

# Filling the Gaps

*Following Täljestories' praxis of de-segregating Södertälje*

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## Sammanfattning

Covid-pandemin har under 2020 avslöjat många sprickor, mönster och hierarkier i vårt samhälle, som innan pandemin var lättare att förbise eller ignorera. Allt eftersom de pågående politiska omvälvningarna, minoriteternas kamper och klimatförändringsstressen skakar om våra perspektiv, har behovet för en djupare mänsklig samhörighet, snabb anpassningsförmåga och i allmänhet ett robust socialt system för att hantera sådana kriser blivit påtagligt. Mot denna bakgrund har diskussionerna kring vad konst- och kultur kan ge oss aktualiserats och är i färd med att omvärderas. Detta innebär inte att sådana diskussioner inte tidigare har format vår gemensamma förståelse utan belysa att ett dynamiskt förhållande mellan politisk gemenskap och konstnärlig intervention utvecklats i vårt samhälle. Denna rapport kommer att följa ett sådant ingripande där en konstnärlig samverkan, designad av Läsföräldrarnas Institutet (LFI) och Grafikens Hus, har erbjudit ett alternativt sätt att integrera skillnader och samskapa i våra samhällen. Genom att tydliggöra denna konstnärliga samverkans tillvägagångssätt och motivation med hjälp av en dialogisk forskningsmetod, hoppas jag kunna problematisera den allmänna misstron som finns kring effekterna av sociala investeringar i arbetet med integration- och segregationsfrågor.

## Abstract

The Covid-pandemic of 2020 have laid bare many fissures, patterns, and hierarchies of our society, which prior to the pandemic were easier to overlook or ignore at one's convenience. While the ongoing political upheavals, minority struggles and climate change stress are shaking our perspectives, the need for a deeper human connection, rapid adaptability, and in general a robust social system to handle such crises has been felt acutely. Against this backdrop, the discussions around what art and cultural spaces can provide us with have resurfaced and the significance of these spaces is now being re-evaluated. It is not being suggested that these discussions have not been shaping our shared understandings in the past; the dynamic relationship our polity has developed with interventions of an artistic nature is merely being highlighted. This report will follow one such intervention where a collaborative artistic practice, designed by Läsföräldrarnas Institutet (LFI) and Grafikens Hus, is providing an alternative way to integrate differences and co-create in our societies. By unfolding this artistic practice's impetus and approach, using a dialogical research method, I will attempt to refute a common scepticism around the effects of social investment in addressing the issues of integration and segregation.

## Introduction

*Telge Bostäder - "Det har fattats beslut om att lokalen ska bli ett områdeskontor och att (ni) ska se efter andra lokaler att flytta till. [...] Jag hoppas att ni kan titta på detta erbjudande och lokalerna i Basaren med nya ögon."*

*LFI - "Vi tittar gärna på lokalerna med nya ögon. Vi vill våra egna barn och alla andras barn i vår stad bara väl och det som är så självklart för enormt många i vårt avlånga land men en bristvara i de områden vi bor och verkar." Läsfrämjarinstitutet är en icke vinstdrivande ideell förening (men all verksamhet görs av professionella som får betalt för sitt arbete.) Vad kommer Telge Bostäder betala för vår insats i Brunsäng? Vi kan resonera som så att den kostnaden ni betalar för vår insats i Brunsäng kommer att göra att vi kan betala hyran till er i Hovsjö."*

The conversation excerpt that you read above was exchanged between Telge Bostäder, a municipal housing company and Läsfrämjarinstitutet, a cultural organisation (LFI hereafter), during the fall months of 2020. LFI had started working with the community of Lina Hage in June 2018 and continued until the relocation from their lokal in October 2020. The tense and confusing few weeks from when this notice was communicated and the consequential move, brought forth many underlying differences in the approach to integration as understood by a local municipal housing company on one hand and a cultural organisation like LFI on the other.

