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“Do You Remember Finland?”
Promoting Finland’s Country Brand with thisisFINLAND Foreign
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ABSTRACT

Tämä pro gradu -tutkielma käsittelee Suomen maakuvamarkkinointia, sekä erityisesti yhtä sen työkaluista: thisisFINLAND Foreign Correspondents' Programme -ohjelmaa (FCP). FCP on ulkoministeriön jo vuodesta 1990 järjestämä koulutusohjelma, jonka puitteissa joukko kansainvälisiä toimittajia tutustuu Suomeen ja suomalaiseen yhteiskuntaan kolmen viikon ajan. Ohjelma on tärkeä työkalu Suomen maakuvamarkkinoinnissa ja ohjelman sisällössä näkyvät maakuvatyön viralliset painotukset.

Tämä tutkielma keskittyi vuoden 2015 FCP-ohjelmaan, jonka 22:sta osallistujasta haastateltiin neljää osallistujaa. Tarkoituksena oli tutkia, millaisia muistoja osallistujilla on Suomesta ja FCP-ohjelmasta sekä selvittää vastaavatko nämä muistikuvat Suomen virallisen maakuvatyön painotuksia. Tällä tavoin pyrittiin siis arvioimaan FCP-ohjelman tehokkuutta maabrändäystyökaluna. Tutkimus oli luonteeltaan laadullinen ja aineisto kerättiin puolistrukturoiduissa haastatteluissa. Aineiston analyysi toteutettiin kaksivaiheisesti. Sisällön analyysin avulla aineistosta etsittiin teemoja, jotka kaikki tai useimmat osallistajat muistivat Suomesta. Seuraavaksi näitä teemoja verrattiin Suomen maabrändäyksen kahden virallisen ohjenuoran mukaisiin teemoihin ja selvitettiin tärkeimmät yhtäläisyydet ja eroavaisuudet.

Tutkimuksen tulokset osoittavat, että FCP-ohjelmaan osallistuneet toimittajat muistivat Suomen rauhallisena, toimivana ja hyvinvoivana yhteiskuntana. Osallistujien mielestä suomalaiset osasivat pitää täydellisen tasapainon työn ja yksityiselämän välillä. Toisaalta osallistajat eivät niinkään muistaneet Suomen vahvuuksia puhtaan luonnon, teknologian ja designin saralla. FCP-ohjelma vaikuttaakin toimivan parhaiten juuri Suomen yhteiskuntaan liittyvien positiivisten teemojen esiintuojana.

KEYWORDS: FCP, country image, country brand, memory, cultural memory, Finland, nation branding, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland

1 INTRODUCTION

In the globalized world, countries must compete in issues such as exports, investments, tourists, students, and labor. Multiple studies have shown that a positive image of a country has an influence on people's decisions and actions, which therefore helps the local companies sell their products and attract both investments and tourists into the country (Anholt 2002; Kotler & Gertner 2002; Beverland & Lindgreen; 2002; Team Finland 2018a). Building and shaping a country image is not easy, since the information about different countries is obtained from multiple sources such as media, education, travels, and encounters with other people (Papadopoulos & Heslop 2002). However, motivated by the positive effects of a good and well-known country brand, many countries have established governmental institutions, campaigns, and marketing strategies to influence the country image in the eyes of foreigners (Kaneva 2011; the Guardian 2017). Finland has also joined this competition and in this study, the focus of interest is in the results of Finnish nation branding and one instance of it in particular: the thisisFINLAND Foreign Correspondents' Programme (FCP).

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland (MFA) has been a member in Finland's nation branding work for decades, and especially the Unit for Public Diplomacy is actively promoting Finland's country brand with different activities. One of their nation branding tools is the thisisFINLAND Foreign Correspondents' Programme (FCP). (Ulkoministeriö 2018) The main goal of the thisisFINLAND Foreign Correspondents' Programme is to provide as many-sided information as possible about Finland to a group of young and influential international journalists. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland has administrated FCP since 1990, and more than 400 young journalists have taken part in it. The programme gives the young journalists an opportunity to learn more about Finland, Finnish society and the Finnish way of life. The three weeks' programme includes briefings on various subjects, meetings with Finnish professionals and politicians, and visits to business enterprises, cultural sites and institutions. (The Ministry for Foreign Affairs 2018)

According to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland (2018), the programme is an important part of its work in the field of public diplomacy. It is also a significant investment in future media relations. The aim is to increase the participants' interest in Finland and strengthen Finland's profile in the long run.

In this thesis, the effectiveness of Finnish nation branding is investigated by collecting and evaluating former FCP participants' thoughts and memories about Finland. The focus group is narrowed down to thisisFINLAND Foreign Correspondents' Programme 2015. This is because during the summer 2015 I conducted an internship at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland in Helsinki and my main task was to assist in organizing the FCP 2015. The participants and events of the FCP 2015 were thereby already familiar to me and the material was readily available to collect, analyze and investigate. The research material is collected with four in-depth semi-structured interviews and the analysis is done by using content and comparative analysis.

To evaluate the results of Finnish nation branding particularly through the FCP 2015, the participants' narrated memories are compared to the themes that the Finnish nation branders wanted to highlight in the nation brand of Finland before and until 2015. For this purpose, *two official nation branding strategies* have been chosen to be used as comparative material.

The first nation branding strategy that I use is *the annual themes for country brand communications* set by the Finland Promotion Board, a body of Team Finland (VNK 2018). These annual themes from 2015 are visible also in the agenda of the FCP 2015 and are therefore used as comparative material in this study. The annual themes are further discussed later in this thesis.

The second part of the comparative material is *the Country Branding Report from 2010* [Maabrändiraportti 2010]. In 2008, the Finland Promotion Board was given a task by the Finnish Prime Minister Mr. Alexander Stubb to establish a nation branding work group. This work group published their report in 2010. According to the Finnish Promotion Board (2015), the findings of the report are still valid in the country's nation branding

work. This report, presenting the *Finnish strengths*, is therefore used as the second part of the comparative material in this study.

Additionally, academic studies are used to form a theoretical framework of this research. The most important basic literature is *How to Brand Nations, Cities and Destinations* (2008) by T. Moilanen and S. Rainisto, which is regarded the most valuable document in the place marketing industry (Kotler in T. Moilanen & S. Rainisto 2008: 8). The book gives a good overall picture of nation branding actions in different countries during the last centuries. Furthermore, it presents the history and the current state of Finnish nation branding in a thorough and sufficient manner.

1.1 Aim of the study and research questions

Despite its long history and emphasized significance, no efforts have been made to investigate the results of the FCP. There have been some occasional alumni meetings, but apart from them almost all connections to the previous 400 FCP participants have been lost. To the best of my knowledge, the MFA or other official nation branding instances have not made any official investigations to collect the former participants' thoughts and ideas about the programme and Finland after they left the country.

Both the new planners of the upcoming programmes as well as the decision makers of Finland's nation branding, such as the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Finnish Promotion Board, need information about the outcomes of the FCP and Finnish nation branding. To find out the outcomes is also highly beneficial for researchers and future students who want to investigate which features of Finnish society and culture might be the most memorable ones for young foreign visitors and particularly journalists. It would also be beneficial to discover if these features are in cohesion with the aims of Finland's nation branding work.

This study aims to investigate the outcomes of the FCP 2015 and the effectiveness of Finnish nation branding in 2015. To reach this aim I contacted four FCP 2015 participants

and found out what they still remember about Finland, and which parts of the programme they regard most memorable ones, either in positive or negative light. The above-mentioned aim is pursued through the following research questions:

- Which features of the FCP 2015 and the Finnish culture, society, and way of life the former FCP participants remember (as negative or positive)?
- Are these memories in cohesion with Finland's nation branding strategies or are there some interesting inconsistencies?

The first question is investigated with the help of a content analysis of the interview material. A comparative analysis is used to find answers to the second research question.

1.2 Research material

Next, the primary research material, background information about the four interviewees and the agenda of the thisisFINLAND Foreign Correspondents' Programme 2015 are presented in more detail. The full agenda can be found in Appendix 2. The presentation of the agenda is featured with a short introduction about the aspects that are not visible in the official timetable. Both the agenda and the background information support the empirical analysis conducted in the fourth chapter of this study. At the end of this subsection, the validity and reliability of the research are discussed.

1.2.1 Background information about the interviewees

The participants of the FCP 2015 were 21–29 years old and selected from among 1,500 applicants. The number of applicants was twice as high as it was in 2013, when the programme was previously organized. The 22 participants represented the following countries: Brazil, China, Egypt, Ethiopia, France, Germany, Great Britain, Indonesia, India, Kazakhstan, Mexico, Norway, Poland, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Turkey, Ukraine, and the United States. (Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland 2015)

Out of the 22 participants four interviewees were selected. The reasons for the selection were both practical and strategical. I wanted to interview participants from different continents and of different gender. I also payed attention to the fact that the selected interviewees had different personal interests and different backgrounds as journalists. Furthermore, the selection was also based on other practical reasons, since some journalists were harder to reach due to different time zones, tight schedules, and bad internet connections.

The first interviewee (Participant 1) is from Spain. He was interviewed on the 4th of March 2018. His age during the programme was 26. When he applied to the programme he was living in Barcelona and was attending his last year at the university. He was also already working full time at a creative marketing agency running social media for the beer brand Estrella. After the programme his contract was not extended, and he moved to London, where he for example managed companies' YouTube channels. At the time that the interview was conducted, he had just quit his job in London and was on his way to Canada for a long vacation. In the future he would like to move back to Barcelona. His main interests are communication and culture, especially music.

The second interviewee (Participant 2) is from Almaty, Kazakhstan. She was interviewed on the 5th of March 2018. During the programme she was 27 years old. After the programme she has moved away from Almaty and lives now in Osnabrück, Germany, where she studies. During the programme she was working as a freelance media communications specialist. She had been a forerunner in her country since she wrote a professional blog and was working as a social media consultant at the time when the internet and social media were still rare in Kazakhstan. Now she is focusing on her studies but is trying to keep up her skills as a journalist, too.

The third interviewee (Participant 3) is from the Republic of Korea, and she was interviewed on the 5th of April 2018. She is now running her own non-profit start-up for innovative education in Seoul, but during the programme she was working as an education journalist in a major Korean newspaper. During the programme she was 26. She has studied in Sweden and visited Helsinki briefly in 2012.

The fourth interviewee (Participant 4) was interviewed on the 10th of April 2018. He is from the UK and during the programme he was 22. During the programme he was working at small local TV and radio station in Lincolnshire, UK. After the programme he moved to London and he is currently working for the BBC Parliament -channel in an office opposite Westminster. His job includes reporting on the actual events in the parliament and politics. He considers himself a politics nerd.

The interviews were conducted via Skype, recorded, and transcribed right after the interview. The interviews were all conducted during March and April 2018. They all lasted from 45 minutes to an hour. The participants were first contacted via Facebook to ask about their interest for the interview. All the participants that were asked for an interview agreed to take part in the research. The participants were told about the topic of the thesis before the interview, but the interview questions were not sent to them beforehand. The participants were also asked not to prepare for the interview. They were also told that the study is not commissioned by the MFA, and they were asked to be as truthful as they can with their comments. Before the interview they were told that even though their names will not be revealed in the study, their identities could easily be recognized because their names and origin countries were published in the official communication of the FCP 2015. The interviewees understood this and were still willing to participate in the interview.

The interview questionnaire can be found in Appendix 1. It is structured in three thematic areas: the participant's image of Finland before participating in the programme, the participant's memories about the programme and the participant's thoughts and images about Finland today after participating in the programme.

1.2.2 The agenda of the FCP 2015

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs organized thisisFINLAND Foreign Correspondents' Programme (FCP) on 10–28 August 2015. During the three-week programme, a group of young international journalists had an opportunity to learn more about Finland, Finnish society and the Finnish way of life (Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland 2015). During

the programme, the participants familiarized themselves with Finland's history, politics, economy, culture, and other key issues. They also had meetings with Finland's political leadership, including the Minister for Foreign Affairs Timo Soini and Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Lenita Toivakka. In addition, the programme included a weekend hosted by a regular Finnish family and visits to Hanko, Turku, and the Åland Islands. The participants also worked for two days in a Finnish media institution. (Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland 2015)

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs payed for the participants' flights and the local embassies helped with visa arrangements and other issues. They also interviewed the participants and gave them material and information about Finland. The ministry mailed a package with brochures and other material about Finland to the participants before their journey.

