, and as an awe-inspiring experience. He distinguishes between scientific and artistic inspiration: scientific inspiration seems to be stimulated from the outside (environment) and artistic inspiration occurs from the individual's inside. But in the same paragraph he explains that this definition is not valid, because landscape artists and portrait artists are using models for their paintings, and theoretical physicists are working with ideas which occur only in their minds. It is obvious that there is no simple separation of the origin of inspiration. (Stein (1974, 15 ff)

Most definitions of inspiration claim that it is an aspect which is coming from outside into the artist, for example from the environment, people, or objects (Trash & Elliot 2003, 872 f). Victor Zuckerkandl's definition of artistic inspiration from 1964 relates to the general perception of inspiration as being the beginning and the essence of every art work. Without inspiration art would not exist. People tend to see inspiration as the main aspect of an art work, which is coming from the outside (in)to the artist. Zuckerkandl defines the artist as the one who receives something – for instance an idea or a thought – from someone else. The artist is the receiver, not the creator. (Pohlmann n.d.) Furthermore, A. Telier (2011, 22) state that inspiration is not coming from a certain object but from the associations a person has with it. The creative person may connect the object to a project, task, or idea: »Inspiration often arises from the transient and ephemeral ways in which objects, people, or an ambience are encountered, their “peripheral presence in the back of one's mind,” [...]« (A. Telier 2011, 22).

On the contrary, Moffitt (2005, 14) quotes a result of Albert Rothenberg's observation on creativity from 1994:

»Closely related to the emphasis on inspiration in creativity is the [complementary] belief in the *unconscious* creative wellspring. [...] the unconscious is considered responsible for mysterious bolts from the blue, flashes of insight, waking from sleep with ideas already formed, and energy-releasing altered states of consciousness«.

In his conclusion, Moffitt (2005, 15 ff) states that inspiration is an artificial invention which is culturally constructed; »*Inspiration* is a made-up term, a buzz-word, another shibboleth« (Moffitt, 2005, 15). Moreover, the generally acknowledged role of inspiration in the creative process is misleading and incorrect (Moffitt 2005, 17). It might be right that inspiration is a culturally constructed term but it is to consider that inspiration is the starting point of every creative act (Runco 2006, 36).

Most importantly there is the motivational characteristic of inspiration (Trash & Elliot 2003, 872). This has also been mentioned in the informants' definition of inspiration in art and design (see also 4. Definition of Inspiration by Informants). Inspiration makes people do things.

Most articles that are dealing with inspiration in art and design are focusing on general inspirational stimuli which can be found in everyday life.

2.6 How to get inspired

There are not many studies about inspiration because usually it is a process experienced by individuals in private, and in that way it is difficult to observe from the outside. Anybody is able to experience inspiration. Some people wait for the situation of inspiration to occur and envy the creative individual who gets inspired easily. However, waiting is not the right essence to receive inspiration. The creative individuals have to be patient, aware of unconscious material, and most of all they have to be disciplined. They have to work in a long period of preparation, while having access to unconscious material, which they are then able to use in a most efficient way. (Stein 1974, 202)

Moffitt (2005, 13) states that »*Inspiration* was – and still is – commonly discussed as representing a uniquely privileged psychological condition accepted to be nearly obligatory in order to attain any measure of creative excellence in the Fine Arts.« Inspiration will always divide the creative persons from the would-be artists: »[...] you

either have [this mysterious gift] – or just don't get it« (Moffitt 2005, 27). There is the belief that it is impossible for non-creative individuals (the majority) to ever achieve the inspired state of a creative person (Moffitt 2005, 27; Costache 2012, 14).

As inspiration is impossible to acquire by skills or practice, it belongs according to Clement Greenberg (in Moffitt 2005, 27) only to the individual. That means that other people are able to learn from, copy, or imitate artistic skills of the creative individual but not his or her inspiration (Moffitt 2005, 27). Moreover, Greenberg's perception of inspiration has nothing to do with religion, politics, or affection, but with »[...] the *exact* choices of color, medium, size, shape, proportion – including the size and the shape of the support – are what alone determine the quality of the result, and these *choices depend solely on inspiration or conception*³« (Moffitt 2005, 28). Greenberg means that all important twentieth-century painters, which were making non-objective art works, gained their inspiration from the medium they worked in (Moffitt 2005, 28).

To get inspired, people need to be completely committed to their work without pressure or threat (Stein 1974, 21 & 202). They have to find the environment in which they are able to work creatively and they have to diminish those factors which are controlling their subconsciousness. Additionally, they have to get into a relaxing state of mind, which means they are unafraid of the repressed aspects which are coming from their subconscious. Furthermore, the individuals must feel safe and secure. (Stein 1974, 202 *f.*) To get inspiration and access to their subconscious, the creative individuals have to be self-aware; »[they require] freedom to explore, to be [themselves], to entertain ideas no matter how wild, and to express that which is within [them] without fear of censure and concern with evaluation« (Stein 1974, 24).

Several models of the creative process exist. The most popular one is the definition by Wallas from 1926 (see also 2.7 The Creative Process). Creativity has also been divided into three phases by Kris in 1953: inspiration, elaboration, and communication (Stein 1974, 14). In the phase of inspiration »[...] the creative individual is [...] driven; he is in an

3 Greenberg equates *conception* with the terms *invention* and *inspiration*.

exceptional state. Thoughts and images tend to flow, things appear in his mind of which he never seemed to have known« (Stein 1974, 14).

2.7 The Creative Process

Wallas divides the process of creativity into four phases: preparation, incubation, illumination, and verification (Stein 1974; Taylor & Getzels 1975; Kim 1990; Brinck 1999; Boden 2004; Runco 2006). Most recent models include recursion in the stage of verification. Recursion gives the individual the possibility to revisit earlier stages of the process and cycle through the stages as desired. The whole process is not strictly linear. (Runco 2006, 32.) Brinck's (1999, 3) definition of Wallas model adds the information that all phases »can overlap and may re-occur during the process of solving a single problem«.

The stage of preparation consists of the identification and definition of the problem and the gathering of information from every possible direction (Stein 1974, 14; Runco 2006, 32).

The next stage is incubation. This stage is composed of the unconscious processing and transformation of the gathered information. Additionally, it is proof for the continuous work of the creative individuals' mind on the problem even while they are not talking or consciously thinking about it. (Runco 2006, 32.) Gonçalves et al (2011, 10) write that by »"doing nothing which relates to the problem" will help the brain activities to restructure and by this gaining new ideas or even a solution for the problem.« During this phase unconscious ideas and solutions are not censored by the mind (Runco 2006, 32). There are several positive aspects to this phase; for example, fatigue of the mind does not emerge, because the work is done unconsciously. That allows the mind to recover and to relax, which promotes the possibility to discover remote ideas and more freely associations. (Kim 1990, 48; Runco 2006, 33.) Moreover, the time, which the individuals spend away from their project, gives space for new ideas, because the mind is not directly focused on the problem, and the fixation on the problem loosens (Taylor & Getzels 1975, 73).

The third phase illumination, also known as insight⁴, is the best known phase of the whole creative process. At that stage the so-called “aha-effect” or “happy idea” occurs. (Stein 1974, 14; Runco 2006, 33)

The last stage is called verification, which includes the testing of the idea for validity, the search for proof and evidence for the solution, and the reduction to the final form (Stein 1974, 14; Brinck 1999, 3). It is necessary to include this stage, because it gives the creative individual the possibility to »test and tinker« (Runco 2006, 32). Moreover, »[i]t may be that problems are made the most effective during some sort of verification« (Runco 2006, 32).

Stein (1974, 14) divides the creative into three categories: hypothesis forming – which is also called “inspiration” or “context of discovery” (Stein 1974, 26) –, hypothesis testing, and communication.

»[H]ypothesis formation [...] starts after preparation and ends with the formation of a tentative idea or plan; hypothesis testing [...] involves determining whether or not the idea will stand up under careful scrutiny and testing; and communication [...] involves presenting the final product so that others may react to and possibly accept it.« (Stein 1974, 14)

Through communication weaknesses of the solution may be highlighted and suggestions for improvements may be formulated (Kim 1990, 49). During the stage of hypothesis formation the creative individuals discover their own most unique sides (Stein 1974, 26).

4 Insights occur when a solution to a problem is found and the individual is becoming aware of that (Brinck 1999, 3 & 14). Runco (2006, 40) explains the creative insights as »protracted, meaning that they cover a period of time. They are not sudden or immediate and quick. Instead, the creator is working with the problem or issue, albeit often on an unconscious level.« For example, while painting the artist experiences several mini-insights (Sawyer 2006, 195).

ANALYSIS

In this chapter I present the findings of the questionnaires that represent the data of this research. I relate those findings to the theoretical background and my own assumptions. The findings are categorized in thematic parts which are found through the thematic analysis from the answers of the informants. In the beginning, I analyze the cultural background of the informants and the consequent influence upon their ideas of inspiration, their life in Rovaniemi, and their perception of creativity. Then I present the informants' definitions of inspiration in art and design. The next part of the analysis deals with the inspirational stimuli used by the informants, and in the last part I present some methods of how the informants find inspiration for their creative working processes.

3. Cultural Impact on Creativity

Due to the fact that the informants are coming from different cultural backgrounds (Austria, Italy, Finland, Sweden, and Ukraine), it is important to open up the cultural impact upon people's lives and values, and upon their way of being creative in art and design.