LFI is a cultural institution working (pre-corona) in three places in Södertälje; Lina Hage, Hovsjö and 2 places in Järva; Rinkeby and Husby. In Hovsjö and Ronna, their work of 4-dimensional reading, improvisational theatre and subsequent workshops engages children of seven preschools along with their educators. LFI's methodology of learning and working together with the target group, which is based on the needs expressed by the community, also encompasses the parents by means of its many activities and workshops. Moreover, through its consistent interaction with the diverse neighbourhoods of Södertälje, LFI has developed its cultural practice in heed to the issues of inclusion, integration, segregation and more.

The integration policy rhetoric from the Swedish state transitioned from its initial universalist approach of 1960s to a multicultural model in 1970s and has now adopted a socio-economic and labour market focused approach. (Grip, 2019). Moreover, during this development, the roles of the state, civic society, private entities, as well as that of the immigrants themselves in regard to achieving a desired integration have been constantly

debated and negotiated. As much as we should focus on the dominant rhetoric and its evidential impact on the society, we also need to highlight the varied methods or practices used by the actors mentioned above. Several studies have noted a substantial difference in for example, the ideology and the practice of integration policies in Sweden. (Arora-Jonsson 2017; Dahlström 2004; Riksrevisionen 2005; Grip, 2019) One of the reasons motivating the decision by Telge Bostäder to establish their office in Lina Hage seems to be that the community of Lina Hage could potentially feel more connected to the housing authority if they are physically within reach regarding the needs of the community. Considering the emphasis Swedish integration policy puts on the housing rights to deal with segregation issues, setting up an office within the neighbourhood increases the ease of access and even relatability perhaps. (Ager & Strang 2008; Government Offices of Sweden 2017). However, if it comes at the cost of relocating LFI from a place where no such cultural centre exists and, in the effect, dislocating their practice which needs a much longer interaction and sustainable relationship development to make a difference, it compels us to ask *what role artistic practices can play in collectively approaching the integration of differences in our societies.*

In order to explore a couple of perspectives to begin answering those questions, I will look at LFI's ongoing project *Täljestories*, based in Hovsjö, Södertälje (in their new lokal albeit a temporary one), in collaboration with Grafikens Hus. LFI's engagement in Hovsjö had been going on well before the project *Täljestories* started and this prior foundational work helped in establishing the centre in Hovsjö a bit easier. If Telge Bostäder's taking over the space in Lina Hage ripped the area of its only cultural centre, the relocation and finding of a suitable space for their activities on the other hand was made relatively easier with Sodertälje municipality's consequential support, a dynamic that this report will take up in its later sections. The project *Täljestories* has been funded by Delegation Against Segregation (Delmos) for the time period June 2020-May 2021 and invited research expertise from Mångkulturellt centrum to document their praxis for a period of roughly six weeks between December 2020-January 2021.

## About Täljestories

Since November 2020 two different target groups 1) children aged 9-11 years old and, 2) adults who are long-term unemployed (långtidsarbetslösa och/eller nyanlända) have come to LFI's lokal Hubben in Hovsjö centrum every week to attend workshops with artists invited by Grafikens Hus; Nachla Libre (a poet), Saadia Hussain (an artist), and Linnea Puranen (an illustrator and graphic designer) together with the educator Zalgai Aho from LFI. The adults'

group have been referred to the workshops as a closed group through Arbetsmarknadsenheten, but the youth groups sign up directly and attend the workshops in their free time.

The project takes ground from a collaboration between the practices of both LFI and Grafikens Hus. As noted above, LFI's practice encompasses children, parents, preschool educators in their activities, the art institution Grafikens Hus on the other hand, works to make graphic art accessible to everyone. Its practice explores the art form through a committed pedagogy that inspires an increased understanding and knowledge of art. Since 2016, Grafikens Hus' operations have been active in Södertälje Municipality. The local anchoring has been an important position for it to create commitment and be relevant for the place and for the people in Södertälje. This approach has functioned as a tool for the project *Täljestories* to strengthen and activate collaborative and creative processes, making art accessible to more people.