The 10th of August was a Monday, and most of the participants arrived in Finland by plane during previous Friday, Saturday and Sunday. They were picked up from the airport or the railway station by a taxi and transported to Töölö Towers, Pohjoinen Hesperiankatu 23 A. Töölö Towers is an apartment complex co-owned by University of Helsinki and Aalto University. The participants were accommodated in small apartments and they shared their apartment with one other participant. Apart from the family weekend and the trip to Turku and the Åland Islands, the participants stayed at the Töölö Towers in Helsinki.

During the programme the two coordinators, the leading coordinator Johanna Unha-Kaprali and myself, led the group and participated each activity with the journalists except from the family weekend, the work placement and the interview day. Transports from one place to another were done by foot, public transport or chartered bus. The organized activities typically lasted from 8 am to 4 pm. One weekend was booked for the family weekend, but the other weekend was free. The full timetable of the programme is presented with the headlines of each activity in Appendix 2.

1.2.3 Reliability and validity of the study

Next, both the reliability and validity of this study, as well as the ethical question of my role as both the researcher and an organizer of the programme are considered. As I participated in the FCP 2015 myself, I was able to understand the narrated memories of the participants easier than someone who was not present during the programme. I was for example able to consider which event or action the participants might be describing in their interviews when their memories were vague or inconsistent. For example, one participant remembered to have been swimming in a lake during the programme even though it was the Baltic Sea in Mariehamn. Notes about these clarifications are presented in the analysis with brackets.

In the following subsections, I evaluate the research process involved. Both the reliability and the validity of this study and the findings are evaluated. Validity and reliability are concepts usually used when discussing the level of accuracy of a research. The level of accuracy in a research may vary and that is why these themes need to be discussed. (Hirsjärvi et. al. 2008: 226). Reliability measures the extent to which the research could be executed again and if the results would then be similar and comparable (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2001:185–187). Validity refers to the credibility of the research. Simply put this means, that the research methods actually have measured what they were supposed to measure. (Hirsjärvi et al. 2008: 226) Furthermore, it measures the level of how well the findings answer the research questions.

The material was collected mostly from primary sources. These included the interviews with the participants. The small amount of interviewees limits significantly the possibilities of drawing any general conclusions from this study. To get more reliable and repeatable answers, an interview with the same theme should be completed with more or all the participants of the FCP 2015. In addition, since in this study the interest was only in one period of the programme, and the results can be significantly different if another year of the programme is studied.

Nevertheless, much attention was paid to make the results as accurate as possible. The interview questionnaire included multiple questions about the same theme to avoid misunderstandings. The atmosphere during the interviews was kept easy-going by assuring the interviewees that there were no right or wrong answers. I avoided to make any extra comments and to give a full voice to the interviewees. However, I did make some extra questions to make sure the interviewee was understood correctly. Overall, the interviews can be considered a successful method in collecting the memories of the participants and gaining a real view about the image the young journalists have of Finland. Considering all the mentioned factors, I argue that the validity of the research can be considered sufficient.

Considering the reliability of the study, I am sure that a new research would yield somewhat equal results if repeated with the same four participants. However, as Hirsjärvi et al. mention (Hirsjärvi et al. 2008: 226), contexts for interviewing are always changing which will influence the results. If the research was repeated with other participants from the same year, some of the results should be similar. The role of different personal interests influencing the results should however be considered. In any case, I think that other researchers would end up with the same type of classification and presentation of the gathered data (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2001: 186). If considering the above-mentioned restrictions, I would value the overall reliability of this study as sufficient.

Finally, my position as the researcher conducting the interviews must be evaluated from an ethical point of view. I had worked in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland and the interviewees knew me as one of the organizers of the FCP. However, at the time of the research, there was no working relationship between the ministry and me. This was also pointed out to the interviewees. My status as a programme organizer was not regarded as causing bias. In contrast, it seemed that it was easier for the interviewees to tell about their thoughts and memories to someone who they knew and who knew the concept of the programme. It was probably easier for the interviewees to mention everything they could remember about the programme because they did not have to be afraid of explaining an activity thoroughly to someone not aware of what they could be

talking about. This might have helped collect even the smallest notions and vague memories.

All the participants were also responsible of writing at least two blog posts on the FCP blog (Foreign Correspondents' Programme 2015). In the first post, the participant introduced their self and their expectations and in the second post, they were asked to describe one day of the programme. This information is important because if, for example, a participant has written a blog post about a music festival they attended during the FCP, this music festival might still be remembered better than something else they did not have to write about. The blog posts are not used as research material, but I think it is important for the validity of the research to mention their existence because they might have an effect in the formulation and durability of memories.

1.3 Research methodology

In this section, the methodological decisions of this study are clarified. The first subsection describes qualitative research methodology and longitudinal research. Secondly, the methods used in the data collection and in the empirical analysis are presented.

1.3.1 Qualitative research methodology

This thesis will be conducted using a qualitative research methodology. Qualitative research aims to describe an event or an individual, to understand a certain activity or to provide a meaningful interpretation of a phenomenon. It often attempts to study the subject of research as thoroughly as possible and to generate clear and consistent information from the research material. (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2008: 157; Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009: 85, 108) This descriptive nature suits the goals of the thesis.

The descriptiveness implies that qualitative research is often inductive in its nature as it proceeds from single instances to general principles. The researcher often aims to study

the material in detail and reveal the unexpected instead of testing a theory or a hypothesis. (Hirsjärvi et al. 2008:160.) Even though qualitative research does not usually test theories, theory is still employed in the research for example as a broad explanation for behavior and attitudes. Theory might also serve as an overall orienting lens or perspective that shapes the study. However, it can be argued that some conceptual structure is always needed as the starting point of the research. (Cresswell 2009: 61–64) This thesis is based on pre-existing theories about nation branding. Furthermore, the nature of memories as source material is discussed and the guidelines of cultural memory studies are presented. Overall, the literature about nation branding, country image and memory studies provides a lens through which the memories of the FCP participants are analyzed.

This qualitative research uses some aspects of the so-called longitudinal research or diachronic study. A diachronic study is a study done over the course of time to study a change in a phenomenon (Dictionary of Media and Communication 2011). Longitudinal research is usually used in medical research, but it may be useful also in other fields of study such as linguistic studies. By tracking a group of FCP participants who attended the course in 2015, I can study how their experiences and memories of Finland have shaped over the years and which aspects seem to be the most memorable ones. Since there is material available about the different activities that the participants attended, the events can be compared to their memories in order to find out which features seem to be more memorable than others.

1.3.2 Data collection method

In qualitative research, the data is quite typically collected with interviews (Eskola & Suoranta 2005: 14–15). Some of the research material might be composed of pre-existing documents, such as written texts. Both these forms of material are used in this study.

The most important material is collected with four in-depth, semi-structured interviews with the former participants. A semi-structured interview is a method of research used most often in the social sciences. There are three types of interview methods. A structured interview resembles a questionnaire; it has a pre formulated set of questions and the

interviewer is not allowed to divert from them. The opposite of a structured interview is an unstructured interview, which resembles free dialog. A semi-structured interview is something in between these two. It is open, allowing new ideas to be brought up during the interview, but the interviewer still has a framework of questions or topics to be explored. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2000: 43-47) The interviews were conducted via Skype, recorded, and transcribed. The interviews were all conducted during March and April 2018.

The interviews were conversational, and the specific questions here were not always asked entirely as they are presented in the questionnaire (Appendix 1). All the four interviews had a similar structure. First, the aim of the research was explained. Second, the interviewee was informed about ethical issues of the research, such as identification and freedom of speech. This means that the interviewees were encouraged to tell also about the negative sides of the programme even though I was one of the organizers. Third, the background information was collected. The interview itself consisted of three sections, which are also used to guide the discussion later in the analysis. The first section of questions dealt with the participant's image of Finland before applying and/or participating in the programme and their thoughts about Finland's image in their home countries in general. The questions in the second section of the questionnaire dealt with the events during the programme. With these questions I wanted to find out what activities the participants still remember and whether they are viewed as negative or positive. The last part of the questionnaire focuses on the participants' thoughts and images of Finland today.

An important primary source data is also the original agenda of the FCP 2015 (see Appendix 2). This agenda or timetable shows all the activities, places, and topics the participants were introduced to during the programme. The agenda with all its details was not published widely, but as I participated in organizing and planning the activities, I have access to it.

1.3.3 Analysis method

When the material has been collected, there are several means to conduct the analysis. In this thesis, both content analysis and comparative analysis are used. Content analysis is used to answer the first research question and comparative analysis is used to answer the second research question. The analysis chapter is also divided into two sections according to this division. Finally, the results of both analyses are brought together in order to present the conclusions of the study and to see if the aim of the study has been reached.

The first part of the analysis is conducted with the help of content analysis. The purpose of content analysis is to organize and elicit meaning from the material collected and to draw realistic conclusions from it (Bengtsson 2015). Downe-Wambolt (1992: 314) underlines that the goal in content analysis is to link the results to their context or to the environment in which they were produced: “Content analysis is a research method that provides a systematic and objective means to: make valid inferences from verbal, visual, or written data in order to describe and quantify specific phenomena”.

In content analysis, the material is first categorized. Each participant’s memories and thoughts are also presented separately one after another. The first section presents the participants’ images and thoughts about Finland before they attended the programme in 2015. The second part of content analysis introduces the things that the participants remember doing in Finland. This part of content analysis shows which activities of the programme in 2015 are the most memorable ones in both negative and positive ways. The final part of the content analysis presents the participants’ attitudes and images about Finland today. This chapter is the most important one because it shows the results of the programme, as the participants tell what kind of an image they now have of Finland. Finally, the most important findings of the content analysis are brought together to a concluding subsection and to Tables 1 and 2.

The other part of the analysis is done by using a comparative analysis method. According to the Dictionary of Social Research Methods (2018), a comparative method is a close comparison of two or more contrasting case studies using similar methods of data

collection and/or analysis. The aim may be to explain similarities and differences or to compare similar phenomena in different sociocultural settings. In this study, the comparison is made between the participants' narrated memories about Finland and the goals of the Finnish nation branders. The results of content analysis conducted in the first part of the analysis are therefore used as the comparative material. The memories are compared to two official Finland's nation branding strategies. These two strategies are the annual themes set by Team Finland for nation branding before and until 2015 and the Finnish strengths stated in the final report of the Country Brand Work Group.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

Next, the structure of the thesis is presented. The thesis is divided into five chapters, which all, except the Conclusions, have at least two sections further divided into subsections.

The thesis is structured as follows: this Introduction chapter presents the research topic, Finland's nation branding, and the case of interest, the FCP 2015. Additionally, the research aim and the research questions, the research material and the research methodology are presented in the different sections of the Introduction. There is also one subsection evaluating the validity and the reliability of the research process included in the Introduction.

The theoretical framework of the thesis is divided into two parts. The first theoretical subsection includes the literary review of nation branding literature and the key concepts of this thesis are presented in it. These include terms such as nation branding, country image and Finnish nation branding. The second theoretical chapter focuses on the concept of memory. It introduces the specialties of memory studies both from psychological and cultural perspective.

The fourth chapter of the thesis contains the empirical analysis. The results of the empirical study are divided into two subsections. One of them presents the results of the content analysis and the other one focuses on the comparative analysis. At the end of the

content analysis, the results are brought together in a section about the findings of the content analysis. This is necessary, since the content analysis is used as comparative material in comparative analysis.

The last chapter, the Conclusions, concludes the study and presents a discussion on the findings. Furthermore, some recommendations for further research are presented.

2 COUNTRY BRANDING AND THE FINNISH COUNTRY BRAND

In this chapter, the most important theoretical concepts related to this thesis are presented with the help of the literary framework about country branding and country image. Furthermore, some important concepts such as brand, nation branding and country image are defined. Finally, a closer look at Finnish nation branding is taken and the two Finnish nation branding strategies, which are used as comparative material in this study, are presented.

2.1 Brand and branding

This thesis examines the effectiveness of one Finnish nation branding tool, the FCP 2015 and Finnish nation branding in general. When examining nation brands and branding, it is important to briefly define the concepts of ‘brand’ and ‘branding’.

In the Dictionary of Media and Communication (2011) brand is defined as a name, logo, trademark, or design (or a combination of these) that signifies a particular company, product, or service. Brand can also refer to the characteristics (both physical and connotational) associated with a particular company, product, or service that distinguish it from others. However, it is important to remember that a brand is always a sum of all the images and information about a product or a subject that is available for the consumer. Therefore, the brand does not automatically hold the same qualities that the company or marketer is communicating or that the marketer wishes it to have. (Moilanen & Rainisto 2008: 14; Mäkinen, Kahri & Kahri 2010: 16, 44)

Branding is an action used by marketers when trying to improve a brand in order to, for example, increase sales. Kotler & Keller (2015) state a well-known definition of branding: “Branding is endowing products and services with the power of a brand”. From the marketers’ point of view, the process involves different steps such as positioning, planning a brand strategy, designing a corporate identity or a product identity, writing brand messaging, and setting brand standards. The final brand is the result of the branding

effort and that is how people identify, know and remember the brand. (Hobkirk 2012) There are large quantities of research available about different branding processes from different perspectives. In this study, branding is understood as a type of marketing communication, which aims at building a certain image in the eyes of consumers.