»That culture is something within which we live, move, and have our very being is both liberating and binding, for as it establishes the very possibility of a shared life of meaning and value it also determines the range of values and options easily and manifestly available, obscuring alternatives. One cannot escape culture [...].« (Alexander 1987, 275)

Our whole life is influenced by the culture we are living in. Triandis (quoted in Lubart & Georgsdottir 2004, 13) defined the term culture in 1996 as follows:

»Culture refers to a shared system of cognitions, behaviors, customs, values, rules, and symbols concerning the manner in which a set of people interact with their social and physical environment [...]. Culture is learned and socially transmitted from generation to generation; cultures are dynamic and may evolve over time. [...]«

Here, culture is seen under the aspect of unifying a group of people who share, for example, the same interests, a common language, or who are living in the same geographical area (Leuthold 2011, 10 f; Alexander 1987, 270). Through this common aspect the group is able to distinguish itself from other groups. There is no hierarchical order that one culture is considered as being better or having the better pieces of art than the other. (Leuthold 2011, 10 f.)

The other aspect of culture is bound to its aspect of being used as valuation, for example for the establishment of social classes. Those social classes are found, for instance, in art. Leuthold (2011, 11) gives an example by mentioning that some people claim Beethoven's symphony and da Vinci's paintings as being “high culture” and then there are the other groups, like Native Americans with their story-telling and totem carving, which are categorized as “low culture”. Only those art works of “high culture” are valued as worth to be presented in public and worth to support. The question is who is deciding whether some artifact is “high” or “low” culture? In fact, many artists investigate the culture of other nations to gather inspiration and new ideas for their own creative projects. (Leuthold 2011, 11 f)

For example, studying and living in Rovaniemi and experiencing Finnish culture has an impact on the foreign people as the informants confirm in the questionnaire. One writes as follows:

»I think the [Finnish] design (or rather – lifestyle) affected me personally.«

Informant #7, 27, Industrial Design, Ukraine

The informant has been studying in Kiev, in a »[...] huge university, the biggest Ukrainian university in the field of architecture« before she came to Rovaniemi. In a small city like Rovaniemi, life is more relaxed and slower than in a metropolis like Kiev. Furthermore, there is more nature around and inside of Rovaniemi, which is within reach of every part of the city. Nature is obviously the biggest influence on the informant's life in Finland, because she mentions “nature” all over again in her answers. With this answer the informant admits that Finland has an impact upon her way of living – in a good or in a bad way. Jandt (2012, 61) suggests that it is normal that people get influenced by a new culture if they live in it for a longer time, because their sensation and their cognitive processes are changing.

As mentioned before, culture has a huge impact upon life. It influences people's behaviors as much as design and art. As Barnwell (2011, 6) states that »[d]esign changes culture and at the same time is shaped by it.« Moreover, he claims that design is used by people according to their cultural background (Barnwell 2011, 6):

»The cultural framings impact on how people use or do not use a particular product. Cultural values are often reflected in the form and function of a product, and are integral component parts of lifestyle. [...] It is culture that gives products relevance and provides the rituals within which artefacts are used.«

As Barnwell writes about the cultural effect on design, Costache (2012, 39 f) relates in her writing to the impact of culture on art. For example, artists are influenced in their doing among others by literature, music, poetry, and philosophy of their own culture as well as of another nation's culture. Those factors have an impact on the creativity of the artists. (Costache 2012, 39 f.) Moreover, Preziosi (2009, 574) states that »Art was traditionally characterized as a mode of cultural production [...]«.

The norms of art, which are setting trends, are always influenced by culture and the time period in which an artwork is made. Those factors always influence artists because they need to find a way to combine their unique style with those trends. Decades ago, it

was much more difficult and time-consuming to get to know the trends of another country (Costache 2012, 39 f). That changed with the introduction of the Internet which makes communication fast and almost unlimited. Trends are spread in minutes around the world and are changing all the time, but still they are records of a certain time period. The Internet has not only a huge impact in terms of setting trends but also in influencing people's everyday life. To the question whether the surrounding of her previous place of study was functioning as an inspiration in creative work, one informant wrote the following:

»I think surrounding is actually not that important for me as a source of inspiration. What is important is internet and opportunity to go out for a walk.«

Informant #7, 27, Industrial Design, Ukraine

Here, the informant mentions besides nature the Internet as meaningful. The informant moved for a two-years period to Rovaniemi to study. The access to the Internet has priority, because it is a connection to the external world, it helps to maintain social contacts, and it is an important entertainer. Additionally, the Internet is a helpful tool to collect information and to find ideas and hints for homework and, in the case of informant #7 (27, Industrial Design, Ukraine), design work.

Art is a record of time and it is said to be an expression of human values (Leuthold 2011, 10). Raymond Williams, who is considered as father of the cultural studies, was the first to think that culture is an interconnected social organism which cannot be put into any social hierarchy, like “high culture” for the elite and “low culture” for the masses. Art is seen as part of culture and not as some superior aspect of it (Carter 2008, 89 f).

Some people create artworks to express their feelings or find meaning in something what they have experienced. Through the consumption of these artworks, people add a cultural value to them, who are then »[...] functioning as “agents in the social circulation of meaning and pleasure”« (Carter 2008, 90). Carter gives an example by mentioning the Mona Lisa, which always had and will have a great influence on art. But at the same time

she says that the meaning of this painting has »changed through time and will continue to change as they interface with other cultural and social ideas« (Carter 2008, 91). In a socio-political approach⁵ humans and culture are claimed to be interrelated aspects:

»[...] humans are active consumers and shapers of their culture. Their self-concept is not predetermined by other forces, but is shaped by themselves in the act of consuming culture. Self-actualization and meaning is achieved through consumption.« (Carter 2008, 91)

In other words, people are the active creators of culture, which means that in the way people influence their culture, they are at the same time influencing the perception and the usage of their creativity.

Furthermore, people are influencing other people around them and they are all constructing a place (see also 5.3 Sense of Place – Place Identity). One informant gives the following answer, which might be analyzed in several ways:

»For me the main source of inspiration is just generally the idea of living in Rovaniemi.«

Informant #5, 28, Art Education, Finland

Although she is from Finland, she thinks that Rovaniemi is a special place to live. Before, she studied in Espoo, in Southern Finland, which differs from Northern Finland not only in the landscape but also in the way people are interacting with each other. The metropolitans are living in Southern Finland and they are busy with their own lives. In the North people are considered to live in the countryside, they are relaxed, and they like to communicate and care for their fellow human beings. This phenomenon probably exists in every country. In her questionnaire she described the multi-faceted cultural life of Rovaniemi and her engagement in the artistic scene. She writes about how the people of Rovaniemi make her do new things and try out new art forms. And these people are constructing the place of Rovaniemi, where she feels at home. There was something that she was missing in her former place of study and what she found in Rovaniemi.

⁵ By P. Willis (quoted in Carter 2008, 91)

»[...] my experience of the place [she refers to Otaniemi, Espoo] wasn't entirely positive, since I tried to live a life, walk a path, that wasn't mine.«

Informant #5, 28, Art Education, Finland

When she moved to Rovaniemi, she came to a place to “walk her own path” and the possibility to express herself in different artistic ways. The reason for that might be that she changed her field of study completely – from economy to art studies – and that she met other people in Rovaniemi who share the same interests as her.

Informant #2 (31, Environmental Art and Design, Sweden) focuses on her connection to nature and environment. She is originally from a small Lappish village in Sweden. She writes that she is active in political projects concerning »the mining industry and the deforestation, the oil, and the nuclear pollution of the region.« A healthy contact between humans and nature is her main concern. This is probably influenced by the fact that she was raised in a small village. In her previous place of study – which was Stockholm – she used her home as inspirational source, which shows that she is deeply connected to her home place.

»Cosmos, aurora borealis and the environment of Lapland (minus the car-noise). In a way, I have always had a strong connection with my cultural history, my home village, the sami-boys and the snow, the stars. So on, very romantic. Somehow, cosmos made it possible to connect the places, through time and space in a way so that I always felt connected to home in the north, even if I was very far away.«

Informant #2, 31, Environmental Art and Design, Sweden

Since culture is influencing art and art making, it has also an impact on creativity. According to Lubart (in Li 2010, 42) there are four ways of cultural influence on creativity: First, there are different concepts of creativity in different cultures. Second, there might be different psychological processes going on when people from different cultures engage in creativity. Third, the different languages may influence people's creativity, and forth, the environment might influence or inhibit people's creative thoughts. All in all, »[c]reativity is

a “very complex interaction” between a person, a field, and a culture [...]« (Li 2010, 42) which is influenced by the educational background and the environment of the individual. Besides those influences, it is culture which is the most important and influential factor for people's creativity. (Li 2010, 42 ff.)

To summarize, we can say that the cultural background of individuals has a great impact on their creative behavior. That might be the reason for the different answers of the questionnaires, because all participants have a different international background and a different perception of creativity.

4. Definition of Inspiration by Informants

The informants were asked in the questionnaire to give their definition of the term “inspiration” in art and design. Some informants claim that inspiration is some **influence from the outside** over a creative individual. Others think that inspiration is a certain **feeling**, and again some define the term more rationally as being a **moment which makes a person start to think**. Almost all informants write about the motivational feature of inspiration to do something creative. One informant argues that it is not always inspiration but also sometimes a need or a necessity that makes people work creatively.

The following definitions of two informants illustrate their understanding of inspiration as an input from the environment (in)to the creative individual. They claim that creative individuals are influenced by their social and physical environment to do something original or artistic.

»It is something that comes from everyday life, its people and environments.«

Informant #1, 26, Applied Visual Art, Finland

»Inspiration is something that you catch from the environment and you put in your creative work.«

Informant #6, 22, Graphic Design, Italy

Some informants understand inspiration as being a feeling that animates people to work creatively. It is an unknown feeling which is coming from the inside and which occurs suddenly to the person's mind. Also inspiration is related to the creative individual's needs and it has a positive impact on the person.