In order to reach out to the neighbourhood of Hovsjö regarding this project, or in fact any other activity organised by LFI, they start a direct dialogue with the people in the area for whom the project is designed, i.e., target group anchoring. The approach is not to impose a need for a project where there is none, but rather to have a standing invitation for people to join and co-create a concrete result that they can take pride in. Additionally, it discusses LFI's intent of making an impression in the area by building long-term associations which are to become recurring and permanent for the participants to continue their engagement. However, the project's beginning saw several challenges to its foundational developments, in part due to an ongoing infrastructural change, and in part due to the worsening situation with Covid and the ever-changing recommendations to control its spread. This was seen in the lack of ease people felt in attending the workshops and also in the lack of number of people registering for in-person meetings and activities. The facilitators at LFI and Grafikens Hus shared the sentiment of not being able to work more organically to build rooted inter-personal connections with the community of Hovsjö. The initial planning had included children aged more than 11 years in the same group as 9-11 years old but depending on the process and needs of the children, the target group was divided in two different groups. Likewise, each target group was expected to have more than 20 participants but tightening corona restrictions made this difficult to achieve. Despite all the setbacks, the facilitators of the project adapted and continued to reach out, albeit at a slower pace, as well as settle in their new locality and initiated the workshop with 10-15 participants for target group 1 and 8 participants for target group 2. As a researcher and eventually a participant in the workshops, owing that to the fluid boundaries between participations and observations as a research methodology, I visited the lokal a few times in-

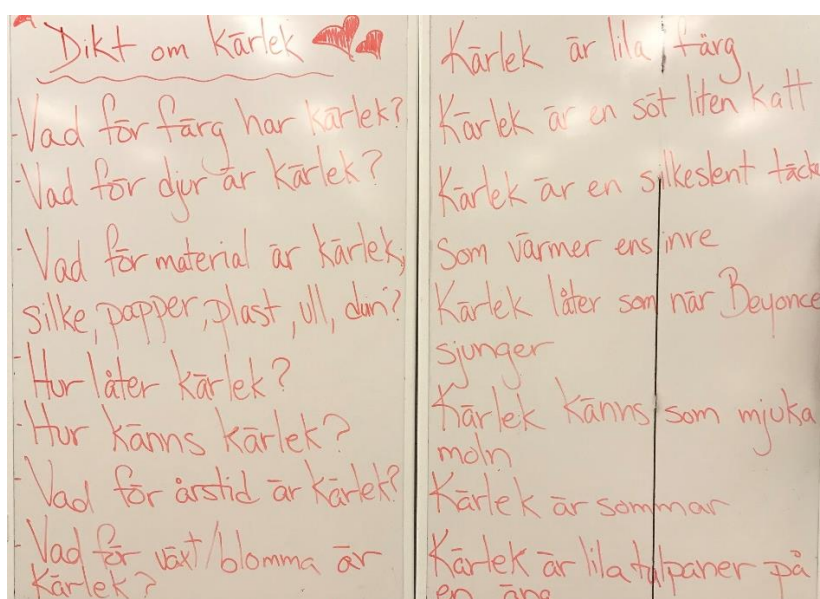
person, attended some more sessions over zoom and shared questionnaires with the artists for a better understanding of their artistic approach and expectations with this project.

### **The Workshops**

From the outset, the workshop design for both the groups were reflective of each artist's methodological approach on initiating an artistic dialogue with the participants. Saadia and Nachla took workshops with both the groups whereas Linnea worked with only the children/youth group. The workshops were not only about engaging with the personal expressions of the participants and creating a language for channelling their emotions, but also about relating it to their experiential understanding of Södertälje. While all the three artistic approaches share key similarities of co-creation, sharing, intuitive expression and process engagement, there are some distinct features which set them apart. Let us look at a few of these which were collected from the field visits of this research.