2.2 Country branding

Place or country branding is a dimension of marketing that promotes places, cities, towns and countries instead of, for example, products or persons (Kotler in Moilanen et al.). As defined by Papadopoulos (2004: 36), place branding refers to the broad set of efforts of a country, regional and city governments, and by industry groups, aimed at marketing the places and sectors they represent. In this scenario, the place or a country is seen as a product to be promoted and “sold”.

Nation branding is seen as a powerful tool especially for small, peripheral countries to strengthen their economic position and to compete against stronger and better-known nations (Volcic & Andrejevic 2011). The political perspective of nation branding is that is coordinated by the government instead of independent companies. Countries are interested in country branding because they see it as a way to attract tourists and investments. (Jenes 2008) Furthermore, a good country brand can be helpful in building foreign relations (Volcic & Andrejevic 2011). Government run national branding goes beyond promoting just economic interests. Nation branding is therefore concerned with a country’s whole image on the international stage, covering political, economic, and cultural dimensions (Fan 2010: 98).

Almost all the countries in the world already have a brand, coordinated or not. According to Kotler (qtd. in Moilanen & Rainisto 2008), informal place branding and marketing has been going on for centuries, and some cities like Paris and Venice have become well known around the world for their beauty thanks to the stories of travelers. Formal nation branding is still quite a recent phenomenon, and it became a topic of discussion in the 1990s when the term “place brand” made its appearance thanks to Professor Simon

Anholt among others (Kotler in Moilanen et al 2008). Fan (2010: 98) notes that nation branding is still driven largely by practitioners and there is an urgent need for conceptual and theoretical development of the subject.

As mentioned above, almost every country has a reputation abroad. Reasons for this include globalization, internet, and travelers who have spread the word about their experiences. These images can be hard to change. Thus, Anholt (2002) suggests that a country should take care of the existing perceptions, rather than “rebranding” itself just for the sake of branding. If the country takes an active role in managing its brand, it should conduct branding exercises, such as brand assessment, strategy design, and application of brand management tools (Kotler & Gertner 2002). In other words, the country should first find out what kind of a brand it already has and then start to strengthen strategically the positive sides of it with the use of different tools. The development should also be followed and measured. It is also highly important that the brand resembles the authentic reality of the country, as otherwise it appears as a manipulation chasing an idealistic image (Moilanen & Rainisto 2008). Factual characteristics may also result in too similar country brands. As Moilanen and Rainisto (2008) state, one of the common mistakes in country branding is to promise something too generic that can be found in other countries as well.

2.3 Country image vs. country brand

When discussing the branding of places and countries it is essential to separate the concept of country image from country brand. As mentioned above and according to Kotler and Gertner (2002), even though a country did not actively manage its brand, people will still have images of it in their minds when hearing the country’s name. These images are the sum of each person’s own beliefs, impressions and educational background. They are combined with information gathered from different sources such as media, travels, immigration, art, music and famous citizens (Papadopoulos & Heslop 2002; Kotler & Gertner 2002).

According to Gunn (1972), images of places are formed on two levels, referred to as organic, and induced. The organic image of a place is created from general exposure to information such as newspaper reports, magazine articles and television programs. This process of image formation can be seen as a result of lifelong culture exchange and communication. In marketing the focus is on the second level of image formulation. This means purposeful advertising attempts to induce an image into the consumer's mind and to increase the possibilities that the consumer would make favorable decisions.

Moilanen and Rainisto (2008) discuss the same issue and argue that there is a difference between a country image and a country brand. Their opinion is that a country image is an unplanned, coincidental entity whereas a country brand is a result of targeted actions (Moilanen & Rainisto, 2008). By using Gunn's (1972) definition country image would then be an organic formulation and country brand an induced image.

However, the two terms are often used synonymously, and for example Jenes (2008) points out that recent publications about country image consider country image related to country branding. Martin and Eroglu (1993: 193) define country image as the total of all descriptive, inferential and informational beliefs one has about a particular country. Kotler, Haider, and Rein (1993) define an image of a place as the sum of all those emotional and aesthetic qualities such as experiences, beliefs, ideas, recollections, and impressions that a person has of a place. According to these definitions, it is evident that an individual forms an image based on their personal frame of reference and experiences.

As Kotler and Gertner (2002) explain, once one has formed an image of a country, it can stick for a very long time and be very challenging to alter. This is due to people's tendency to only build the image stronger in their minds and use it as an explanation to make sense of the surrounding world (Kotler & Gertner, 2002). Furthermore, people are likely to be attentive for information that fits the image and disregard such that does not (Kotler & Gertner 2002). Gilmore (2002:283) stresses the importance of country brand positioning and a proactive stance in country branding, because if the branding is not done carefully, the country can become dominated by a particular negative image or stereotype.

Overall, in the modern information flow it can be difficult to separate the concepts of country image and country brand from each other. It is almost impossible to identify which information originates purely from advertising or marketing and which is just general exposure to information. The line between the marketer and independent media is vague. Therefore, I choose to use the terms “country image” and “country brand” as interchangeably. For the purpose of this study, it is not important from which source the image of a country comes from. All the different sources finally form the bigger picture of a country brand in the eyes of foreigners. In this study, country branding efforts are regarded to be done in order to influence both the country brand and the country image.

2.4 Public diplomacy

Since the research object of this study, the FCP 2015, is a Government run programme for young journalists, aiming to tighten the media relations between the participating countries, it is important to discuss the concepts of public diplomacy and international public relations (IPR). Moreover, the unit at the MFA currently organizing the FCP is called the Unit for Public Diplomacy, so the term “public diplomacy” requires brief clarification. Signitzer and Coombs (1992:138) argue that IPR and public diplomacy are very similar concepts because they seek similar objectives and employ similar tools. They defined public diplomacy as “the way in which both government and private individuals and groups influence directly or indirectly those public attitudes and opinions which bear directly on another government’s foreign policy decisions”.

Wilcox, Ault, and Agee (1992, 409-10) define IPR as “the planned and organized effort of a company, institution or government to establish mutually beneficial relations with the policies of other nations.” Based on goals and means, Gilboa (1998) distinguishes between public diplomacy, where state and nonstate actors use the media and other channels of communication to influence public opinion in foreign societies; and media diplomacy, where officials use the media to investigate and promote mutual interests, negotiations, and conflict resolution.

In the context of the FCP, the participating journalists can influence the public attitudes in their home countries. After participating in the programme the journalists have much more information and knowledge about Finland than the average journalists in their home countries usually have. The Finnish nation branders wish that the effort they have put on the FCP would pay off in the future for example as better coverage of Finland in the news.

Next, I will take a deeper look into the history, strategies, and tools of Finnish nation branding. The themes and strengths that the Finnish nation branders are particularly highlighting in order to distinguish Finland from all the other countries in the world are presented in more detail.

2.5 Finland's nation brand and branding

Finland's nation branding, including its themes and tools, is discussed in this section. First, a short overall picture of the different instances involved in the nation branding in Finland is given. This is followed by a short look at the current state of the Finnish nation brand. The section ends with the presentations of the two official nation branding strategies that are used as comparative material in this study.

Many different instances in Finland are interested in promoting Finland's country brand and image. Both public and private sectors as well as average citizens have a role and an interest in the nation branding work. However, this study focuses on the publicly run nation branding work.

Different governmental nation branding instances are typically divided by their focus groups or goals. This applies also to Finland. Visit Finland works to develop Finland's image directed towards travelers and helps Finnish travel companies to internationalize, develop, sell and market high-quality travel products. Visit Finland is a part of Business Finland that promotes Finnish innovation funding, trade and investment. (Visit Finland 2018) Both these are part of Team Finland, a large network of public sector actors

providing internationalization services. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland is also a member in the Team Finland network. (Team Finland 2018b)

The Finland Promotion Board (FPB) manages the country brand coordination and communications. This group of communication and marketing professionals, both from the public and private sectors, is responsible for creating the country brand strategies, and it also sets the annual themes for country brand communications. (VNK 2018). The FPB also produces research data pertaining to the development of Finland's country brand. These researches are published in a database called Toolbox that is managed by the FPB (Toolbox 2018). Both the country branding strategies used in this study are available in the Toolbox.

The Unit for Public Diplomacy at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs has been responsible for the work of the Secretariat of the Finland Promotion Board in addition to its own tasks, which consist primarily of steering the network of diplomatic missions, the production of tools, the coordination of major projects requiring international communications, and visits by journalists and opinion leaders. (Finland Promotion Board 2017) Unit for Public Diplomacy is also responsible for organizing the FCP.

Even Finland Promotion Board itself admits that there is a certain lack of coordination, efficiency and effectiveness in the Finnish country brand work. Multiple operators have a noteworthy impact on Finland's country brand and their efforts are sometimes overlapping (Finland Promotion Board 2017). However, the country branding organization gains also credit as Moilanen and Rainisto (2008) admit the Team Finland - network has been able to gather the various operators together to carry on its work despite the changes in politics.

In addition to the problems regarding the coordination of the nation branding work, Finnish nation branding itself has some well-known difficulties. According to a Brand Tracking survey commissioned by Visit Finland, Finland does not stand out from its Nordic neighbors. The entire Nordic region is commonly seen as one entity with similar culture and society. This demonstrates both challenges and opportunities when the goal

is to highlight the unique aspects that separate Finland from our neighbors. (Finland Promotion Board 2017)

The current state of Finland's nation brand has been followed and measured for many years. The Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs has annually published a review of the articles written about Finland in the world media during one year. In 2015, the main topics did not differ much from those published in 2014. In 2014, Finland was regarded as a model country in the fields of education, technology, innovations, equality, welfare system and good governance. Further, topics that were mentioned often were good standard of living, unpolluted nature, food, design, architecture and music. Some common stereotypes like coldness and Santa Claus still held their ground on the side. (MFA 2014)

A summary of the image surveys committed by the Finnish Promotion Board (2017) in 2016-2016 goes: "Finland is perceived as a functional and competent country, which is nevertheless somewhat cold and clinical". The results of the various reports are not presented here in more detail, but a lot of material is available in the Toolbox (2018). In addition, in this thesis the main interest is in the programme organized in 2015; thus, the newest events or changes in the Finnish country brand are not reported here.

Next, a more detailed look is taken at the themes of Finland's nation branding in 2015, it being the interviewees of this thesis participated in the FCP 2015. After that, a closer look at the Nation Branding Report form 2010 is also taken to highlight the themes that are found the most positive, distinguishable, and important in the Finnish society and way of life.

2.5.1 Key priority themes in Finland's nation branding in 2015

The first nation branding strategy that I use as a comparative material in this study is *the annual themes for country brand communications* set by the Finland Promotion Board, a body of Team Finland (VNK 2018). These annual themes from 2015 are visible also in the agenda of the FCP 2015 and are therefore used as comparative material in this study.

The thematic areas for Finland's country branding in 2015 were: *cleanliness* (incl. cleantech, quality of living, a well-functioning society, the Arctic, nature), *design* (products, services, cross sectoral) and *education and competence* (incl. start-up companies, Slush). According to Team Finland's Strategy update, (Team Finland 2015) these seven general thematic key priority areas in the strategy for 2014 remained unaltered for 2015. The strategy of 2014 also states that in response to recent developments in the foreign policy environment, a greater emphasis is being placed on general communications built around the Finland theme (a democratic, functioning, competence-based Nordic welfare state and a member of the EU). (Team Finland 2014)

In the media review from 2015, the media coverage of these strategical themes had decreased a little since 2014. The Finnish education system got the outright most coverage in both 2014 and 2015. 65 % of the followed countries reported that Finland had a very good reputation in education. The second biggest theme was Finnish art and design, but the positive reputation and coverage in media dropped from 35 % of the followed countries to only 26 % between 2014 and 2015. The other fields of international reputation, most of them related to *cleanliness*, were IT-technology and digitalization (25 % in 2014 and 16% in 2015), life sciences (15 % in 2014 and 10 % in 2015), cleantech (10 % and 6 %), arctic knowledge (5% and 5%) and bio economy (5% and 3%). (Ministry for Foreign Affairs 2016)

2.5.2 Country Brand Delegation's opinion on Finland's strengths

The second comparative material used in this study is *the Country Branding Report from 2010* [Maabrändiraportti 2010]. The country branding work took a major step in 2008 when the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Alexander Stubb set a working group to define the brand of Finland. The timeline for the working group's project was two years and the results were published in 2010. The delegation was formed of prominent Finns with personal experience and proven ability in a wide range of fields such as culture, business, international advocacy and public relations. Jorma Ollila who was Chairman of the Board of Directors of Royal Dutch Shell plc and Nokia Corporation chaired the delegation. (MFA 2008)

Additionally, a co-operation was launched with the nation branding specialist Mr. Simon Anholt who defined the central elements of the Finnish identity. These were trustfulness, solution-focused and the ‘no-fuss’ mentality and the perseverance of the Finns. These were the features that Anholt thought clearly differentiate Finland from the other Nordic countries (Heino 2016; Maabrändiraportti 2010).