»For me it is getting good idea or any idea which gives feeling of awe. Feeling of being inside my own spirit = in spirit = inspiration. Expressing or creating something which has meaning for me.«

Informant #3, 29, Art Education, Finland

»Inspiration is the feeling, that you have found way to express certain topic through art. You're enjoying working with your medium, not just because you gain something, but you also are enjoying your experience.«

Informant #4, 27, Art Education, Finland

»A feeling that gives me a rush and urges me to react somehow...usually it is the connection of loose ideas in my head, falling into places and creating a realization of something that needs to be done! Something extremely important and very wonderful, when inspiration hits things get a bit crazy.«

Informant #2, 31, Environmental Art and Design, Sweden

Informant #2 (31, Environmental Art and Design, Sweden) and informant #6 (22, Graphic Design, Italy) mention especially the motivational feature of the experience of inspiration. It makes the person react and do something creative. There is no difference if inspiration is coming from the inside or from the outside of the creative individual.

Informant #5 (28, Art Education) focuses in her definition mostly on the meaning of inspiration as motivation.

»I think that sometimes “inspiration” means that you get some kind of an inkling of an idea of what you want to do, even if it’s just a starting point. In that case the most important thing you can do with your inspiration is to DO IT or do whatever, make happen, make real the thing that’s knocking at your mind. Yes. That’s pretty much it. You need to trust that the first step will lead you to the second, and for that reason you need to start DOING. You can’t think “well i don't know where this is going to lead me so I’m not going to do it/anything.”. You need to trust the process. “Inspiration” is just the first breath in, but before the work is done you will need to have taken a lot more breaths in and out.«

Informant #5, 28, Art Education, Finland

Informant #3 (29, Art Education, Finland) and informant #5 (28, Art Education, Finland) mention both “breath” and “in spirit” in their definitions which is the etymological origin of the word inspiration (see also 2.5 Inspiration in the Field of Art and Design). In more rational definitions inspiration is a personal experience which starts the creative thinking process.

»Inspiration is a moment, where your mind starts generating ideas that seem interesting for you.«

Informant #7, 27, Industrial Design, Ukraine

»Inspiration for me is something which makes you start thinking, seeing things in a different angle. Like the spark of a fire. [...]«

Informant #8, 22, Industrial Design, Austria

Informant #5 (28, Art Education, Finland) raises the question of necessity being the starting point for creative working and not inspiration.

»[S]ometimes I think some works arise not from inspiration but from NECESSITY. For instance when I think of some lyrics+melody combos that I have created, then it is usually because I have been thinking of some THING and as soon as I manage to make some kind of conclusion about the topic that I can stand behind, that resonates with my intuitive sense of the [situation], thing, idea, or concept, then in those moments the melody and lyrics just come to my mind as a type of “conclusion” or sort of “final statement” that underlines and fully describes the conclusion that I’ve come to.«

Informant #5, 28, Art Education, Finland

The way informant #5 (28, Art Education, Finland) explains the phenomenon of “necessity” she is talking about an inspirational thought, an idea which makes a person think about a certain topic and which finally results in creative work. Some people may feel an urge to do something creative and novel to express themselves and their feelings, which may be seen as a necessity. This may raise the question if necessity and inspiration may be the same in her point of view, because both make people do something.

At some point, I was wondering if inspiration can also come from a negative influence. For instance, when someone sees a really ugly painting and suddenly there comes the idea to the mind to paint over it to beautify it. Could that also be called inspiration because it is an input which makes people do something? In my whole research inspiration seems to be a positive input which leads people to do something positive. In my opinion, inspiration is just the factor which makes people react and in this case it is always something positive.

All informants mentioned important aspects in their definitions of creative inspiration. They are all involved with creativity – whether in their studies or in their free time – and know a lot about inspiration. That might also be only unconscious knowledge, because some told me that they never thought about their inspirational sources before. In my opinion, that is the usual way because when artists are getting an idea for their creative work, they are happy when they receive the idea without concern from where that idea emerges. To think consciously about inspiration claims some effort and time, and might not

lead to a desirable working process, because many creative work is done because of the wish or need to do it and not because it has to be done.

5. Inspirational Stimuli

Gonçalves et al (2011b, 7 f) and Eckert and Stacey (1998, 9) state that designers find inspiration while being engaged in certain activities, for instance while going for a walk, reading books, listening to music, or visiting a museum. In those situations the creative individuals are in direct contact with the sources of their ideas. Some people may think that the creative individuals are not working at all in that time, but in fact that is the point when they are mostly involved in their creative thinking and in finding most of their creative ideas. (Eckert & Stacey 1998, 9.) Through the analysis of the participants' answers, I categorized the findings about their inspirational stimuli under different themes. Those themes have been found from information which has been mentioned in the answers of the questionnaires.

The establishment of the themes of this study emerged from the codes and categories that I found from the data and their analysis. With help of my reflexive journal (see Ortlipp 2008) I used the initial codes to create categories from the data. Those codes were *people; buildings/city/Rovaniemi; nature; hobbies/interests; dance/music; other peoples' works; sentences/words; ways to find inspiration; curiosity; and new/unknown things.*

The next stage was to categorize and to edit those codes. The categories that I created from the codes were *social environment* with the subcategory *conversation and interaction with people; physical environment* with the subcategory *nature; sense of place – place identity; hobbies* with the subcategories *music* and *walking outdoors; visual and tangible objects; activities related to creativity; change, progress, and challenge.* Some facts found in the informants' answers were more difficult to categorize and some were suitable to use in several categories.

The final themes – which represent at the same time the following chapters – are the result of the researcher's coding, categorization, and analysis.

5.1 Physical Environment

Through the answers of the questionnaire I realized that the city of Rovaniemi as itself is an important source of inspiration for the students. Dove (n.d.) mentions in her article that people can use almost anything around themselves as inspirational source, as for instance architecture. Informant #6 mentions the architectural structures of the buildings of Arktikum and Korundi as being inspiring. Those buildings are the main touristic attractions in Rovaniemi, especially the Arktikum with its “glass-finger” pointing to the North. The picture of the building seems to be the number one in touristic leaflets.

Informant #2 (31, Environmental Art and Design, Sweden) describes the extraordinary features of the city's architecture:

»The city's architect [Alvar Aalto] proposed the idea that no house built would reach higher than the highest tree, (which is not too high here) and therefore the low midnight sun can reach everywhere in town [...].«

Informant #2, 31, Environmental Art and Design, Sweden

The description of the extraordinary features of the architecture of Rovaniemi illustrates the essential value of the nature and its phenomena to the Finnish culture. Von Bonsdorff (1995, 50) states that architecture represents a culture and its mentality, whether in a conscious or unconscious way, and that it refers »[...] to the social values and world view of the society to which the architect and client belong«. Rovaniemi is a city in the Northern part of Europe and for some people it is situated in an exotic⁶ area, because the extreme seasonal changes are present every day for the people who are living there. The contrast of wintertime and summertime is immense. The winter is cold and dark and the summer

6 “exotic” in a way of different, strange, and unfamiliar.

bright. The never-ending sunlight is a natural phenomenon which is attracting also tourists to this area in the summer because it can only be experienced in the Northern part of Finland. It is said that Alvar Aalto wanted to include this extraordinary phenomena in his architectural plans for the city of Rovaniemi by building houses which were at the most four-storey. By that it would be possible for all inhabitants to enjoy the midnight sun. Alvar Aalto considered always nature in his designs and he rather aimed to build buildings which fit their surroundings than to destroy the idylls with high buildings (Koho 1995, 107).

Another architectural exception is the form of the map of the city center because it is shaped like a reindeer's head with antlers (Koho 1995, 111). This is also a design of Alvar Aalto. The informants themselves do not refer to these facts in general but mention certain buildings and sites in Rovaniemi as important to them. For example, informant #5 (28, Art Education, Finland) names the city's library, which is also a design by Alvar Aalto, and the café Antinkaapo as trigger for creative thinking. The café is important to her because of the old people who meet there to have conversations with each other while having their coffees. Here it is the social value why the informant is so interested in the building and not its architectural features.

A couple of informants describe Rovaniemi as an ugly or not especially beautiful city (informant #6, 22, Graphic Design, Italy & informant #8, 22, Industrial Designer, Austria), hence an unaesthetic city made from concrete (informant #2, 31, Environmental Art and Design, Sweden & informant #8, 22, Industrial Design, Austria) but both informants have different perceptions of the use of concrete in the city center. Informant #2 (31, Environmental Art and Design, Sweden) names a positive aspect of the “ugly” concrete, because she thinks that it is good for free time activities, like skateboarding. Informant #8 (22, Industrial Design, Austria) relates to the gray block houses which form the appearance of the city of Rovaniemi. Those buildings have been built as fast as possible after World War II to offer homes to the inhabitants after the city had been completely destroyed by German troops (Koho 1995, 111). Considering this history, Rovaniemi might be seen at its core as being functional rather than beautiful. However, the notion of beauty and good-looking can change over time, because »[...] what counts as beautiful in a sense is historically conditioned [...]« (Nehamas 2006, 147).

Rovaniemi's surrounding nature contrasts the concrete buildings of the city center. One informant writes about the features in the city center of Rovaniemi that she likes:

»I love the many trails leading all over the town so I never have to take the same way to get where the wind blows twice. I like certain houses, and trees, and stones and street-parts too but they are linked together by the town, so perhaps I say the city-center? Rovaniemi, as in being the city Rovaniemi. Otherwise I prefer the natural environments [...]«.

Informant #2, 31, Environmental Art and Design, Sweden

The informant enjoys to live in the city of Rovaniemi because it is such a small city and so close to nature. Therefore she does not have to miss nature here. Since she is studying Environmental Art and Design and her background from a village in Swedish Lapland, the informant enjoys being in nature and is interested in environmental concerns like the mining industry and the deforestation.