#### **With Nachla Libre**

The workshop design follows the construction of poems not just through words but explores its association with emotions, colours, and dialogues about everyday lives of the participants. In a playful and intuitive way, the exercises to warm up in speaking Swedish for example, were able to create a space for the participants where the personal anecdotes get weaved into their drawings. The method of co-relating words, in any language participant felt comfortable with, to one single Swedish word made the workshop a big collaborative space of sharing how one word can have several different ways of expression.





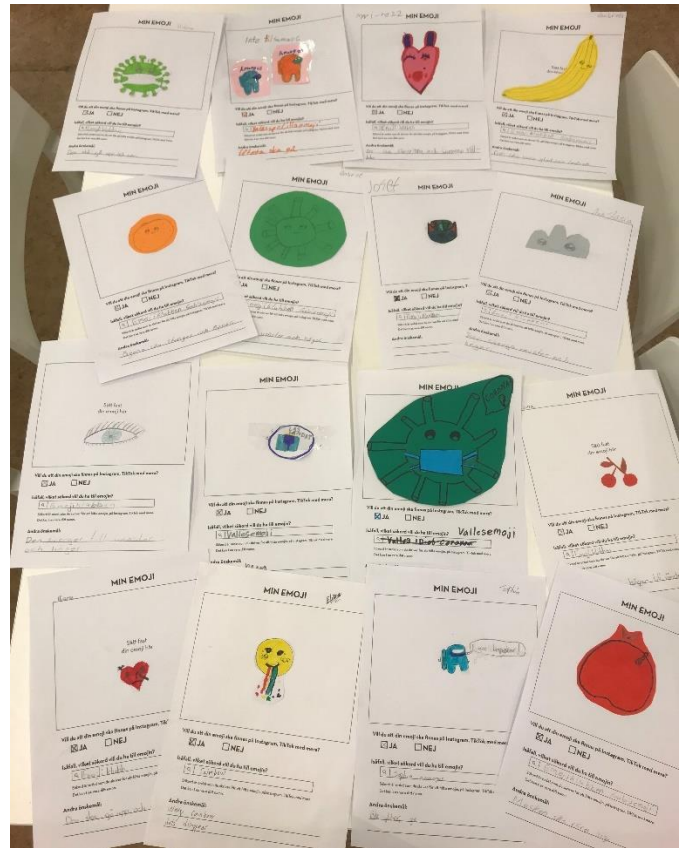
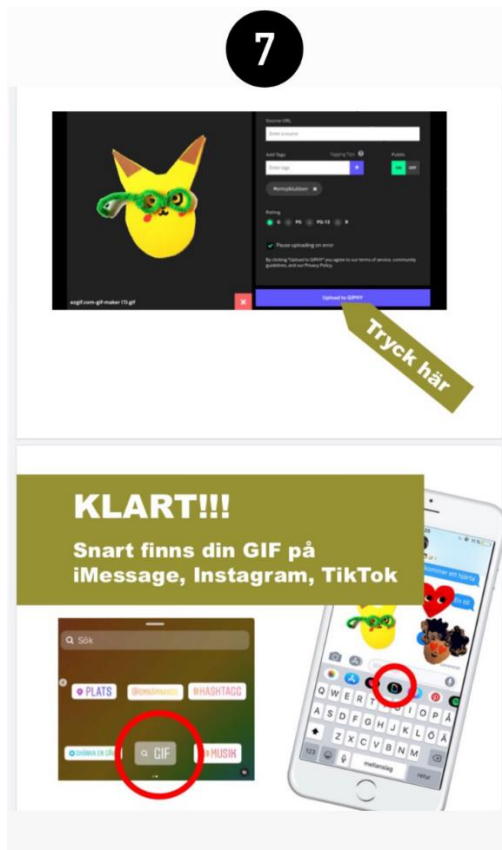
### With Linnea Puranen

Linnea's workshop intervenes in participants' lives digitally. She shares techniques of developing a digital language to the imaginations by animating them into emojis for social media platforms. The project underlines that not only creating at the lokal is important but also enabling the participants to continue the tasks at home if they feel like. Besides, Linnea's aim is for the participant to be able to "go back to the workshop" in the future, if they wish to. One of the ways she has done it is by making the information available online.