On the basis of Anholt’s suggestions and with the help of multiple other sources and surveys the nation branding committee was able to distinguish three strengths that were unique to Finland. These Finland’s most important strengths are presented in the working group’s final report (Maabrändiraportti 2010). The strengths are the *functionality of Finnish society, the close relationship to nature and the system of basic education that is among the best in the world.*

The Country Brand Delegation (Maabrändiraportti 2010) suggests that Finland could take part in solving the problems of the world by using these strengths. Each of the strengths – *functionality, nature and education* – could therefore be used to develop both our own country and the entire world, while also demonstrating the strengths to the whole world. *Functionality* was chosen because it is the word that best describes the society, culture and, practices of a solution-oriented nation. Functionality combines two aspects that are characteristic to Finland: reliability and mutual trust as well as an unconventional, non-hierarchical way of solving problems. Functionality also covers the Finnish design which is available for all: ordinary people as well as the more wealthy part of the population.

Moreover, the delegation adds that Finland’s mission is also to learn to tell the world that it can help solve its problems. As noted in the country brand working group’s report, many international rankings indicate that the images regarding Finland are positive, but Finland is not well known outside of its “closer circle” (Maabrändiraportti 2010). Therefore, the report concluded that Finland as a country has not yet succeeded in delivering the message regarding all of its key strengths.

The report had a practical orientation as the themes were developed further into concrete tasks for various stakeholders. That is also why the report was called “a Mission to

Finland”. Some tasks were large projects to be executed on a state-level, but some were smaller and directed to all Finnish people. This highlighted the idea that everyone in Finland would be involved in the brand building. (Maabrändiraportti 2010)

3 MEMORIES AS SOURCE MATERIAL

Since people's memories are investigated in this thesis, it is important to have a look at some key concepts on memory and how it works. In this thesis, the main interest is in the participants' memories of their experiences during the FCP 2015 programme.

In the first section of this chapter, the concept of memory in psychological literature is described. However, memory is also a cultural phenomenon. According to Astrid Erll (2008:5), we must differentiate between two levels on which culture and memory intersect. First, the individual level which involves the cognitive remembering process and collective level with social and medial dimensions. These two aspects of memory are presented in more detail in the second section.

3.1 The concept of memory in psychological literature

According to Richards (2009:132-140) there are major individual differences in how memory operates. In psychological literature, personal memories are called autobiographical memories, which refers to memories of one's own life in a visual, auditory, or other sensory mode. The memories of events can also be called episodic memories (Chambers 2017:4). There are ways to activate the autobiographical memory and for example some specific situations or voices can trigger the memories to come back. (Richards 2009:132-140)

The autobiographical memory is also vulnerable to distortion. The episodic memories are narratives that are influenced by expectations before the actual events ever happen and by rumination after the event. Furthermore, memories are also influenced by other experiences such as photographs and our goals and motives at the time of remembering. It is hard and even impossible to distinguish inaccurate memories from true memories since they arise from the same encoding, rehearsal and source monitoring processes that produce true memories. However, in many contexts distortions have no practical

consequences since even the person their self cannot distinguish a true memory from a distorted one. (Johnson 2001)

However, some researchers have completely denied the idea that memories could be separated to true and false ones. According to Straub (2008: 220), a solidly proven recognition makes the conventional idea that memory records “what used to be”, appear simplistic. People do not simply memorize objectively existing things or events, which thereafter can neutrally be perceived, captured and recollected in narratives. On the contrary, memories are transformed into a phenomenon worth remembering already in the act of perception and reception. A memory is a meaningful and therefore communicable experience that can therefore be remembered. When a new memory is created, we structure and organize the material and tie it together with our previous knowledge. Memory, especially autobiographical, constantly arranges and organizes what we remember anew. (Straub 2008: 220)

Therefore, Straub suggests reconsidering the traditional theories on the “distorted recollections” and the like. He points out that memory does not work like a blank sheet or neutral storage place. It does not passively record everything that happens or reproduce it unaltered. All our memories have been interacting with the previous “contents” in our mind. A salient feature in these operations is the narrative structuring of events. (Straub 2008: 220-222)

One process tightly related to remembering is the process of forgetting, which has been studied widely in psychology. There are several psychological and physical factors affecting the rate of how much of the new information is remembered and how much is lost. These factors are for example personal interests and experiences and physiological factors such as stress and lack of sleep. (Chambers 2017: 157)

3.2 The concept of memory in cultural research

According to Erll (2008:5), no memory is ever purely individual, but always inherently shaped by collective contexts. The people we live with and the media we use influence the memories we have and acquire. The memories are often triggered as well as shaped by external factors, ranging from conversations to books and to places. In short, we remember in sociocultural contexts.

The concept of *cultural memory* has been developed to understand this process. The term cultural memory is further divided into two levels. On the first level of cultural memory, the term “memory” is understood in a literal sense, whereas the attribute “cultural” is a metonymy, standing for the “socio-cultural contexts and their influence on memory.” The instance of cultural memory is understood this way especially within oral history, social psychology, and neurosciences. (Erll 2018:5)

The second level of the cultural memory refers to the symbolic order, media, institutions, and practices by which social groups construct a shared past. No society or group can literally “remember”, and the term “memory” is therefore used metaphorically. However, the process of how a group builds a shared past bears resemblance to the processes of individual memory. Much research in cultural history and the social sciences has been done with regard to this second aspect of collective memory. (Erll 2018:5)

As presented above, the two forms of cultural memory can be distinguished from each other on an analytical level. However, in practice they interact continuously. There is no such thing as pre-cultural individual memory or collective memory, which is detached from individuals and embodied only in media and institutions. Just as sociocultural contexts shape individual memories, a “memory” which is represented by media and institutions must be actualized by individuals, by members of a community of remembrance. (Erll 2008:6)

In this thesis, the four interviewees represent individuals of a community of remembrance of Finland. Their narrated memories presented in this study are formed in the cultural context of Finland and the FCP 2015. Their individual memories are interesting and important because they are pieces of the bigger picture of the cultural memories and images of Finland that foreigners and visitors have. The memories of the participants have been shaped with a range of physical and psychological factors. Psychological factors, such as personal interests, previous memories, knowledge, and experiences, all have an impact on the memories and the narratives that the participants share in the interviews. Furthermore, some physical factors such as lack of sleep and stress might have influenced the perception of new information and therefore also the memories. These factors cannot be excluded in the research nor can they all be considered individually in the analysis. However, their role should be remembered when discussing the findings of this study, and that is why the participants were also asked to describe their image of Finland before the programme and their mood and feelings during the programme.

Next, I will move on to the empirical analysis of the research material, the participants' narrated memories. The analysis is divided into two sections and each participant's memories and thoughts are first described separately. Finally, the four participants' memories are gathered into tables.

4 THE EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

This chapter includes the empirical analysis of the research material. The chapter begins with a qualitative content analysis of the research material collected in four interviews. In the second section, the findings of the content analysis are compared to the two official strategies of Finnish nation branding to find out the similarities and the differences between the memories and the strategies.

The aim of the empirical analysis is to find answers to the two research questions, which are: 1) Which features of the FCP and the Finnish culture, society and way of life the former FCP participants remember (as negative or positive) and 2) Are these memories in cohesion with Finland's nation branding work or are there some interesting inconsistencies? In the content analysis, the primary goal is to find answers to the first research question whereas the comparative analysis seeks answers to the second research question.

4.1 The content analysis

This section is divided into four subsections, which follow the same structure and order as the interview questions (see Appendix 1). What the participants knew about Finland prior to their trip and what kind of an image Finland has in their countries is briefly described in the first subsection. The next subsection focuses in the activities during the FCP 2015. The idea is to find out what the interviewees remember about the programme. The focus is on actual events and visits, in other words this subsection describes what the participants remember doing in Finland during their visit in 2015. The final subsection is the most important one as it presents the participants' thoughts and ideas about Finland today. At the end of the content analysis, the memories of the participants are summarized in a table.

4.1.1 The participants' images of Finland before participating in the programme

As described in the literary framework, memory is not an empty storage that simply collects events to a memory database. Memories are always influenced by many factors, and one of them is the previous information we have about a topic. As Kotler and Gertner (2002) explain, once we have formed an image of a country, it can last a very long time and be very challenging to change.

Because of the reasons stated above, it is useful to get an idea of the image, knowledge, and information the participants had about Finland before their trip here. The participants were therefore asked what they knew about Finland before the programme and from which sources they usually got their information about Finland in their country. Next, each participant's answers to these questions are presented.

Participant 1

Participant 1 says he did not know much about Finland and had not visited it before participating in the programme. However, he mentions considering Finland as one option for his student exchange destination, but eventually he went to Canada. He says he knew that Finland is a country in the north where they speak "a weird language" and that it is the home of Santa Claus. Moreover, he knew that Finland has a good welfare and education system. He had heard that the Finnish people like Spanish TV-shows such as *Los Serranos*. He thought that was very surprising.

Participant 1 also points out that because he had visited Norway, he assumed that Finland would be very similar to it. He had met some Finnish people during his studies abroad, and he had an idea that the Finns are friendly but somewhat reserved. He also mentions that he knew that the Finns have "a big respect for nature".

Participant 1 thinks that the Spanish people appreciate the Finnish welfare system but think that the weather in Finland is depressing. The Finnish people are regarded as "a bit cold and hard to get along with", which is mostly because of the cultural differences between Finland and Spain. Participant 1 mentions that most of the information the

Spanish people have about Finland comes from the media and from people who have visited Finland. Finland is not often in the news, but during Christmas time, the media might show images of Santa Claus and sauna. Participant 1 describes that he was afraid of not surviving in the sauna in Finland and that he had prepared himself to it in a local sauna in Spain. He decided to apply to the programme after he saw a post about it in a Facebook group for young journalists based in Barcelona.

Participant 2

Before participating in the FCP 2015, Participant 2 knew very little about Finland. She says she knew only about the sauna, Santa Claus, Nokia and the high-level education system. She had been thinking about applying to study in Europe, and had also considered Finland. However, studying in Finland is not free anymore for people coming out side of the EU and therefore she now studies in Germany. She says she knew where Helsinki is because she knew it is not far from St. Petersburg. She knew Finland was one of the least corrupt countries in the world. She also knew about the freedom of press in Finland. Participant 2 says she loves Scandinavian design in which she also included Finnish design.

Her image of Finland before participating in the programme was that it is “a miracle and almost like a fairytale”. It was hard for her to think about anything critical to say about Finland, especially when compared to her own country. She had also an idea about the Finnish weather: she knew it is warm in August, but that she should also bring an umbrella.

According to Participant 2, all people in Kazakhstan know Finland because of Nokia and Santa Claus. She says the level of knowledge has increased because of a world exhibition that was organized in Kazakhstan. Participant 2 thinks that most people in her country get their information about Finland through Google and Wikipedia, and the Visit Finland-website. She says that Finland is not considered an interesting travel destination because of the price level and because it is not seen as interesting during the summer. She thinks Lapland is more interesting to the Kazak tourists than Helsinki.

Like Participant 1, also Participant 2 found out about the programme on Facebook when a friend shared information about it on her Facebook page. She applied to the programme because she had visited Europe many times, but Finland was still a “terra nova” to her.

Participant 3

According to Participant 3, Finland is regarded as an “education paradise” in South Korea. Therefore, all the Koreans are quite interested in Finland. Finland is also known for Santa Claus, and he is often shown for example in TV-commercials. Participant 3 adds that as an education journalist she knew even more about the education in Finland than the average Koreans do. She mentions that she knew that the Finnish students are known for not being depressed like in Korea and that the Finnish education system was currently under reformation.