The physical environment, which has been mentioned by all informants as source of inspiration, is nature. Nature is a source of inspiration (Dove n.d.) and is used as a catalyst for constructing creative ideas (Eckert & Stacey 1998, 4). For instance, designers work for that reason with motifs, phenomena, and color combinations from nature (Eckert & Stacey 1998, 4). Especially in Rovaniemi nature has a great influence upon the inhabitants and life. Urponen (2011, 59) mentions a research in her thesis which shows that the students of the University of Lapland gain vital energy from the surrounding nature. This suggests that nature, especially the surrounding nature of Rovaniemi, has an important role in the life of the students. Moreover, Urponen (2011, 58) states that nature is important to Finnish people and that it is highly valued in their culture. People and their everyday lives are influenced by nature and vice versa (Urponen 2011, 58). Weston (1995, 105 ff) calls nature as *»[...] a well-established component of the Finnish identity.«*

The seasonal changes have also a big influence upon the city and upon people who are living in this region (informant #1, 26, Applied Visual Art, Finland & informant #3, 29, Art Education, Finland). This becomes obvious in the different usages of the river. There is

always movement at and on the river: in summer it is a place to relax at the beach, to go for a walk along the banks, to fish or to swim, and also to row or to canoe. In winter people use the river also for certain activities like for ice swimming, ice fishing, and cross-country skiing on the ice. People walk across the ice to get from one part of the city to another, snow mobiles use the river as a road, and car drivers can use an ice road. The ice layers connect parts of the city with each other, which are reachable in summertime only through taking detours around the river across the bridges. The informants claim the bridges as being important features of the city (informant #2, 31, Environmental Art and Design, Sweden; informant #5, 28, Art Education, Finland & informant #6, 22, Graphic Design, Italy). The *Jätkänkynttilä* bridge, also called (Lumberjack's) Candle Bridge, is one of the famous emblems of Rovaniemi which connects the Ounasvaara area with the city center. (Rovaniemen kaupunki 2014.)

The river is often used as a source of inspiration (informant #1, 26, Applied Visual Art, Finland; informant #2, 31, Environmental Art and Design, Sweden; informant #4, 27, Art Education, Finland; informant #5, 28, Art Education, Finland; informant #6, 22, Graphic Design, Italy & informant #7, 27, Industrial Design, Ukraine).

»It is an element that is always on move and never stays the same. It carries life in it and is a place for me to go to when I want to think and be inspired.«

Informant #1, 26, Applied Visual Art, Finland

»I especially love the days when the river hasn't completely frozen over where the bridge sticks into the water and then it gets really cold and then the water evaporates and there is an intense mist over the river that rolls over into this area where I lived these last 2,5 years.«

Informant #5, 28, Art Education, Finland

Water is a fascinating element, as informant #1 (26, Applied Visual Art, Finland) mentions: it is a never-ending circle. While looking at the river, some people might start to think and philosophize, for example, about life. Moreover, it is an element which has many different

forms: fluid, frozen, hard, soft, warm, cold, and so on, and that makes it interesting and inspiring.

According to informant #6 (22, Graphic Design, Italy), the changes of the lighting conditions caused by the seasons are also inspiring, as well as the contrast between light and shadow. Beside the river and the lighting conditions, Ounasvaara-hill with its fireplaces and the watch tower offers a place in Rovaniemi where students find inspiration (informant #5, 28, Art Education, Finland & informant #6, 22, Graphic Design, Italy). This is a place where it is possible to have a look over the whole city, the surrounding forest, and the hills, to go for hiking and skiing, to relax, to take photographs, and to trigger new ideas for creative projects. Regarding the answers from the questionnaires and my own experiences, it might be said that Ounasvaara-hill is a special place for many people in Rovaniemi because it is a place for free time activities and a possibility to be in nature.

Through the interaction with their surroundings, creative individuals are collecting inspirational sources (Gonçalves et al 2011a, 2) and since Rovaniemi is close to nature, it is reasonable that all informants named nature as source of inspiration in the questionnaire, as for instance trees and woods (informant #6, Graphic Design, Italy).

»I always tell that Rovaniemi is a city in the forest since we have a lot [of] nature around the city and there [are] many [beautiful] areas.«

Informant #3, 29, Art Education, Finland

»Rovaniemi is a spacious, simple city. Lot of nature and trees connect the center with the rural areas. That makes Rovaniemi also a quiet place.«

Informant #8, 22, Industrial Design, Austria

Those examples show that nature is one of the key components of the city Rovaniemi because nature is found all around but also in the middle of the city.

Informant #8 (22, Industrial Design, Austria) mentioned an important phenomenon by giving a good example of the city Linz where she studied previously before coming to Rovaniemi for her studies:

»The Danube is very close to my University, thats where students go in summer to relax and talk. This way it is also a source of inspiration cause only when you feel good and free your mind, you can be creative.«

Informant #8, 22, Industrial Design, Austria

In an environment where the individuals are able to relax and to feel good, they are free to think creatively and are open to perceive new inspirational stimuli.

For those informants who have been studying previously in larger cities like Linz, Stockholm, Espoo, Kuopio, Kiev, and Milan, Rovaniemi is a special place because of its closeness to nature. Some like the quietness (as mentioned, among others, by informant #8, 22, Industrial Design, Austria) and that the city is so small and familiar. Anyhow, all informants value the size of the city. It is possible to reach almost all destinations by bike which seems to be an important means of transportation in Rovaniemi as several informants mentioned in the questionnaire (informant #3, 29, Art Education, Finland; informant #5, 28, Art Education, Finland; informant #6, 22, Graphic Design, Italy). They do experience nature more intensive in Rovaniemi because most of them possess own bikes to cycle through the city – whether they are Finnish or foreigners. Due to the fact that the public transportation is not that well-developed and students do not own much money, a bike is the best option to be mobile in a small city like Rovaniemi. While riding a bike, people have time to observe their surroundings, for example when they take the same route to university every day. In autumn they experience the color-changes of the trees and at last when the trees defoliate. In spring they watch the lawn becoming greener every day. This is a much different experience of nature than for example in a bigger city where the public transportation is well-developed and people just sit in a bus to get from one point of the city to another. Besides that, people in Rovaniemi have to be aware of the weather and temperatures while cycling. They have to consider if it is going to rain or to snow, if it gets warmer or colder. Those factors make people consciously taking the natural environments

into consideration and that might be the reason why nature is influencing their creativity a lot, because it encounters the people in Rovaniemi every day.

As mentioned before, all informants named the surrounding nature as one of the most important inspirational sources of Rovaniemi. Only one informant states that nature is a necessity for her creativity:

»I think surrounding is actually not that important for me as a source of inspiration. What is important is internet and opportunity to go out for a walk. I almost do not care where it can happen – it just has to be some nature there.«

Informant #7, 27, Industrial Design, Ukraine

She states that she does not use the surroundings to trigger inspiration, but at the same time she writes that she needs nature around her – which is also a part of the surrounding. In that sense, she admits that nature is the factor which is influencing her the most in her creative thinking. She concludes the phenomenon as follows:

»[...] nature [in Rovaniemi] is really remarkable – it obviously replaces the need for art. For me.«

Informant #7, 27, Industrial Design, Ukraine

5.2 Social Environment

People's environment – the physical as well as the social – and their creativity stand in an interactive relationship with each other (Sternberg et al 2005, 351). Stein (1974, 251) refers to Kurt Lewin's findings from 1935 when he studied the interaction between individuals and their environment. Lewin claims creativity to be a transactional relationship (Stein 1974, 251). To be creative, the individuals need to work in an environment in which they feel safe, relaxed and unthreatened. In this way, they are capable of forgetting restrictions and boundaries which inhibit them from thinking and creating freely. (Stein 1974, 26.)

Besides stimulating creativity, social environments are an important source of inspiration (Blochberger 2007). That aspect emerged also in the opinions of the participants of the questionnaire. Informant #3 (29, Art Education, Finland), #4 (27, Art Education, Finland), #5 (28, Art Education, Finland), and #8 (22, Industrial Design, Austria) mentioned people, friends, and lecturers in university as inspirational sources for their creative work in Rovaniemi.

During interaction with their own surroundings, people's minds are nonstop searching for inspirational sources (Gonçalves et al 2011a, 2). This includes the psychological (social environment) as well as the physical environment, for instance the location of a Northern town like Rovaniemi (informant #1, 26, Applied Visual Art, Finland; informant #5, 28, Art Education, Finland & informant #6, 22, Graphic Design, Italy; see also 5.1 Physical Environment). On one hand, most of the informants think that the remote location of Rovaniemi does not inhibit the cultural life of the city. Students and tourists provide an active atmosphere in the city of Rovaniemi (informant #1, 26, Applied Visual Art, Finland & informant #3, 29, Art Education, Finland). Every year there are thousands of tourists coming to the city to visit the village of Santa Claus. In 2008, there were almost 480,000 overnight stays of tourists counted in Rovaniemi (Rovaniemen Kehitys n.d.). This cultural diversity generates an international atmosphere in the small city of Rovaniemi which again creates a special connection between the city and its inhabitants because people know each other here.

In the following examples, the informants mention an important aspect of living in a place: the aspect of place identity⁷ created with the help of its inhabitants (Ashworth & Graham 2005).