"I have done that with lectures that I have previously held, and workshops that have content that can be published online. I find this a nice way to "keep the project alive" and as something the participant can return to, develop, and reach out, if they want to."

From personal observations at the children's workshop, I gathered that gaining a skill and actualising their imaginations into a symbolic functionality became a voice for the participants that they could identify themselves with.





### With Saadia Hussain

Saadia's approach of working together manifests in a layered mural painting where choosing patterns is related to making personal decisions, discussions, and frictions over sharing the common wall for painting are negotiated and more such. In one of the tasks, participants were asked to write down five things important to them and then create an image for it that could be put on the wall. The workshop encouraged reading feelings with colours and shapes and looked for explanations to why the participants cut those shapes. Not only, pictures of what the participants found beautiful were transformed into colours on the wall.



## Collaborative Artistic Practice

The foundational identity of LFI lies in their 4-dimensional method of *höglasning*. It incorporates active participation, improvisation theatre, as well as reading and language which enables the participants to craft a language that manifests their needs, knowledge and thinking. Moreover, by situating the power of the word in the participant and providing a space for them to act from, the method highlights the importance of building a cultural capital, that is to say, a more democratic and representative space for neighbourhoods tainted with negative stereotypes. On the other hand, Grafikens Hus works closely with artists, art educators and other experts to design creative processes which can make art more accessible and representative of people's individual and collective expressions. Being an art institution incorporating public opinions and becoming more participatory and social in nature helps Grafikens Hus in shaping their practice that connects with the community on a deeper and more personal level.

This project then became an opportunity that brought these methods of learning and expression together to develop new ways of working with, for example, the language integration efforts being driven by the Swedish state, strengthening a citizen's relationship to urban development, as well as with increasing trust in one's own abilities and creating more inclusive spaces. In several conversations with the facilitators regarding locating the ideological frame of reference for the project, Paulo Friere's Pedagogy of the Oppressed was mentioned to be at the core of this collaborative practice. The need for realising the learner as a co-producer of the knowledge and creativity along with the educators and artists was deeply felt. Likewise, the emphasis on words, dialogue and language in the project's practice reflects Friere's argument on inculcating dialogical practices in education for developing one's perspectives or expressions on the world.

Therefore, the project's purpose is grounded in co-creating spaces and artistic practices which can interact with the urban development of Södertälje (to counter segregation) and the workshop design imbibes a norm critical and intersectional perspective to give the residents power to their expressions, language, and representation.

## Findings

The research began with the aim of observing, documenting, and highlighting how community participation and representation are central to the artistic processes that the project employs, but within the short time span of finalising this research i.e., six weeks, it also became about

studying the significance of small-scale art and cultural organisation's practices in building a social and cultural capital of the society. In navigating through those two components, the research findings are somewhat overlapped and boil down to the following points:

- 1) manifestation of communal cultural physical spaces into active spaces of representation and civic engagement,
- 2) redefining art and its practice,
- 3) the merit of co-creation in addressing issues stemming from segregation,
- 4) broken dialogue and understanding of integration amongst different actors,
- 5) inability to comprehend difference

Let us unfold these associations of ideas in some detail now. I will explore the first three points together, followed by the latter two in the next subsection.