Participant 3 had some real experiences about Finland before attending the FCP. She had done her student exchange in Sweden in 2009 and therefore she considered herself as being quite familiar with the Northern European culture. She assumed that Finland would be quite similar to Sweden. She says that to Koreans in general Sweden and Finland have a very similar image: both are considered a paradise. Participant 3 had also visited Finland before the programme. She had spent half a day in Helsinki during the winter in 2009. She remembers that everything was white and cold and that the people were quiet. She also remembered a big white church in Helsinki.

Applying to the programme was recommended to Participant 3 by email. She had visited an event at the Finnish Embassy in Korea and there she got to know some Finnish people to whom she gave her business card.

Participant 4

As his motivation to apply to the programme Participant 4 says, “I knew nothing about Finland, so I thought I’d just love to find out more about it”. Participant 4 had been to Sweden and Denmark as he has some friends in these countries. He assumed that Finland would be very similar to the other Nordic countries and therefore he was always

comparing Finland to Sweden. He had also heard about the Finnish saunas and the Finnish education system.

Participant 4 was searching information about Finland on the internet and found the YouTube channel of Visit Finland. He was shocked that the videos only had ca. 600 views. This made him think that Finland might not be a hotspot for tourists.

Participant 4 thinks that Finland is a country that is not often talked about in the media. According to him, one reason for that might be that there is nothing very controversial in Finland's foreign policies and that Finland is still quite a young country. He thinks that many people in the UK, when thinking about the Nordic countries, first think about Sweden, Denmark and Norway.

Participant 4 applied to the programme because his news editor recommended it to him. He got interested, even though his work at the time did not cover many topics from Finland or the Nordic countries.

4.1.2 The participants' memories about their experiences during the programme

In this subsection an account on the participants' narrated memories about the events of the FCP 2015 is given. The participants were also asked to tell what they would include in the programme and what they would leave out if they could. Additionally, the participants were asked to describe their mood and feelings during the programme.

Participant 1

Participant 1 remembers quite many of the different activities during the programme. He mentions the meetings with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the President. Furthermore, he describes that the programme included cultural activities such as a visit to the Flow Festival and cooking and tasting Finnish food. He further remembers that there were visits to different cities, a work placement, and a "visit to a vessel". He also adds that he remembers that shipbuilding is one of the big industries in Finland. Participant 1 also remembers that he visited a Finnish school and that he spent a weekend

in a Finnish family. He mentions that the programme was flexible and some activities were only arranged to those who were interested in a specific field. For example, the journalists who were interested in business visited Nokia headquarters and he visited the YouTube event Tubecon.

For Participant 1 the best day during the programme was the day of arts, which was also the day he was responsible of writing his blog post. He says he remembers this day best because he had to write about it on the blog. He remembers that during the day he visited the office of Music Finland, the headquarters of Marimekko and an organization related to Finnish design. The day ended at the Flow festival, which he thinks was the best activity during the entire programme. He also remembers visiting an art exhibition by arts students in the festival area.

Participant 1 was also very pleased with his visit to the Tubecon event, which is one of the biggest YouTube events in the Nordic countries. He was the only international journalist in the event and had a chance to talk with the organizers. He thinks these contacts have helped him later in his career.

Participant 1 further describes that every day had a different theme. On one day he remembers visiting a place where people were “cutting and recycling trees”, which helped him understand the Finnish people’s respect for nature better. Furthermore, he remembers visiting schools and a university where he learned about recent research. Participant 1 further describes that he remembers the visits to Hanko and Turku. He remembers that there was a multidisciplinary center in Turku and that he got to talk to a person from the Film Commission of Western Finland and a Finnish film director. The director was shooting a film in a castle that the group was visiting. Participant 1 also remembers the visit to the Åland Islands. He describes the islands as an autonomous Finnish territory that is Swedish speaking. In Åland, he remembers visiting the sauna for the first time in Finland. He says that he learned many things about autonomous regions, which was relevant regarding the local politic situation in Spain. He further mentions the Peace Institute and that the Åland Islands serves as an example of a territory that has an autonomous status. Briefly, before his flight back home, Participant 1 had a chance to

spend time at the Finnair VIP area, which he describes as “something special and quite fancy”.

During his free time in Helsinki, Participant 1 visited the Museum of Photography and the Olympic stadium. Participant 1’s host family introduced him to architecture and he remembers visiting Alvar Aalto’s house and the house of “the one old president” (Tamminiemi), which was decorated with furniture from the 60s and 70s. He also visited Sompasauna in Kalasatama. This was a very special visit for him because the sauna is only known by locals and has now been demolished from the way of building construction.

Participant 1 tells that he did not like the food workshop because the food that they cooked was not that tasty. If he could add something to the programme, he would include a visit to Rovaniemi and Lapland. He says that this is because all the previous participants had a chance to visit Lapland and because Rovaniemi is very famous for Santa Claus. Furthermore, he thinks that the nature that he saw near Helsinki was not that “wild” and therefore he would have wished to see the wilderness in Lapland. He would also have liked to have spent a little more time in Hanko on the beach.

Participant 1 describes his feelings during the programme as excited, privileged and positive. He thinks that he had a chance to see the “unusual” side of Finland because it was sunny almost all the time during the programme. Thus, he thinks that his next visit should be during the winter so that he could see the “cold and dark side of Finland”.

Participant 2

Participant 2 remembers primarily the visits to the schools, the lectures about the economy and the meeting with the President. She further describes that she was impressed with the visit to the Presidential Palace. She thinks that the attitude of the President was modest, and the journalist were very warmly welcomed. She describes the atmosphere as “easy-going and friendly”.

Participant 2 further describes the visit to the Finnish school. She saw that the people were involved in the educational process and they seemed to enjoy it. Participant 2 still remembers one conversation she had in a Finnish school canteen: “I still remember when we were eating in the school canteen and I asked some girls if they like their school and they said yes we like our school.” According to her, the atmosphere in the school seemed relaxed.

Furthermore, Participant 2 remembers the family weekend, the work placement, the visit to Turku, and the visit to the University of Helsinki. She remembers meeting the Head of the Public Relations of the University of Helsinki, who she thinks was very communicative and open-minded. She remembers talking with her about the relation between psychology and public relations. She thinks this conversation might have inspired her to apply to a university in Germany to study this subject. Furthermore, she remembers that the group visited a neurobiology laboratory at the University of Helsinki. Participant 2 says she loves Marimekko design and that she still uses her Marimekko bag. Participant 2 thinks the best part of the programme was that the journalists were allowed to be very independent during the programme. She thinks that they were allowed to “live like normal citizens”. She says that the organizers did not try to impress the participants with glamour, but instead gave them opportunities to learn on their own. The weekend spent in an ordinary Finnish serves as a good example of this. “We lived like normal people in Helsinki and used public transport and everything”, she describes. During her free time in Helsinki she visited Suomenlinna and explored the city with her public transport ticket. Travelling around was easy because the distances were not too long.

The only thing that the participant did not enjoy that much was the visit to the garbage station. She thought it was interesting, but that the visit was too long and that the group was tired. Like Participant 1, Participant 2 also missed a trip to Lapland. She thinks that Lapland is interesting because it appeals to the “childish part of everyone’s personality”.

Participant 2 describes the programme as very intensive; at times, she remembers having been very tired. However, she is grateful that she got so many different impressions of

different areas of Finnish culture and society. She only lived in Finland for one month, but she thinks she learned more than during the whole time she has lived in Germany.

Participant 3

First, Participant 3 remembers the meeting with the President. She further tells that because she is an education journalist she remembers the visits to the schools. She also remembers the visit to the Parliament where she met one of the councils working with educational affairs. She remembers that the group had a lecture about the Finnish ecosystem, visited Marimekko headquarters and “a big boat”. She remembers that she visited Turku and the Åland Islands. Her host family lived near Turku and she worked in *Kauppalehti* for her work placement. She remembers having parties at the Töölö Towers, visiting the Flow Festival, tasting salmiakki and going to the sauna many times.

Participant 3 thinks that the best part of the programme was the Family weekend, as it gave her a chance to interview a Finnish family and to explore their daily life. Later she noticed that instead of normal everyday life, she was instead exploring a Finnish vacation, since the time was spent at the family’s summer cottage. However, she thought that this was also very interesting.

Participant 3 also has some critical comments about the programme. She mentions that she did not like the lecture at the Bank of Finland (Confederations of Finnish Industries) that much because it was not interactive, and therefore it was difficult to concentrate on it. She also remembers that they had a history tour of Helsinki, but the vocabulary was unfamiliar for her and she cannot remember anything about the tour.

She adds that if she could choose, she would have left out of the programme the visit to Music Finland because her visit to Sony Music Finland on her interview day was much more interesting. She had requested an interview with an education specialist, but it did not work out and she had an interview with Hevi Saurus instead. Her friend had told her about this heavy metal band playing educational music for children. She also adds that the visits to schools may have focused too much on the educational organization and the different opportunities in schools. She was missing a chance to interview teachers,

students, and pupils to find out how the teachers are treated and what the students really think about their education. Participant 3 further remembers the visit to a maternity clinic, but she was not able to talk to the clients and to the personnel as much as she would have wanted to there either. Finally, she adds that she did not have a chance to hear about the early childhood education.

Participant 3 describes the programme as a great opportunity, but also a burden. She thinks she had quite much pressure because she was an education journalist from Korea, where Finnish education is held in high regard. She had to do some personal sacrifices and for example use all her holidays to be able to attend the programme: “But I was very happy anyway and I wanted to get as much information as possible,” she adds.

Participant 4

Participant 4 thinks that the most memorable event during the programme was the family weekend. During the weekend, he spent his time talking to his hosts and trying to get as much information as possible about the Finnish way of life and for example about Finnish education. He further remembers the visits to the Flow Festival, a radio station, and a coffee roaster (which was at Teurastamo). Participant 4 also remembers “a beautiful park where the group carried a basket of cinnamon buns into a forest and had a picnic on a rock” (this was in Tvärminne Zoological station). Furthermore, he mentions a marine conservation place, Åland Islands, and the meeting with the President. He also remembers visiting Turku, but he does not remember what he did there. Moreover, he remembers “this awesome evening at the saunas by the lake” (which was in Mariehamn by the sea). He mentions that he was told there would not be any mosquitoes, but there were, and they bit him. In his free time, he took part on a guided walking tour in Helsinki.

He thinks that the meeting with the President was very special, especially for journalists just starting their career. According to him, it is normal to assume much about meeting a world leader, but to their surprise people realized he is “just a normal guy who has a coffee with you”.

Participant 4 did not like the visit to Marimekko because the topic was not that interesting for him. Furthermore, he thinks that the meeting at the Business Forum (Confederations of Finnish Industries) in the morning was quite dull since they only “watched a very long Power Point presentation”.

If he could, Participant 4 would include a visit to Lapland into the programme. He admits that a trip to Lapland is a very stereotypical activity in Finland, but he was still disappointed that it was not included in the programme. He thinks Lapland is interesting because Santa Claus lives there and because it is typical to think about snow and cold weather when thinking about Scandinavia. He thinks that many participants thought that there would be snow and cold in Lapland in August. He thinks it should have been communicated better why the FCP 2015 did not include a visit to Lapland.

Participant 4 thinks the programme was amazing, but also tiring. He describes that his mood and feelings towards Finland were positive and happy. However, during the family weekend he had realized that he was very tired because of the full-packed programme. He also thinks that sometimes the group did not spend enough time in one place, and that for example once he would have liked to stay on a beach by a lake a bit longer (in Hanko). He also missed out on one of his favorite artists at the Flow Festival because he went to have nap and slept in. He had to ask for more vacation from his job after the programme because he was so exhausted.

4.1.3 The participants' image of Finland today

In the last part of the interview the participants were asked to describe the image they now have of Finland. They were asked to describe the Finnish lifestyle, culture, society and way of life and to describe Finland with five words. Some participants also told how the programme has affected their lives today. These descriptions are presented below, one participant at a time.

Participant 1

Participant 1 describes that his image of Finland is now very different from before participating in the programme. He thinks that the most surprising thing was that in contrast to his assumptions about Finland being very similar to the other Nordic countries; it is actually very much linked to Russia. He was surprised about the shared history and cultural background of Finland and Russia and that the relationship between the two countries is still very important in politics.

He also saw that even though Finland is a model country in many fields, it still has some problems. For example, despite the great level of press freedom, the media is in trouble and one place where the participants did their work placement “fired half of their staff”. Participant 1 says; “It was enlightening that not everything there is so super great”. Furthermore, Participant 1 confirms that the cliché of Finns being obsessed with saunas is true and that “there are saunas everywhere”. Participant 1 was also very surprised about the case of Åland Islands and he thought that their example could be useful in the discussion about the independence of Catalonia in his home country.