»For me the main source of inspiration is just generally the idea of living in Rovaniemi. The way that people here know each other, and how you keep running into people you know. So all the effort you make with respect to getting to know someone, well it's not for nothing, because those people will exist in your near surroundings for ever and ever.«

Informant #5, 28, Art Education, Finland

»Rovaniemi has really made a positive impact on me; it is the laid back atmosphere and the people that have made it feel like home, by creating the feeling of being welcome.«

Informant #1, 26, Applied Visual Art, Finland

When people have the feeling of being at home, of feeling comfortable, and of belonging to a place, they are truly connected to this particular place because they define their own identity through certain qualities of this place (Rose 2000, 89; Leuthold 2011, 163). Both informants mention the advantages of the small-sized city of Rovaniemi, which provides familiarity. For others, the small city leads to constrictions and limits, as the following example illustrates:

»Citizens and authorities put a lot of affords in regard of maintaining cultural life in the town, but of course the remote area and the size of Rovaniemi makes it probably rather hard.«

Informant #7, 27, Industrial Design, Ukraine

She criticizes the limited number of cultural events which are offered by the city due to its small size. Besides that, it is almost impossible to be anonymous in a small city like Rovaniemi, because there are so many familiar people around, for example from university

⁷ This phenomenon will be discussed in detail in 5.3 Sense of Place – Place Identity.

or from work. Those examples show two sides of the same coin – Rovaniemi's small-town character attracts some people but in the same time it repels others. It has to be taken into consideration that informant #7 (27, Industrial Design, Ukraine) lived before in Kiev, a much larger city than Rovaniemi. People from large cities experience another way of living than those from the countryside respectively from a small village: They are used to different cultural offers and that is what they miss in smaller cities like Rovaniemi, where the cultural offers are limited to several committed people and a limited number of locations.

Additionally, the World Wide Web is offering a platform for social interaction. Costache (2012, 49 f) mentions the Internet as »[...] a vital place for artists to find new ideas, display and sell their art, and connect with follow artists and the audience.« The same is true for designers and every other user. Informant #7 (27, Industrial Design, Ukraine) indicates that the Internet is more important in triggering inspirations for her than the environment she is living in (see also 3. Cultural Impact on Creativity). She might use the Internet to find inspirational stimuli, to gather information, and most of all for maintaining her social life. That might be the reason why she complains about the cultural life of Rovaniemi, while other informants, who are actively engaged in the cultural scene of Rovaniemi, claim the contrary. It might be that the connection to the Internet is one of the most important aspects in the complaining informant's life during her stay in Rovaniemi. The reason why another person is satisfied with the cultural offers of Rovaniemi and informant #7 is not, might correlate with their social behaviors. Some people who are active in maintaining their social network through the Internet might have less social contacts in “real life” than those people who are actively engaged in the cultural scene of Rovaniemi. It does not mean that those who are talking and writing to friends via the Internet are unhappy with their situation. It is a personal preference what people like to do, but it is logically that the one who is more at home working with the computer misses the cultural opportunities which are offered in the city.

Burnett (2007, 310) writes about *telepresence*, a phenomena in which people use computer technology to “be somewhere else”. That might be one reason for informant #7 (27, Industrial Design, Ukraine) why the access to the Internet is so important to her.

Through the Internet it is possible to overcome borders, for example geographical borders, to get information from other countries. What might be a problem in “real life”, for instance to get a visa for traveling from certain countries, does not matter in the Internet. Moreover, it is easier to find and meet a group of people through the Internet who share the same interests without being forced to consider time and place (Burnett 2007, 329).

Sawyer (2006, 268) states that creative work always results from a cooperation between people. In that manner, interaction with people (informant #1, 26, Applied Visual Art, Finland; informant #3, 29, Art Education, Finland; informant #5, 28, Art Education, Finland & informant #8, 22, Industrial Design, Austria) and conversations with friends (informant #3, 29, Art Education, Finland) increase creativity and are the origin of inspirational ideas. One of the most important activities to find inspiration is having conversations (Gonçalves et al 2011b, 7 & 10; Gonçalves et al 2013, 216). »A certain word and what that word makes [the creative persons] think of« (Dove n.d.) might lead the individual's mind to start to create creative ideas. That means that by working and having conversations with other people the creative individuals are gaining ideas and achieve a better and more creative result because they see things in new ways (A. Telier 2011, 21). For example, designers use the “stranger's gaze”⁸ to collect as much information as possible to find a design solution which is novel and suitable for as many people as possible. For that reason, designers talk with outsiders (people who are not involved in the design process) to get a better notion of what is still missing and what they may have overlooked with their expert view on their design. (A. Telier 2011, 15 f.) A. Telier (2011, 16) explain that »[...] at its core, design work is about cooperating with others, and mobilizing one's and other's imagination [...]«.

It might be assumed that in difference to design, collaborative work in art is mostly done for fun and less done to explicitly improve one's work. Nevertheless, the aspect of finding new ideas and getting another view on the project by working with other people (also from different fields and backgrounds) is shared with that of the designers. Additionally, A. Telier (2011, 127) explain that the collaborative work originates from all

8 »A designer needs the “stranger's gaze”, the creative gaze that simultaneously implies closeness and distance.[...] [It is used for] closing and reopening the design concept in particular situations, to research, integrate additional resources, and so on [...]. (A. Telier 2011, 21)

participants (people who are involved in the work), their manipulation and reaction to each other: »An actor reacts to another actor's offer of a newly created symbol or utterance by imagining an interpretation and thereby creating a new offer« (A. Telier 2011, 127).

This phenomenon of the positive effect of collaboration in creative work is clearly portrayed in the answers of the informants. People, people's behavior, and conversations are very important and efficient methods of getting inspired. Also designers prefer to gain their inspiration from talking to people (Gonçalves et al 2011b, 7 & 10; Gonçalves et al 2013, 216). Informant #3 (29, Art Education, Finland) collects inspiration from conversations, and informants #2 (31, Environmental Art and Design, Sweden) and #8 (22, Industrial Design, Austria) use occasionally words or sentences as starting point for a creative project.

For the students of the University of Lapland social contacts and interaction with people are very important. Gonçalves et al (2011b, 10) support the idea of talking to other people during the design process. The designer shares problems with people who are involved in the project or people to whom the project is unknown. That helps to look at the problem from different perspectives. Even if the conversation is not leading to a solution of the problem, it may give the person the feeling of finding it sooner or later. (Gonçalves et al 2011b, 10 f.) Generally, most of the informants mention people as a source of inspiration (informant #1, 26, Applied Visual Art, Finland; informant #2, 31, Environmental Art and Design, Sweden; informant #3, 29, Art Education, Finland; informant #4, 27, Art Education, Finland & informant #5, 28, Art Education, Finland).

»People that make me feel good about myself and who show me that they respect me and think highly of me and who ask interesting questions that help me open up new parts inside myself are also inspiring. This is because they give me energy to believe in myself and that is inspiring because the starting point for attempting anything in life is an understanding that one has an important place in the fabric of things«.

Informant #5, 28, Art Education, Finland

»People ;who are so [complex] and interesting, inspiring and capable of doing and being huge things. [...] People, who overcome their selves.«

Informant #3, 29, Art Education, Finland

Additionally, informant #8 (22, Industrial Design, Austria) mentions lecturer in university as inspirational:

»[...] during lectures I get inspired what teachers say. Especially very energetic speakers (lecturers) inspire me.«

Informant #8, 22, Industrial Design, Austria

The lecturer, who functions as a mentor or role model, gives some input – a word, a statement, etc. – to the audience that makes them think about aspects in a new way which they have not considered yet (Trash & Elliot 2003, 871 f). Some word or concept might stimulate their minds to find ideas for an artwork, a design, and so on. Lecturers, who are really committed to the topic they are teaching and who are passionate about it, might be able to “infect” their students with their interest. At best, the students' minds get involved with the topic which has been recently discussed. That opens many paths for the students to start working with new ideas, thoughts, or concepts in their own creative work.

5.3 Sense of Place – Place Identity

People and their creativity are influenced by their physical and social environment. Through an emotional attachment to a certain place, they create a sense of place by giving the place and themselves identities that are interacting with each other – in other words people call the identity of a place into existence.

Place identity is related to culture – for instance music, traditional clothes or food –, to landscapes and surroundings, or to region-specific activities and products, which are, for example, used for marketing in tourism (Huigen & Meijering 2005, 20). Ashworth and Graham (2005, 21 f & 31) claim that a place is a social construction because its identity is an attribution given by people to it. During the process of finding an attribution for a particular place to form its identity, people take their personal feelings towards the place into consideration, the feeling that connects them to the place either in a positive or in a negative way. (Huigen & Meijering 2005, 21.) That means also that the process of finding a place's identity is subjective (Simon 2005, 31) and »[...] if individuals create place identities, then obviously different people, at different times, for different reasons, create different narratives of belonging. Place images are thus user determined, polysemic and unstable through time« (Ashworth & Graham 2005, 3).

Moreover, a place's identity »is established through the way in which a person communicates about [it]« (Huigen & Meijering 2005, 21). For example, informant #5 (28, Art Education, Finland) and informant #1 (26, Applied Visual Art, Finland) mention their interaction with people as very important feature (see also 5.2 Social Environment). This means that people who are living in Rovaniemi are a really important aspect of creating the identity of the city.

The notion of home is part of people's inspirational sources. One informant mentions Lake Inari as her main source of inspiration, because she is originally from Inari.

»My home nature and Lake Inari [have] always been my main [source of inspiration]. I think it will stay forever wherever I go. I find through art I'm telling true story about how Lapland is like, and at the same time [about] the sights [that] my ancestors have seen.«

Informant #4, 27, Art Education, Finland

She describes the phenomena of people being influenced by their personal and cultural background as well as their heritage. For instance, Genders (2009) portraits artists in her book who are explaining their artistic background and the influence of their origin upon their creative works. One artist states that in his artworks he is influenced by the landscapes where he grew up. Several artists talk about an emotional attachment to the place and the landscape in particular. Places and memories have a big impact upon artists which may cause them to deal with pleasant but also uncomfortable topics. (Genders 2009, 38 f.)