He describes Finnish culture as warm and welcoming, but not to the same extent as it is in Spain. He thinks the Finns are hardworking and committed. He thinks the society is very modern, open, and multicultural and that the people are well educated, open for new ideas and interested in discussing them. He describes Finnish politics as transparent. He further mentions that the respect for nature and the environment is visible in the society.

Participant 1 thinks that the way of life in Finland is easy-going and not luxurious. He further describes that the Finns like to keep both their home and work very “private”, and they tend not to tell much about their life to strangers. Therefore, despite the welcoming atmosphere, it is hard to get to know a Finnish person on a deeper level. Furthermore, Participant 1 describes the Finns as very aware of their own weaknesses. He had been reading about “sisu” in his guidebooks, but he did not really see or experience it in Finland. “Maybe it is more visible during the winter”, he adds.

Participant 1 is looking forward to visiting Finland again. However, he would not like to live here because he regards himself too different, especially because of the language barriers and cultural differences.

Participant 1 needed more than five words to describe Finland. His words were cold, respectful, warm, welcoming, friendly, natural and traditional.

Participant 1 further describes two events that showed him something special about Finnish culture. First, he describes the atmosphere in the newsroom of MTV, where he did his work placement. He had been in a newsroom in Spain and there everyone was “shouting to each other”. In Finland, on the contrary, the atmosphere was quiet and calm. Later he heard that they had many problems during the shot, but he had no idea about it because everyone stayed relaxed. Moreover, in Tubecon, Participant 1 was very surprised that the Finnish fans stayed very calm in front of their idols. The fans were not as hysterical as in Spain. The idols were not surrounded by security and everyone acted very respectfully. He thinks this respectful calmness has something to do with Finnish culture.

Participant 2

Participant 2 describes that she felt like home in Finland and that Finland is still one of her favorite countries. Participant 2 thinks that the Finns respect a person’s private space and do not ask questions about salaries or relationship statuses. Furthermore, she tells that the Finnish people are quiet but friendly and helpful. She also adds that she appreciated the fact that almost all people in Finland speak English.

Participant 2 was surprised that Finland is not part of Scandinavia and that, according to her experiences, the Finnish people are culturally and racially closer to Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. She thinks that the lifestyle in Finland is slower than in the Scandinavian countries, but the people are more open and sociable.

Participant 2 got her impressions about the Finnish way of life mostly during the family weekend. Her guest family lived on the countryside and she thinks that their way of life was relaxed. However, she mentions that even Helsinki is “not that stressful” and that

some of the participants could not believe it was the capital city because of the calm atmosphere. She thinks there are many international brands and work opportunities in Helsinki, but that there is “always a chance to have a drink, enjoy and relax”. Overall, she describes the Finnish people as “simply happy”.

According to Participant 2, in Finnish society “the government takes care of all people”. She says that even though Finland is not as rich as Norway, the people can still have everything they need to lead a good life. She further describes that she saw some homeless people, but the locals told her they are not Finnish and that “they come from Romania or other less developed countries”. She was also surprised that in Finland the students are not in a hurry to graduate and start working. She describes that in Finland people are still studying when they are 26 or 27 because they are sure about their future and that is why they can start their career in their thirties. In her opinion the negative side of that is that the students are not productive for the society. She adds that it would be better for the Finnish economy if people would not study that long.

One stereotype that she thinks was proved to be true was that there truly are saunas everywhere in Finland. Participant 2 was surprised that there was a sauna in their apartment in the Töölö Towers and on the ferry to Åland. She was also surprised that the famous Finnish air was fresh and easy to breathe even in the city center of Helsinki. She says she did not feel any differences between the air in the city center and in Nuuksio national park.

Participant 2 describes Finland as awesome, calm and unpredictable. She thinks of it is a combination of “wild flow and calm lifestyle”. Back in Kazakhstan Participant 2 visited the World exhibition and its Finnish pavilion. She describes that the pavilion was very simple and some people thought it was dull. However, she thought it offered a good impression of Finland because “Finland is not trying to impress other countries with money”. “Finland focuses more on reputation and the image is like an expression from reality”, she explains.

In her everyday life, Participant 2 does not follow any Finnish media, but she reads all the news she can spot about Finland for example on the internet. She thinks that Finland inspired her to continue her studies and to live in Europe. She adds that now that she has seen how well things can be in a society she is more aware that Kazakhstan still has many problems.

Participant 3

Participant 3 thinks that Finland is now much more familiar to her. She says that the Finns are for some reason very predictable and then on the other hand very un-predictable. She further describes that the Finns are for example always trying to be on time. Compared to the Swedes she thinks the Finns are even more diligent. She describes that the Finns are often very committed to their responsibilities and that everyone has goals they chase passionately.

Participant 3 describes Finnish culture as very safe. She thinks there is a “culture of safety” in Finland and that the Finns always try to be safe and secure themselves. That is why the society is also very peaceful. She further describes that this tendency is also visible in the Finnish politics and in the reform of the education system. She thinks there is a social consensus both in the politics and in the everyday life of the citizens. Furthermore, she thinks that the Finnish education reformation can be seen as a symbol of Finnish society because the education system is reformed only once in ten years. “It seems that they move very slowly, but the people are leading the regulation or laws or policies, and the laws are trying to reflect the people and their thinking and their future”, she adds.

Participant 3 says that she has always envied the way of life in the Northern countries. She says that Finland is an exceptionally peaceful and quiet northern European country where the work-life balance is very good. During her work placement in *Kauppa-lehti*, she was very astonished that the people were working in two shifts. She says that the Koreans tend to think that the Finnish people do not work at all, but in Finland she realized that they do.

Participant 3 was also very surprised that the same family could live very different lives in their summer cottage on the countryside and in their home in the city. In her host family's summer cottage there was no running water or electricity. Participant 3 thinks that it was very surprising that the Finns can have both: city life and simple countryside life. She thinks this opportunity to choose might also affect the Finnish lifestyle.

Before coming to Finland Participant 3 had thought, "all Finns must love their country". However, in Finland she met people who were not completely satisfied with their home country. One of her co-workers in *Kauppaliehti* did not like the education methods in the Finnish schools and considered them too soft. The co-worker said that the Korean education stimulates the children to achieve greater goals and overcome bigger challenges. Participant 3 thought that this comment was very surprising, but interesting.

Participant 3 would describe Finland as strong, peaceful, steady, clean, and delightful. Participant 3 points out that the FCP 2015 was not just about learning about Finland, but it was also a very important inspiration. According to her, she has now challenged herself more and become braver.

Participant 4

The most surprising thing Participant 4 remembers about Finland was that Finland is not that similar to other Nordic countries. He describes that Finland is typically seen as very liberal, but it is actually politically in "the right wing of the Nordic countries". He continues that the Nordic countries are typically leftist in their politics and that Finland is much more centrist and conservative than he had thought. By this he means that all the Nordic countries are stereotypically seen as very liberal, and he had not thought that there would be a sizable population in Finland that did not share these values. He further points out that these opinions became visible in the parliamentary elections where the True Finns (The Finns Party) got a big victory, which happened just before the FCP 2015. He remembers interviewing the MPs of The Finns Party and being surprised that people had voted for them in Finland. According to him, there is an underlying conservatism in Finland, especially among older people.

Participant 4 further remembers that one teacher in Finland told him that the Finnish government was planning to cut on education. This was also very surprising to him, since he had thought that Finland would not address cuts on their world-famous education system.

Participant 4 thinks that Finnish culture is a very interesting mix of Russian culture and Scandinavian or European culture. He thinks that the Finnish culture has an open, liberal side and another, almost a depressed side. He further describes that the stereotype of the Finnish quiet and heavy-drinking men is very similar to the stereotype he has about Russian men. However, Participant 4 adds that in contrast to the stereotype, the Finns were very warm and welcoming, which made them fantastic hosts.

However, one stereotype that got support in Finland was that saunas are very popular and that “everyone has a sauna”. Furthermore, Participant 4 describes that Finland has traditionally been regarded as a very pro-European country, in contrast to Russia, for example. This was also evident in Finland, and the country did feel very European, he tells. He further describes, “So in many ways you are further away from the heart of Europe, but then on the other hand you seem more European than some of your neighbors”.

Participant 4 thinks that the way of life in Finland is amazing and that he would enjoy living in Finland. He thinks that the best thing is that the Finns still have the perfect work-life-balance. He further describes, “The Finns did not seem to work”, which he means as a positive thing. Participant 4 tells that the Finns make a clear distinction between work and free time, and the people have respect for the home life. “That is like the main memory that I have”, he concludes.

Additionally, Participant 4 spotted one interesting thing about housing in Finland. He thinks that the houses are very American in style: beautiful big houses with big gardens. This was very surprising to him, even though he knew that the lot prices are not necessarily at the premium in Finland. Participant 4 describes Finland as different, European, reserved, beautiful and quiet.

As an experience, the FCP 2015 changed many things in Participant 4's life. He has now international friends all around the world and a lot of information about Finland. He points out, "Now when people talk about any European country I can say oh and in Finland they say this". Participant 4 thinks that the programme inspired him to quit his job and apply to London to work with bigger issues than local events in Grimsby. Finally, he admits that the programme has "opened many doors" on his career.

4.1.4 The results of the content analysis

The four interviewees had a great deal of memories about their experiences in Finland. It is very clear that personal interests played a big role in the formulation of their memories about Finland. Participant 1, who was interested in social media and arts, remembered many things related to these topics. Participant 2 was interested in studying and research. Participant 3 described widely her experiences about the Finnish education, and Participant 4 remembered issues related to politics. These different memories concluded in very diverse images, which makes it challenging to draw conclusions from them. However, there are some commonly mentioned issues in the memories, and all four participants ultimately share some of the described images of Finland. These common descriptions are presented below.

There were in total six activities that all the interviewed participants seemed to remember. These were *the family weekend, the meeting with the President, the visit to Turku, the visits to schools, the visit to Marimekko and the lecture on the Finnish economy.*

From these the family weekend was remembered as a very positive experience. During the family weekend, the participants were able to have deeper discussions with Finns, to follow their way of life and to experience the life in the countryside on a summer cottage, as most of the families brought them to one.

All the participants remembered the meeting with the President Sauli Niinistö. The participants were very flattered that the president had time to meet them and to have a

coffee and discuss with them. It seems like the modest, relaxed, and friendly atmosphere at the Presidential Palace has left a very strong and a positive memory.

All the participants also mentioned the visit to Turku. However, only Participants 1 and 2 remembered some of the activities during the visit. The city of Turku was not described any further by any of the interviewees. It seems like the visit is remembered only because it was a place outside of Helsinki and therefore something “different”.

All the interviewees remembered visiting a Finnish school. The school visits were extremely important to Participant 3 who was an education journalist, but also Participant 2 remembers the school visits very well. However, the quality of the Finnish education was among the things that all the participants mentioned knowing about Finland already before the programme. Therefore, it is quite natural that the school visits are so well remembered. However, the school visits are not remembered as only positive. Participant 3 was missing the chance to talk with teachers, pupils, and parents. She would have also wanted to know something about the early childhood education. Furthermore, Participant 4 heard about the cuts on education from a teacher and was shocked that Finland was cutting on education.

All the participants remembered the visit to Marimekko and three out of four participants remembered it as positive. The participants do not seem to remember much about the Finnish design in general and no one described the visit in more detail. Participant 2 mentioned that she still uses a Marimekko bag.

Quite surprisingly all the participants remembered the lecture about the Finnish economy. The name of the organization giving the presentation was not remembered or it was remembered incorrectly (remembered as Bank of Finland, when it really is Confederations of Finnish Industries). Unfortunately, it seems like this activity is mostly remembered because it was considered tedious. The participants could also have been interested in the topic, but the Power Point -presentation was so un-interactive and given too early in the morning that it was hard for the participants to concentrate on it.

Furthermore, other often mentioned activities were the visit to the Åland Islands, the sauna evening in Mariehamn, the Flow Festival, the visit to Hanko, the work placement, the meetings with the Finnish MP's, the visit to Music Finland, the visit to Nuuksio, visiting the icebreaker and the lectures at the University of Helsinki.

Participant 1 remembered the visit to the Åland Islands very well due to a personal interest in an autonomous region. The Finnish sauna and the sauna evening in Mariehamn were remembered as very positive and unique experiences. The visit to Hanko was probably remembered because the participants were very disappointed that they did not have more time to spend on the beach in Hanko.

The work placement was remembered as a great experience. It gave the participants an idea of the Finnish working life and culture at a work place. Even though one of the work places was in the middle of layoffs, the experience is still remembered as positive.

The image of Finland as the country of snow and Santa Claus was visible in the participants' thoughts about the programme. Three out of four participants would have wanted to visit Lapland if they could have included something in the programme. This was mostly because they had heard about Lapland before the programme and because it was regarded as the most famous place in Finland. Participant 4 thinks that some of the participants were not aware that there would not have been snow in Lapland in August, and that this should have been communicated better.

All the different activities mentioned in the interviews are listed in Table 1. The activities remembered by all four participants are highlighted with dark grey and the activities that were remembered by two or three participants are highlighted with lighter grey.

Table 1. The activities mentioned in the interviews

ACTIVITY	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Participant 4
Meeting with the President	yes	yes	yes	yes
Visit to Turku	yes	yes	yes	yes
Logomo in Turku	yes			
Turku Castle	yes			
Meeting with the film director Mika Kaurismäki	yes			
Forum Marinum Maritime centre				yes
Visiting Hanko	yes (as negative)			yes (as negative)
Nature trail in Tvärminne, picnic				yes
Work placement	yes	yes	yes	
Family Weekend	yes	yes	yes	yes
Visit to the Åland Islands	yes		yes	yes
Peace institute/ Åland islands as an autonomous region	yes			
Finnish sauna and swimming in the sea in Mariehamn	yes			yes
Visit to schools	yes	yes	yes (as negative)	yes (as negative)
Visiting a maternity clinic			yes	
Meeting with the Foreign Minister	yes			
Visit to Nuuksio	yes	yes		
Lecture about the Finnish forest industry	yes			
The Flow Festival	yes		yes	yes
Art exhibition at the Flow festival	yes			
Finnish food work shop	yes (as negative)			
Meeting with the MP's / visit to the parliament			yes	yes
Visiting Marimekko	yes	yes	yes	yes (as negative)
Visiting Music Finland	yes		yes (as negative)	
Visiting Design Forum Finland	yes			
Visiting an icebreaker/ "big boat"	yes		yes	
Confederations of Finnish Industries (lecture on economy)	yes	yes	yes (as negative)	yes (as negative)
Sitra waste treatment plant		yes (as negative)		
Visiting Teurastamo				yes
Visiting the University of Helsinki/ current research	yes	yes		
Lecture about brain research		yes		
Historical tour in Helsinki			yes (as negative)	
Finnair lounge at the airport	yes			
Interview day			yes	
Own activities				
Visiting Tubecon	yes			
Museum of Photography	yes			
Olympic stadium	yes			
Alvar Aalto's architecture	yes			
Tamminiemi	yes			
Sompasauna /sauna	yes		yes	
Walking tour				yes
Suomenlinna		yes		
Exploring independently/using public transport		yes	yes	
Eating salmiakki			yes	
What was missing?				
Visit to Lapland	yes	yes		yes
Snow, darkness, and coldness	yes			yes
Visiting "wilderness"	yes			
pre-school education			yes	

Next, the descriptions of the image of Finland that are shared by all or the majority of the four participants are presented. The participants were asked to describe the image of Finland, Finnish lifestyle, culture, society and way of life.

The only image that all the participants had in common was that the *Finnish people have the perfect work-life-balance*. The Participants seem to think that the Finns like to keep a clear line between their private life and working life. Even though the Finns did not “seem to work at all”, they were still seen as committed and hard working. This image might be influenced by the fact that the programme was organized in August when some of the Finnish people are still on vacation and when the working life might not be as hectic as during other times of the year. This finding can be regarded as quite interesting.

Another usually mentioned idea was that Finland is “not just another Nordic country” and it is more linked to the east than what the participants had guessed. This is a very interesting finding. I do not think that the relations to Russia or the east were highlighted during the programme, thus this idea must have been formulated from different sources of information during the entire programme. Furthermore, all the participants had thought that Finland would be very similar to the other Nordic countries. As this assumption was not totally supported, the participants were perhaps trying to connect Finland to something else they knew.

Many participants were also surprised or relieved, that even Finland has some problems and that Finland is not such an ideal country after all. Finland was also regarded as honest and not trying to impress with money or fake images. The fact that Finland has some troubles seemed to be regarded as a positive thing and the participants seemed to appreciate the honesty.

Sauna was one of the few things almost all the participants knew about Finland before they participated in the programme. The stereotype that the Finnish people are obsessed with saunas and that there are saunas everywhere was proven true in Finland. The sauna culture was described in a positive manner.

Many of the participants described Finns both as warm and welcoming, but also as quiet and reserved. They noticed that the Finns have a strong respect to a person's private life and personal space. The participants anticipated that this might also be the reason why the Finns seem to be quiet and reserved. However, the participants appreciated that the Finns were friendly without being intrusive.

The Finnish society was mostly described as modern, open and multicultural. Politics were described as transparent. The participants thought that the democracy was working well in Finland and that the welfare state seemed to take care of its citizens, which provides safety and security into the society.

Next, all the different descriptions of the images the participants have of Finland, Finnish lifestyle, culture, society and way of life are gathered into the table below. The descriptions mentioned by all of the four participants are highlighted with dark grey and the descriptions used by two or three participants are highlighted with lighter grey.

Table 2. The image of Finland, Finnish lifestyle, culture, society and way of life.

Image	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Participant 4
Finland is not just like the other Nordic countries	yes	yes		yes
Finland is culturally and historically linked to Russia / to east	yes	yes		yes
Even Finland has problems / not all the Finns love Finland	yes		yes	yes
Finns are obsessed with saunas	yes	yes		yes
Finns are quiet / a bit reserved	yes	yes		yes
Finns are warm / welcoming / friendly	yes	yes		yes
Finns are committed and hardworking	yes		yes	
Finns respect each other's private life / personal space	yes	yes		yes
Finns have respect for nature	yes			
Finns respect the balance between work life and home / perfect work-life-balance	yes	yes	yes	yes
Finnish air is clean		yes		
Society is modern / open for new ideas / multicultural	yes	yes		yes
Society is also conservative / not that liberal /right-wing movements				yes
Finns are very pro-European				yes
Finnish people are well educated / speak good English		yes		
Finnish politics are transparent / good democracy	yes		yes	
Finnish welfare state works well		yes		

Finns are aware of their weaknesses / honest / no bragging	yes	yes		
The example of Åland Islands is useful in politics	yes			
Way of life is easy going /calm / not luxurious	yes	yes		
Finns like safety / the society is safe and peaceful		yes	yes	

All the participants say that their image of Finland is much more accurate, diverse and different now from before participating in the programme. This is understandable, since all the participants told that they did not know much about Finland before participating in the programme.

4.2 The comparative analysis

In the previous section, the results of the content analysis were presented. This was required to find out which activities of the FCP 2015 seemed to be the most memorable and what kind of an image the participants have about Finland, Finnish lifestyle, culture, society and way of life today. Next, these findings are discussed in the comparative analysis to find out if the memories and images are in cohesion with the official Finnish nation branding strategies.

First, the memories and images about Finland are compared to the FPB's *annual themes for country brand communications*. This is done with the help of the agenda of the FCP 2015, as it was influenced by the strategic nation branding themes of 2015. Secondly, a comparison with the Finnish strengths highlighted in the Nation Branding report form 2010 is conducted. The comparative analysis seeks to find answers to the second research question which is: Are the memories in cohesion with Finland's nation branding strategies or are there some interesting inconsistencies?

4.2.1 Participants' memories compared to the nation branding themes of 2015

According to Team Finland's Strategy update (Team Finland 2015) the annual themes for country brand communications in 2015 were: *cleanliness* (incl. cleantech, quality of

living, a well-functioning society, the Arctic, nature), *design* (products, services, cross-sectoral) and *education and competence* (incl. start-up companies, Slush).

The strategy also states that in response to recent developments in the foreign policy environment, a greater emphasis is being placed on general communications built around the *Finland theme (a democratic, functioning, competence-based Nordic welfare state and a member of the EU)*. These themes are visible in the official agenda of the FCP 2015 (see Appendix 2).

The first theme of Finnish nation branding in 2015 was *cleanliness*. This included factors such as cleantech, quality of living, a well-functioning society, the Arctic expertise and the clean nature. There were plenty of activities linked to this theme. For example: the visit to the Tvärminne Zoological Station and the discussions about the Baltic Sea environment, the visit to the icebreaker Urho, the presentation of the LNG system on board of Viking Grace, the presentation of the circular economy and resource wisdom with Sitra and the site visit at Sitra waste treatment plant, the guided trip into the woods of Nuuksio National Park, and the visit to the maternity clinic.

Unfortunately, not many things directly related to *cleanliness* were visible in the participants' memories. Only Participant 1 remembered the icebreaker and mentioned the shipbuilding industry in Finland. He also mentions the Finnish respect for nature. Only Participant 2 remembers the Finnish fresh air and only Participant 3 mentions the maternity clinic.

However, many issues related to the quality of living and the well-functioning society, which were included in the theme of *cleanliness*, are visible in the participants' memories and ideas about Finland. Participant 3 describes Finland as *clean* and *steady*. Both Participants 2 and 3 describe the Finnish society as safe and secure. The Finnish welfare state was appreciated, and the well-working Finnish democracy and transparent politics were mentioned as positive instances. Finally, all the participants were impressed by the good work-life-balance that the Finns seemed to have.

The second theme of Finnish nation branding in 2015 was *design*. Both products and services were included in this theme. Activities most related to this theme were the visits to the Design Forum Finland and Marimekko. Finally, Flow Festival can also be regarded to be related to design. In addition to music, the festival is famous for focusing on visual arts, design and good food. One well-designed public service in Finland is the network of libraries, which was introduced to the participants twice during the programme.

All the participants remembered the visit to Marimekko, which was therefore among the most memorable events during the entire programme. However, Participant 4 remembered it because it was uninteresting. Three out of four participants remembered visiting the Flow Festival and Participant 1 described it as the best activity during the entire programme. He also remembered visiting an art exhibition during the festival. However, the other two participants did not describe the Flow Festival in any more detail. Thus, the festival does not seem to be remembered especially for design but rather for well-known artists and as a good experience.

Unfortunately, no one remembered the library visits or told anything about the library services in Finland. None of the participants described the Finnish design in more detail and only one participant just linked it to Scandinavian Design. In conclusion, the visit to Marimekko was a memorable event, but the uniqueness, functionality and quality of the Finnish design seems to have been forgotten.

The last theme highlighted in Finnish nation branding in 2015 was *education and competence*, which included also start-up companies and Slush. The activities related to these topics were of course the different visits to the University of Helsinki and the schools, as well as the visit to the Startup Sauna and the presentations of different start-up companies and Slush event.

The participants did not remember any of the activities related to the start-up scene. The only companies mentioned in the interviews were Marimekko and Nokia. However, the school visits were remembered by everyone and the visit to the University of Helsinki was also often mentioned. However, all the participants said they knew about the quality of the Finnish education system already before participating in the programme. Education

does not play a big role in the participants' descriptions of the image of Finland. The Finnish society was described as modern and open for new ideas, which is somewhat related to the competence and start-ups. In conclusion, the visits to schools, hearing about the education system and simply experiencing the famous Finnish education in Finland were memorable events, but the Finnish education expertise and start up competence do not seem to have influenced the participants' image of Finland.

4.2.2 Participants' memories compared to Finland's strengths

The nation branding report from 2010 sets three different themes as Finland's most important strengths. These are the *functionality of Finnish society*, *the close relationship to nature* and *the system of basic education that is among the best in the world*.

The *functionality of Finnish society* was visible in the participants' memories and images of Finland. However, the concept is very wide, and it is hard to identify the individual memories or expressions related to this topic. The Finnish society was primarily described as open, modern and multicultural. Secondly, it was seen as safe, stable, and secure. The participants were impressed by the modest, welcoming and honest mentality of the Finns, especially that of the President. The Finnish welfare state was seen to be secure and well maintained and the people were regarded as committed, respectful, warm and friendly, but also quiet and reserved. The one thing that all the participants had in common was their opinion that the Finnish people had a perfect work-life-balance. The perfect work-life-balance can be related to the strength of the *functionality of Finnish society*, which therefore seems to be well functioning tool for branding as well.