Also informant #6 (22, Graphic Design, Italy) mentions her home town Varese and its landscapes and buildings as the main inspirational source for the creative work she used to do at the University in Italy. During her stay in Rovaniemi, she got interested in snow and ice sculpturing. Ice and snow have a big influence upon the lifestyle in Northern Finland and its people. For example, the University of Lapland offers every year ice and snow sculpture workshops which many international but also Finnish people attend. This shows that the cultural surrounding influences the interests and creative works of people, even if they only stay temporarily in a place such as Rovaniemi.

Place identity and a person's identity influence each other. (Huigen & Meijering 2005, 21 f.) Rose (2000, 88) states that »Identity is how we make sense of ourselves [...] [and] the meanings given to a place may be so strong that they become a central part of the identity of the people experiencing them.« Informant #5 (28, Art Education, Finland) presents this phenomenon through her personal experiences.

»Rovaniemi state of mind just makes me feel so much more relaxed about life in general. I [realize] that everything is here, everything is close by and there's really no hassle about stuff. Nothing to worry about. The people are all here, close by, and I will run into people I

know all the time. I have my place here and I am part of the fabric of the town. So in general I've just eased into existence here. Which makes doing stuff, anything really, a lot more easier.«

Informant #5, 28, Art Education, Finland

Also informant #7 (27, Industrial Design, Ukraine) mentions the influence of her stay in Rovaniemi upon her life.

»I think the [Finnish] design (or rather – lifestyle) affected me personally.«

Informant #7, 27, Industrial Design, Ukraine

Besides the lifestyle, – which is discussed in detail in 3. Cultural Impact on Creativity – informant #7 (27, Industrial Design, Ukraine) mentions Finnish design. Finnish design is associated with simple forms and lines, natural shapes and colors, simplicity, and functionality. It might be said that this radiates a sense of calm. Associations with Ukrainian design might bring bright colors, small and detailed elements, and traditional flower-motifs, but also simple forms into one's mind. Those are only examples and one might think that it is only a cliché, but I want to emphasize the differences and similarities of Finnish and Ukrainian design to interpret what informant #7 (27, Industrial Design, Ukraine) means. During their study abroad, the international students of the Faculty of Art and Design get to know Finnish design. Their own designs and art works are influenced through this knowledge and it will be visible in their later works. The culture of a foreign country has an impact on the person who is living in it, even if the person is staying there only for a short period of time.

Everyday life (for instance ordinary objects and environment), personal surroundings (for example friends, colleagues etc.), and cultural contexts (for instance ideas, thoughts and concepts of philosophy and science) are influencing people's lives and their creative work (Costache 2012, 39 & 49). Informant #2 (31, Environmental Art and Design, Sweden), informant #4 (27, Art Education, Finland) and informant #6 (22, Graphic Design, Italy) feel much more free to express themselves in their creative works through

their experiences in Rovaniemi. Informant #3 (29, Art Education, Finland) compares her previous place of study, Kemi, with Rovaniemi and comes to an interesting conclusion:

»[...] I must say that if I compare the study places which I had in [Kemi] and Rovaniemi[,] the place which was in Kemi was very inspiring [...] but the city itself was not that inspiring. [Then] again the study place in Rovaniemi UNI was not inspiring to me. The UNI felt like clinic or too clean compared to the place in Kemi which had [cozy] and [home-like] feeling. BUT Rovaniemi city itself is inspiring to me. So I am quite satisfied about my surrounding when finding inspiration. But [the] best inspiration I am finding from inside; when looking from inside the outside world. Do I want to see something beautiful and inspiring or [ugly] or boring? This tells more about my own approach to art making...and life.«

Informant #3, 29, Art Education, Finland

She states that the experiences of what is inspiring to her differ from place to place. In Kemi she was inspired by the building of her faculty but not by the city and in Rovaniemi it was the other way around – she was studying in an interesting city but the university did not foster her creativity. The reason is the atmosphere of a place that makes her feel good and comfortable. Additionally, she states that the most important inspiration comes from the attitudes towards life by the persons themselves.

All in all, the construction of an attribution of a place identity may take some time, moreover, »[it] is a continuing process in which new actors establish themselves and goals and ideas change. [...] Identities are constructed and reconstructed« (Huigen & Meijering 2005, 22). People that have been met and places that have been visited have an influence on the way of working and thinking of an individual. Informant #8 (22, Industrial Design, Austria) concludes the aspects related to place identity in one sentence:

»[...] I believe everything where you are and what you experience reflects in what you produce and do.«

Informant #8, 22, Industrial Design, Austria

5.4 Another Person's Intellectual Property

People are inspired by other people and their creations, by objects, and many more aspects in life (Trash & Elliot 2003, 872). While talking to other people about art – regardless if it is their own art or another person's creation – or looking at another person's work, makes the mind generate ideas for new projects. It might be the shared interest in a style of painting or a method of photographing which makes people talk to each other, get excited about it, and inspire them to do something creative by themselves. The following example illustrates the informant's example for this phenomenon.

»And another good inspiration is I guess taking in the works of others. That's for sure a good way to get a hint about where you want to take your own work! Often there is someone who has done or thought something along the lines of what I might want to do, and then it's really nice to feel this kind of connection with previously done work and think: “yes, this kind of stuff exists, I am onto something. Someone else thinks like this as well. I should continue on this path.” [...] I also find it inspiring to hear other people perform or see other peoples creative work. And most importantly, to hear about their creative process and to hear about what they have been thinking while they create and make and think and what types of things have been going on in their mind.«

Informant #5, 28, Art Education, Finland

Some people might think that they lack creativity, because someone else had a similar idea as themselves before, and get demotivated. Informant #5 (28, Art Education, Finland) sees the positive effect of the similarity of two projects and gets encouraged by that idea.

Two of the participating design students write about their way of triggering inspiration:

»I find inspiration looking for something related to the project I have to work with, usually by keywords or general ideas, getting inside a moodboard and finally finding out what is really important and what I want to highlight, and combining them in the final shape.«

Informant #6, 22, Graphic Design, Italy

»I [...] scan through some sites that I like (about graphic design or industrial design).«

Informant #7, 27, Industrial Design, Ukraine

Both are using the methods that were taught in their studies of design, like a mood board. They use images and ideas, which have been invented by someone else before, in a positive way to get inspiration for their own work. That way they find out what has already been done in that particular field and what is still missing. Dove (n.d.) advises designers to look into books and surf on the Internet in search for photos that stimulate their creative thinking, as informant #7 (27, Industrial Design, Ukraine) usually does. Nevertheless, pictorial representations tend to lead to possible problems like design fixation⁹ (Gonçalves et al 2013, 216).

In the opinion of informant #4 (27, Art Education, Finland) the mix of different materials, colors, and textures are animating her mind to think openly, and in that way she is able to be creative. In addition, one informant uses both tangible and visual material in the beginning of the creative process to trigger ideas.

»Sometimes it can be just a sentence, scene or picture from tv that is inspiring, [...] or other design objects«.

Informant #8, 22, Industrial Design, Austria

Studies show that designers use every kind of stimuli as source of inspiration, as for example images, objects, texts, and audio material (Gonçalves et al 2011a, 1 & 3; Gonçalves et al 2011b, 1 f; Eastman 2001, 153). It has been researched that the creative individuals prefer pictorial stimuli even though they have endless amounts of other inspirational sources at their disposal (Gonçalves et al 2011b, 2). Only informant #3 (29, Art Education, Finland) mentioned written texts as source of inspiration:

9 Design fixation: »[G]enerated concepts that exhibited shared characteristics with the used stimuli. [...] It refers to a blind, and sometimes counterproductive, adherence to a limited set of ideas in the design process within a short-term time period.« (Wang & Tu 2013, p.3)

»Another ways I get my inspiration is by listening or reading about interesting topics which are usually philosophical or metaphysical in nature. Or I follow artists I admire and their work. I look at pictures or art which touch my soul and heart.«

Informant #3, 29, Art Education, Finland

Gonçalves et al explain that most designers prefer visual to textual stimuli in the idea generating phase, because it is easier to remember. More importantly, to transform written information into a visual product requires the ability of the researcher to think in a highly abstract way. Images are mostly used in the creative process, because the individual is much faster in perceiving the information that the image contains than by reading a text about the same topic. Moreover, there is no need for translation into another language and the individual can use the option of flicking for- and backwards through the images, because there is no specific order to consider or to sustain as it is in texts. (Gonçalves et al 2013, 217 f)

Another activity, besides using images and texts to gain inspiration, is »looking at nice objects« (Eckert & Stacey 1998, 9). For example, informant #6 (22, Graphic Design, Italy), who is interested in architectural forms like the buildings of Korundi and Arktikum, mentions besides buildings, urban spaces, geometric shapes, and geometry as influencing factors upon her work. Another informant is more interested in graphics and typography.

»It is not what I do – I am an industrial designer, and I am not making font – but looking through some nice illustrations creates a specific mood in my head, nice feeling[,] like impatience to do something.«

Informant #7, Industrial Design, Ukraine

This example illustrates once again the essences of creative working; individuals have to get first into a relaxed and good mood by being involved with things that are interesting to them before they are able to start to work on a creative project (Stein 1974, 21 f; see also 5.2 Social Environment).

5.5 Change, Progress, and Challenge

Change, progress, and challenge are basic conditions of creativity (Stein 1974). Usually, the creative individuals are open-minded people who are not afraid of changing situations, because they do not demand that everything stays the same (Stein 1974, 27). Quite the opposite, the individuals are curious, interested in learning new things, and they are self-confident (Stein 1974, 24 ff) because their creativity results from their own responses to challenges and problems (Runco 2004, 658). Moreover, »creativity is not only a reaction to but also a contribution to change and evolution« (Runco 2004, 658) and the whole process is based on previous learned knowledge (Gonçalves et al 2013, 215). The informants answered to the question about what is inspiring to them that new situations and differences are pure inspiration for them.

»New situations which I haven't experienced before, new locations, new activities, new people.«

Informant #8, 22, Industrial Design, Austria

This statement stands in relation to her stay as foreign student at the Faculty of Art and Design in Rovaniemi. She moved temporarily from Austria to Finland for a study abroad and has to get used to several changes, like a new environment, a different culture, and most of all, a different climate. The weather influences every person in Rovaniemi. Especially, foreign people have to face several challenges, like the darkness in wintertime, the brightness in summertime, and the snow which is covering the ground for almost half a year. Openness and flexibility for such challenges are required by people who are moving to the North as well as the attitude to get involved with such unknown situations. Moreover, informant #8 (22, Industrial Design, Austria) progresses for sure in improving her artistic skills by the new situations that she experiences. For example, almost every international student attended the snow sculpture workshop which was offered by of the Faculty of Art and Design, as informant #6 (22, Graphic Design, Italy) did during her stay in Rovaniemi. Those “exotic” workshops worked up the curiosity of the international students because they never had the chance to participate in such unique workshops.

Moreover, the informants are curious about their own reactions concerning new situations and they are interested to face challenges.

»The fact that there is always more to know and understand in life.«

Informant #3, 29, Art Education, Finland

More introverted individuals may be inhibited to be creative because they feel uncomfortable in a situation where they could be creative. This results from the fact that by being creative people might differ from social standards with their new ideas and that may shake the status quo of the society and introverted people do usually want to fit into the social context (Stein 1974, 24). That is to be considered, because there is an interrelation between the creative individuals and the social context in which they are creating their ideas and projects (Stein 1974, 251).

Barron and Harrington (1981, 453) attribute the following characteristics to creative individuals: »creative individuals have a “high valuation of aesthetic qualities in experience, broad interests, attraction to complexity, high energy, independence of judgment, autonomy, intuition, self-confidence, [and the] ability to resolve antinomies or to accommodate apparently opposite or conflicting traits in one’s self concept [...]«. Interests and curiosity are important in the creative process.

»[G]etting to the bottom of or starting to understand for instance a new choreography or a new song that we are singing in choir. It is inspiring and uplifting to understand and read into meanings that people have hidden in music or poetry or pictures or dance.«

Informant #5, 28, Art Education, Finland

»[...] I just go on surfing on anything that keeps me interested and keeps me questioning, until I find an question or an answer which cause me to feel inspired, something I feel I can use somehow [...].«

Informant #2, 31, Environmental Art and Design, Sweden

Both examples illustrate the curiosity of the person to learn something new and to be able to understand a certain phenomenon which is still unknown to the individual. This open-minded attitude fosters creativity.

6. Methods of Finding Inspiration

As was mentioned before, the basic condition of working most creatively is to be in an atmosphere where the creative people feel safe and comfortable (Stein 1974, 26). Hobbies are an individually chosen activity in which people feel mostly free and become themselves, because while pursuing their hobbies they devote time to themselves (Csikszentmihalyi 1997, 12 f). One basic condition of getting inspired is to be yourself (Stein 1974, 24) and that is the reason why people are mostly creative when they are engaged in their own hobbies. Stress and fear are counterproductive (Pohlmann n.d.), but while pursuing a hobby the individual feels usually relaxed.

The informants were asked to define their methods of finding inspiration for their creative work. In general the informants are getting inspired while they occupy themselves with their hobbies, like photographing (informant #1, 26, Applied Visual Art, Finland; informant #4, 27, Art Education, Finland & informant #8, 22, Industrial Design, Austria), biking (informant #5, 28, Art Education, Finland), reading (informant #3, 29, Art Education, Finland), being involved with music (informant #3, 29, Art Education, Finland; informant #4, 27, Art Education, Finland; informant #5, 28, Art Education, Finland & informant #6, 22, Graphic Design, Italy), and going outdoors (informant #1, 26, Applied Visual Art, Finland; informant #2, 31, Environmental Art and Design, Sweden & informant #7, 27, Industrial Design, Ukraine).

The activities that are most often mentioned by the informants are related to music, for instance music-making, listening to music, and dancing. In addition to those methods, which are mentioned above, the informants refer to sketching and painting (informant #4, 27, Art Education, Finland) as useful approaches to find inspiration. It shows that everyday

activities are an important factor in the process of searching for inspiration as mentioned by Gonçalves et al (2013, 216).

Gonçalves et al (2011b, 2 ff) and Eastman (2001, 153) state that sound and music are useful tools during the design process. This has also been proofed by most of the informants. Some students use music-making as starting point for their creative work (informant #5, 28, Art Education, Finland), some listen to music during the working process (informant #4, 27, Art Education, Finland & informant #7, 27, Industrial Design, Ukraine), and another informant finds the right mood to work at a project through dancing:

»I first get myself in a good mood. Feelings are important in creative process so usually I dance with a good vibe music. When I feel that my movements are easy flowing and I enjoy I start to create.«

Informant #3, 29, Art Education, Finland

This is another example that relaxation and enjoyment support the creative thinking process. Dancing is a movement of the body which may result in a monotonous rhythm when the person finds the right “vibe”. Pohlmann writes that monotonous rhythms loosen tensions in the individual’s body as well as fixations of the mind upon a certain idea. In this way a person is able to think more freely and without constrictions. In this relaxed state of mind thoughts and ideas are drifting around but at the same time the mind directs those thoughts to find an answer to an unsolved problem in everyday life. Those problems were unsolved because the solution was prevented by restrictions and barriers of the mind. (Pohlmann n.d.)

Designers are always busy with finding new ideas for their creative work in every kind of situation that occur in everyday life, for example while being outdoors (Gonçalves et al 2011a, 2). Being outdoors is usually equated with being in nature. As mentioned before, nature is an important factor in the process of finding creative inspiration, but in this context “being outdoors” includes also being in a city.

»I [...] can find inspiration mostly by going outdoors and observing what is happening around me. Especially walking is one of the most effective method[s] including my camera.«

Informant #1, 26, Applied Visual Art, Finland

»I go outdoors, off road, move around in the outdoors environment until I feel fulfilled.«

Informant #2, 31, Environmental Art and Design, Sweden

Informant #2 (31, Environmental Art and Design, Sweden) highlights her interest in environmental art, environmentalism, and sustainability. Besides her studies in Environmental Art and Design, she is in her free time actively involved with fields related to nature, as »the mining industry and the deforestation, the oil, and the nuclear pollution of the region«. Another informant describes her method of finding inspiration as following:

»Well, I have made a habit going out for a short walk to the nearest lake (which is pretty close). Especially when I am tired, or stressed and I cannot force myself to work. I think it is mainly the fresh air and [quiet] surroundings without people [that] calms me down. So when I come back – I want to work.«

Informant #7, 27, Industrial Design, Ukraine

This method is claimed by Eckert and Stacey (1998, 9) as being most effective, because the creative individuals gather ideas for their creative work while they are directly in contact with the source of their inspiration. Additionally, Gonçalves et al (2011b, 7 f) list, among others, walking as one of the best activities to gain creative ideas. This is again the method that Pohlmann (n.d.) writes in his article about: a constantly remaining movement is a good method to find inspiration and to overcome restrictions in the mind.

As those examples illustrate, it is important for people to be in a good mood and to feel good about themselves in order to get inspired. Moreover, a healthy way of life with good food (informant #2, 31, Environmental Art and Design, Sweden) and having fun

(informant #3, 29, Art Education, Finland) are essentials to be able to work creatively. For example, informant #5 (28, Art Education, Finland) writes that people just need to start doing something and then they will see where it takes them and what they will create:

»I guess this comes from just concentrating on the body and on the current moment and the realising “oh, well, there's in fact this thing that is on my mind which I didn't really realise was there or which I've been trying to deny or quiet down.”«

Informant #5, 28, Art Education, Finland

To overcome restrictions in the mind is the basic condition in order to be able to find inspiration and most of the informants need to have some natural environment around them to feel good and relaxed.

CONCLUSION

Before I started to write this thesis, I was thinking that nature is the most influencing factor upon the inspiration of the students in Rovaniemi concerning their creative work. Inspiration is something which makes a person start to think – whether it is demanded in a creative task or in business. During my stay in Rovaniemi I experienced that nature had a huge impact on my creativity as well as my way of life. I have never been living so close to nature before. Because I was influenced by nature in Northern Finland, I was thinking that many other people in Rovaniemi, especially the students of the Faculty of Art and Design, must experience the same. Through my research I wanted to confirm my hypothesis that nature is the main source of inspiration used by the students in their creative work. Furthermore, I wanted to find out, what are further inspirational stimuli that they are using, and do they have certain methods to get inspired.

The data of this study is composed of the answers to a questionnaire of eight female students – four Finnish students and four international students. I did not exclusively ask female students to fill in my questionnaire but it happened that I regained the answers from exclusively female students. The reason for that might be that fewer than 15 students that I contacted about participating in my study were only four male students. I was aware that it is possible that those four male students do not participate in my study. Nevertheless, the fact that all informants are female has no determining influence upon the result of the research.