The close relationship to nature gained much less attention than the issues related to functionality. However, the topics related to nature were mentioned among those that the participants were missing on the programme. Almost everyone mentioned they would have liked to see nature in Lapland and to experience the wilderness, darkness and coldness of the Finnish winter. Three out of four participants had some memories about nature. Participant 1 remembered something about the forest industry and the Finnish respect for nature, Participant 2 the fresh air and Participant 4 a picnic in a forest and

swimming in a lake (sea). Surprisingly, Participant 3 did not mention the Finnish nature, even though she was responsible of writing a blog post about the day in Hanko and Tvärminne Zoological station. The participants were also able to experience the way of life on a Finnish summer cottage. The possibility to live both close to nature and in the city was regarded as something unique to Finland. In conclusion, the Finnish close relationship to nature was only somewhat visible in the participants' memories.

The greatness of *the Finnish education system* was one of the things that all the participants knew of already before coming to Finland. Thus, it is not a surprise that there were also many memories about the education system in Finland. First, all the participants remembered visiting schools in Finland. Participants 2 and 3, who were also most interested in the educational affairs, remembered even quite specific conversations they had about education in Finland. Both of them were interested in the first-person perspective and interviewed pupils and students they met in Finland. Participant 3 even compared the entire Finnish culture and society to the education reform. Participant 4 learned something new about the Finnish politics when he heard about the cuts on education. In conclusion, the greatness of the Finnish education system was familiar to all participants already before the programme and the FCP does not seem to have influenced that image. Participant 3 had quite much pressure as she tried to find out everything about the Finnish education system. This might even have prevented her from focusing on other strengths of Finland.

5 CONCLUSIONS

In this thesis, I studied the outcomes of the thisisFINLAND Foreign Correspondents' Programme 2015 and the effectiveness of Finnish nation branding in 2015. This was done by collecting narrated memories of four former FCP 2015 participants and comparing the memories to two official nation branding strategies of Finland. My data collection method was a semi-structured in-depth interview and both content and comparative analysis were used as methods of the analysis.

The results of this study indicate that the effectiveness of the FCP as a nation branding tool is equivocal. There were not many memories directly related to the annual themes or the Finnish strengths. Particularly tenuous were the descriptions about cleantech, arctic expertise, design and Finnish nature. Therefore, it seems like the FCP 2015 did not function that well in presenting themes related to these topics. On the other hand, the FCP 2015 seems to have worked well in formulating memories and images about Finland as a well-functioning, peaceful and stable society where people are happy and have a good work-life-balance.

To summarize, the Finnish cleantech and Start Up-expertise were probably not remembered because none of the four interviewees were particularly interested in these topics and because the presentations of the topics were not interactive or interesting enough. The programme was also not able to demonstrate the special characteristics of the Finnish design. Finnish design was mostly associated with only one brand, Marimekko, or to the bigger field of Scandinavian design. The uniqueness, functionality and quality of the Finnish design does not seem to be remembered at all among the four participants. Furthermore, the FCP 2015 more or less failed to present the uniqueness of Finnish nature. Nevertheless, the wish to visit Lapland and experience the "real" Finnish winter and nature was presented also by the participants themselves. The FCP 2015 was probably too focused in the Helsinki region to create stronger images about Finnish nature.

However, many issues related to the quality of living and the well-functioning society were visible in the participants' memories and ideas about Finland. The Finnish society was mostly described as modern, open, and safe. The politics were described as transparent. The participants thought that the democracy was working well in Finland and that the welfare state seemed to take care of the citizens, which provided safety and well-being into the society. The FCP 2015 seems to have worked well in communicating and presenting these strengths. Factors that enhanced this effect were probably the family weekend and the meeting with the President. Both these activities probably demonstrated positively the openness, safety and functionality of the Finnish society. However, the most important finding was that all the four participants thought that the Finns had a great work-life-balance. Even though the perfect work-life-balance is not mentioned as a Finnish strength or an important theme in the official Finnish nation branding, it is related to the strength of the well-functioning society. However, this interesting finding indicates that the Finnish nation brand specialists should maybe focus even more in highlighting this strength in the Finnish nation branding.

The greatness of the Finnish education system was one of the things that all the participants knew of already before coming to Finland. Thus, it is not a surprise that there were many memories about the education system in Finland. However, the FCP does not seem to have influenced the image, which was formulated already before the programme. The fame of the Finnish education might even have prevented the participants of focusing on the other strengths of Finland. Therefore, this study indicates that the role of the Finnish education should not be increased nor decreased in the programme. However, a first-person perspective would bring a new perspective to the topic. Maybe the Finnish education could be presented with an activity similar to the family weekend, and thereby give the participants a chance to experience the Finnish education from another perspective.

Finally, an interesting finding that should be considered in the Finnish nation branding was that Finland is still perceived as "just another" Nordic country with many similarities to Sweden, Norway and Denmark. However, the cultural and political connections that Finland still has to Russia and to the other Eastern European countries seem to have

surprised the participants interviewed in this study. The results of this study indicate that Finland should put even more effort in distinguishing itself from the other Nordic countries. In their work, the nation branders could maybe use the eastern influences, which can distinguish Finland from Scandinavia.

This study gives researchers an idea about the effectiveness of the Finnish country branding in a very narrow context. In further studies, more participants could be interviewed and participants from different years could be contacted. That would reveal a bigger picture of the topic. The Foreign Correspondents Programme could also be compared to other similar nation branding tools to reveal more about its effectiveness as an image building and country branding instrument.

Moreover, future research with different methods, such as a quantitative study or a survey with a significantly bigger sample would reveal more material for further investigations.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Interviewing themes

The interviews were conversational, the specific questions here were not always asked entirely as they are presented here.

Personal information: Sex, Age (during the programme and now), Nationality, Residence, (during the programme and now), Work and Career (during the programme and now) other upcoming information.

Before the programme:

How and why did you apply to the programme?

What did you then know about Finland? (describe with examples)

Describe your image of Finland? What do you think it is in your country in general?

From which sources did you get your information from?

How did you get prepared for your trip?

During the programme:

Could you give me a summary of the FCP? (Just tell me about the programme as if I would not have been there)

What did you do?

What did you learn?

Where did you visit?

Who did you meet?

What was the best? What was not that great?

If you would have to leave something out, what would it be?

What would you add and why?

What did you do outside the programme and why?

What do you remember about it (activities outside the programme)?

How would you describe your mood and feelings during the programme?

After the programme:

Compared to your previous knowledge about Finland, what changed?

How would you describe the Finnish culture – Way of life – society?

How does the Finnish culture – society – way of life distinguish from your own culture?

What was the most surprising thing you learned?

What was not that surprising, did some stereotypes get support?

What kind of role does Finland have in your life today?

Do you think something would have gone differently if you wouldn't have participated?

When you now describe Finland to others how do you describe it?

Could you describe Finland with 5 words? Why these?

Is there something more you would like to tell me about Finland or the FCP?

Appendix 2. The agenda of the FCP 2015

Monday 10 August: Welcome and orientation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Welcome to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Finland's country brand ● Q & A and short presentations ● Panel discussion: Finnish media ● Lunch with the Minister for Foreign Affairs Mr. Timo Soini ● Welcome to the Finnish Nature Centre Haltia ● Finnish Forest Industry ● Guided trip into the woods of Nuuksio National Park
Tuesday 11 August: Introduction to the things Finnish	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Welcome to the University of Helsinki ● How to speak Finnish ● Finnish economy ● Finnish customs ● Lunch at Porthania student canteen ● Historical walk: An introduction to the Finnish history ● Introduction to pesäpallo ● Sauna evening at Töölö Towers
Wednesday 12 August: Helsinki – functioning and fresh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Welcome to Helsinki and presentation of Helsinki City Library and the Central Library 2017 project ● Being a mother in Finland, visit to a maternity clinic ● Welcome to Teurastamo ● Lunch: Finnish food workshop ● Tour at Teurastamo
Thursday 13 August Visit to Hanko	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Food and Identity in Finland, a lecture on board of the bus ● Baltic Sea environment and current research topics at Tvärminne Zoological Station ● Tour of the Tvärminne station and walk along the nature trail ● Walking tour around Hanko ● Suomi Quiz
Friday 14 August: Arts in Finland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Design in Finland: Creative problem solving and competitive edge at Design Forum Finland ● Marimekko and its design at Marimekko Headquarters ● Marimekko's success in the Asia-Pacific region ● Lunch at Maritori and visit to the gift shop ● Music Finland in brief ● Sibelius and his legacy – Classical music in Finland ● Finnish heavy metal and how it became a worldwide phenomenon ● Indie music scene in Finland ● Finnish music industry in numbers ● Q & A and coffee at Music Finland

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Flow Festival
Saturday and Sunday 15-16 August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Free time, all the participants had 3-day-tickets to the FLOW Festival
Monday 17 August: Finnish education and science	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Visit to Viikki teacher training school ● Learning walks in primary classes and upper secondary classes ● School lunch ● Teacher education in Finland ● Finnish brain research – from method development to understanding effects of music ● Helsinki Challenge Science Competition ● Play Learning Heal ● NEMO – Natural emotionality in digital interaction
Tuesday 18 August: Finnish economy, startups and cleantech	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Renewal of Competitiveness and economic structure in Finland – role of startups and entrepreneurship at Confederations of Finnish Industries (EK) ● Circular Economy and Resource wisdom with Sitra ● Lunch at Block by Dylan ● Startup Sauna at Aalto University ● Slush with Riku Mäkelä ● Presentations of startup companies: 720° and Tesback ● Site visit at Sitra waste treatment plant hosted by ZenRobotics
Wednesday 19 August: Visit to Turku	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Presentation of the VR Group on board of Extra Class car ● Welcome to Turku ● Logomo – Centre for creative economy and event venue ● “Turku in 30 minutes” ● Lunch with the CEO of Forum Marinum Maritime Centre ● Turku as a centre of maritime expertise at Aboa Mare: Presentations about ridiem Maritime Innovation Hub and Meyer Turku Oy. ● Chance to try out simulators used to train ships’ navigating officers ● Turku – City of History, City of Cinema – a guided tour in the Turku Castel with film director Mika Kaurismäki ● Cruise on river ferry Jakke Jokilautta ● Accommodation at Hotel Scandic Julia
Thursday 20 August: Visit to Åland Island	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Departure for Åland Islands on Viking Line M/S Amorella ● Buffet lunch and Suomi Quiz on board ● Åland Parliament at Autonomy building ● Guided tour in the countryside, visit to the fortress of Bombarsund ● Dinner at Restaurant Smakbyn ● Sauna evening and swimming in the sea at the Gröna Udden Camping

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Accommodation at Hotel Pommern
Friday 21 August: Visit to Åland Islands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Åland Government ● Trade and Industry on Åland ● Åland Islands Peace Institute: presentation of activities and research ● Lunch and free time in Marienhamn ● Departure for Turku on Viking Line M/S Viking Grace ● Presentation of the LNG system and a tour on board of Viking Grace the world's first LNG powered passenger vessel
Saturday and Sunday 22-23 August: Family weekend	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The participants spent one weekend with a Finnish family. Each participant went to a different family who were chosen by a consult. For logistical reasons, all the families lived in Southern Finland, mostly in Turku, Helsinki or Porvoo.
Monday and Thursday 24-25 August: Work placement in Finnish media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The participants worked for two days in the following Finnish media: Helsingin Sanomat, Iltalehti, Ilta-Sanomat, Kauppalehti, MTV, STT-Lehtikuva and the Finnish Broadcasting Company Yle.
Wednesday 26 August: Interview day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Before and during the programme the participants were able to make wishes for interesting Finnish interview objects. The organizers did their best to arrange two to three interviews for the participants, which would take place during this day. The participants did not have any other organized programme during the day.
Thursday 27 August: Governance in Finland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Meeting with the President of the Republic of Finland Mr. Sauli Niinistö Finnish Parliament ● Panel discussion on gender equality and environmental matters at the Parliament of Finland with Pekka Haavisto, Nasima Razmyar and Ozan Yanar ● Meeting with Minister for Foreign Trade and Development, Ms. Lenita Toivakka ● Evening of Finnish cinema to celebrate the final night of thisisFINLAND Foreign Correspondents' Programme 2015: Finnish Short Films ● A reception event with all the co-organizers invited
Friday 28 August: Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Visit to Arctica Shipping and icebreaker Urho ● Certificate ceremony and feedback discussion ● Farewell lunch and discussion on thisisFINLAND.fi website ● Optional: Modern Sky festival (Asian and Nordic music) EARS- Europe-Asia Roundtable Sessions

Saturday and Sunday 29-30 August: Departures	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The participants left Finland during Saturday 29th and Sunday 30th of August. They were again provided with a drive to the airport. At the airport, they could spend time in the Finnair lounge free of charge.
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