In this research – which is dealing with the experiences and the knowledge of Finnish and foreign students – the cultural background of the individual plays an important role. Culture has a great influence on many parts of human life, for example the way an international student gets involved with the Finnish culture, and how other people add a special characteristic to a certain place, hence the creation of place identity. Besides the surroundings in which a person lives, the social contacts play a major role in the creative process. By moving to Rovaniemi – all informants are coming from different cities than Rovaniemi or foreign countries – people have to deal with changes in their lives. For

example, they are forced to leave their familiar environment and to get to know new people and new habits. It might be the first time for the foreigner students to be in contact with Finnish culture and for that reason they have to deal with the cultural differences and the new surroundings in which they are living now. Some of the foreign informants are willing to try out new things due to the fact that many experiences in Rovaniemi are “exotic” to them. However, creative people are claimed to be open-minded and curious, and this is obligatory to deal with all the challenges and changes. Those challenges and changes help people to grow and improve their skills and to progress in their own way of working creatively.

Concerning the influence of the Finnish culture upon foreign students, only the Ukrainian informant stated that she is influenced by the Finnish way of life. None of the other informants mentioned the “Finnish lifestyle” in their answers of the questionnaire, because they are from Finland or from a culture which is “more similar” to the Finnish culture. Even that both cultures are influenced by some Russian aspects, Ukrainian culture differs more from Finnish culture than for example the Swedish or Austrian culture. On the other hand, I am surprised that the Italian informant has not mentioned the “Finnish lifestyle” as influencing, because I think that those cultures might differ more from each other. Finnish stereotypes¹⁰ are quiet people and empty landscapes, in contrast to the Italian stereotype of being loud and energetic. My assumption is that factors that are unknown or foreign to individuals influence those people more than something which is familiar to them.

Moreover, my study includes a wide range of informants from different artistic and design-related backgrounds who have a diversity of interests and hobbies. On the contrary, it could have been a research concentrating only on art students or exclusively design students. But my distinction – or rather that I do not distinct between those fields at all – help to create a more wide picture of the creative students in Rovaniemi that shows that those fields belong together and that inspiration is a central aspect in both art and design. Both – artist and designer – need inspirational input for creating innovative ideas and conceptions in the beginning of their working processes.

¹⁰ Those stereotypes that I mention in this study are related to my own thoughts and they do not present an official or general opinion.

The relationship with nature is relevant for the informants in their creative working which becomes obvious in this research. The influence of nature upon the creativity of the students might result from the fact that it is an essential part of Finnish identity – which has an impact on the life of all participants in Rovaniemi – and that most of the students have been studying previously in bigger cities where they did not have such an easy access to nature. Moreover, it has been researched by Urponen in 2011 that students of the University of Lapland gain vital energy from the surrounding nature. Through the interaction with their surroundings, creative individuals collect inspirational sources and since Rovaniemi is close to nature, it is reasonable that all informants named nature as source of inspiration in the questionnaire.

Furthermore, everything around us might serve as inspiration, for example architecture. A country's architecture and its culture have an interrelated relationship concerning the representation of its own culture. It is visible in Rovaniemi's architecture that nature has a significant status in the Finnish culture, which takes the midnight sun and the surrounding nature into consideration. The study shows that the informants feel good while they are in nature, and relaxation and enjoyment are requirements that support the creative thinking process.

The final themes of this study show a combination of the categories with the theoretical background and the analysis. There are two categories of inspirational stimuli: the *outer* sources, including nature, buildings, architecture, objects, books, and images, and the *inner* sources like relationships, people, and experiences.

Those themes cover the main points of the inspirational stimuli mentioned by the informants. Additionally, those topics appeared frequently in the articles which form the theoretical basis of this research. For instance, the study proves that individuals have to feel good and safe to be creative – which has been researched by Stein already in 1974. This phenomenon has been confirmed by the informants' statements about their engagement with hobbies and their relationship with a place's identity. Most of the informants wrote that they feel like being at home in Rovaniemi. That is important for their work, because the physical environment has a great impact on people's well-being and

consequently on their way of being creative. Moreover, people, the environment – the social as well as physical – and objects are supporting the generation of creative ideas, which has also been subject of studies made among others by Gonçalves et al, Trash and Elliot, Eastman, and Dove.

The methods of finding inspiration differ from the inspirational stimuli in that aspect that they are ways to generate new ideas. These are procedures that help the creative individual to get into the right mood to be creative, hence to feel relaxed and to forget about restrictions. Some people go outdoors for a walk to clear their minds and in this way they find new ideas. Other people are involved with their hobbies. The method which suits a person the best depends on the people themselves and their personal interests. To gain knowledge about those methods is important for understanding the ways inspiration in creative work might be found and used.

The advantages of conducting thematic analysis are its flexibility and accessibility. Braun and Clarke see the method as being essential for every researcher because it contains basic aspects of many other research methods. The method offers the possibility to open up results of qualitative research understandably to many different people. Additionally, it is a flexible method because there is not only one way of how to apply thematic analysis. It is the researchers' choice how they are using it. To maintain reliability, it is necessary to show transparency in the way of working and analyzing to make choices of the researchers comprehensible for the reader. A reflexive journal is one tool to preserve replicability.

Some researchers claim that thematic analysis is too subjective due to its flexibility. As solo researcher I find the codes and themes of the analysis through my own assumptions and thought while reading the data. Saldaña (2009, 7) quotes the following explanation: »"All coding is a judgment call" since we bring "our subjectivities, our personalities, our predispositions, [and] our quirks" to the process [...]«. To avoid subjectivity, it is advised to use thematic analysis in cooperation with other researchers. For instance, while coding it is possible to find conformity of the codes – later on with the themes – and this shows that the codes are reliable. Upon regular consultation with my

supervisor and with people who were not involved in my study, I configured a convincing set of themes for the analysis.

The reason why I choose the thematic analysis is because it is a method to establish a result for a wide and multifaceted audience. It can be invalidated that this research method is not a commonly acknowledged analytic method – among others with the articles of Braun and Clarke – because thematic analysis includes the basic aspects of many other research methods.

A last point of criticism that I want to invalidate is that the thematic analysis might be seen as too broad. That it offers too much information and that researchers have a problem to focus on the main aspects of their research. Well-developed research questions are the solution to this problem. In my case, I have a research question which includes the main aspect of the research – inspirational stimuli and nature – and it narrows the field of study to a certain group of informants – only students of the Faculty of Art and Design of the University of Lapland. The part about the methods of finding inspiration for creative working processes supports the understanding of the students' inspirational sources and relates also to nature.

In general, already published studies about inspiration in art and design are dealing mainly with inspirational stimuli that are found in everyday life, for instance objects, hobbies and activities, and the social environment of the creative individual. Those are influencing aspects which are important to consider while doing research on this topic. Other studies that take the influence of a place into consideration (for example, Stein 1974) deal mainly with the topic of creativity and how people are able to work creatively. However, in my study I put also an emphasis on the place-related influence upon people's inspiration in art and design – the focus is on the city of Rovaniemi and its natural surroundings.

Further research about this topic could focus on the place-related influence upon students' inspiration in art and design. For instance, it is interesting research about the influence that the city of Helsinki has upon the creative students of the Aalto University.

Since features of the city of Helsinki are not that related to nature as the ones of Rovaniemi, it could be researched how the students in a bigger city use nature as their inspirational source and what they use as inspirational stimuli. To go one step further, it would be fascinating to leave the Finnish cultural background – which is highly influenced by nature – and to research this topic in another country, for example Germany. Many universities are situated in metropolises that do not offer many natural surroundings to their students. A comparison of both locations could offer an interesting and deeper insight into the knowledge about inspirational stimuli that is used in art and design.

My own perception of inspiration in creative working processes has been influenced through this research in this way that I think more consciously about what could inspire me. As the study shows I can not force inspiration to occur to me. There is only a way of knowing where I have *to go* or what I have *to do* to find inspiration. During my research, some of the informants thanked me for the interesting topic because it made them the first time think about their personal sources of inspiration. Through the questionnaire they got the chance to think consciously about what is important in their creative work and their creative thinking.

All in all, there are many different inspirational stimuli and ways of getting inspired but there is one aspect in common: the individuals have to feel safe and comfortable to be creative. I conclude that the most important stimuli of finding creative inspiration is, on one hand, to be living in an environment, which is diverse and welcoming, and on the other hand, to have multi-faceted and stable social contacts. Those are factors that are influencing people the most and make them feel good about themselves, which supports their creative potential. It does not have to be nature – even if nature has been mentioned by all informants as huge influence upon their creative works as students of the Faculty of Art and Design unaffected by their cultural background – which makes people be creative. It just needs to be a comforting place where the individuals feel confident and secure. I draw the conclusion that nature has an important influence upon the informants' creative inspiration, but it has no exclusive priority. The most influencing aspects upon the inspiration of the students' creative work are the social and the physical environment – which includes nature as a subcategory.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX 1

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Questionnaire “Inspiration”

This questionnaire is related to the research for my Master's Thesis in EMACIM-program. I am researching the inspiration of the Art and Design students of the University of Lapland. The information is entirely anonymous.

Age:

Gender:

Date of Moving to Rovaniemi:

Subject of Study in ULapland:

Home Country:

Previous Place of Study (before coming to Rovaniemi):

Please answer to the following questions in **complete sentences**.

1. Please describe in details your previous place of study and it's surroundings.
2. Please describe in details the city of Rovaniemi and it's surroundings.
3. Please describe in details the creative work that you do in your studies in ULapland.

4. Please describe in details the creative work that you do in your free time in Rovaniemi.
5. How would you generally define inspiration in art and / or design?
6. Please describe in details what is inspiring to you.
7. Please describe in details your own methods of finding inspiration.
8. Please describe in details your main source of inspiration in Rovaniemi and it's surroundings.
9. Please describe in detail the source of inspiration that you used in your previous place of study and it's surroundings.
10. Would you say that your creative work has changed during your stay in Rovaniemi? If yes, please explain how it has changed.

Thank you very much!

Please contact me via email when you have questions related to the questionnaire or my Master's thesis.

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