### **Potential of Art and Cultural Spaces**

In a response to Telge Bostäder, Marlen Eskander, one of the founders of LFI, reflects upon how the approach and effect of LFI's activities actually engages with the society and why investing in social and cultural development of the physical spaces is urgently needed:

*“Ortens Junibacken som ger barn ett svenskt kulturellt arv och som kan utgöra en motvikt mot de destruktiva krafterna som är kriminalitet, destruktivitet, passivitet, polaritet och segregation. Det finns inte nog med argument att berätta om mervärdet som ert företag kan vinna på att förbättra området genom att ha en fysisk plats dit barn och föräldrar kommer för att marineras i och formas av konst, språk, litteratur och skapande. Det är tyvärr svårt att förändra med kortsiktiga och halvdana lösningar. Som ett kommunalt ägt bostadsbolag kommer ni att få avkastning på den investeringen ni väljer att göra.”*

As we have known, the art and cultural institutions have long been the means of production, representation, and distribution of contemporary art, as well as its history and criticism. But lately this agency of art and its institutions have come under sharp criticism from the civil society of many countries around the world. The criticisms have exposed their exclusionary politics, structural racism, epistemological dominance, colonial roots, as well as their lack of representation and participation of minorities, thereby challenging the identity and purpose of such institutions in our societies. In the early 2000s, the experimental approach that was referred to as ‘New Institutionalism’ was redefining contemporary art institutions to

analyse the ‘institutional desires’ as well as their role in the society. In a search of those alternatives, Nina Möntmann (2009) argued for the transformative public potential of an institution. She further maintained that local participation can democratize an art institution. But the consequent institutionalisation of the institutional critique itself also disclosed the need to problematize self-awareness by not searching for radical art outside the institution of art but rather in its ‘conceptual or perceptual frames, discourses and, practices’. (Fraser, 2005). This is where I would argue for the collaborative artistic practice of the project *Täljestories* for its methods of co-creation, investment in cultural and linguistic capital and establishing a communal public space to act from.

The onus of creating and defining what art is and how it is expressed is placed as much on the participants as it is on the artists and facilitators at LFI and Grafikens Hus. Linnea’s workshop design is essentially based on providing a safe and accessible environment to the participants, paying attention to both their physical and emotional needs. Upon reflection, Linnea shares that despite having studied art for five years, her personal experiences about accessibility of art spaces still make her feel left out in art spaces like galleries and museums. “I still sometimes feel like art is not for me, or that I don't understand it when I go to an exhibition. I want to work away from that feeling. Art should be a safe and accessible practice.” The task of ‘making art’ can feel daunting when there is a dominant understanding that it can only be made by ‘artists’. In dealing with participants’ hesitations or shyness during the workshops, Linnea works in smaller groups where she could then be attentive to everyone’s needs and can ‘see everyone’ so to speak. In approaching the younger children at Hovsjö lokal, for example, she initiates conversations about what they like, are thinking about making, or if they would want to attempt to make a folded paper boat. Linnea’s approach has been to simply listen and create activities which could focus on understanding where the feeling of hesitation stems from. Similarly, Saadia also reflects that the common hesitations she encounters are with the participants connecting to the idea of what art is and finding its relevance in their personal lives. She then shares, “There is a gap often connected to skills and that Art is something you are good at or not, an idea which lingers on from schooling. I try to open up the idea of what art is and can be [...] the freedom and the right to express, art as discussion, trying, experimenting, understanding, questioning and so on.” Saadia’s workshop design of incorporating variety, transparency, and breaks into the practice to develop an interest and preferring smaller groups so that the relationship can be built while working together, have surely helped in countering those hesitations.

Nachla centres the empowerment perspective in her artistic practice where the collective is stronger than the individual. She emphasises that for working in socio-economic marginalized areas, such as Hovsjö's case under study here, the empowerment perspective is vital, and even more so for children. She further notes the society's lack of opening up shared common spaces which can provide opportunities for working class people of colour and thus roots her practice in providing creative tools for empowering youth, strengthening their sense of ownership on what is actually theirs in the process. Her focus in the project *Täljestories* is on poetry, strengthening the participants through the spoken and written word. In doing so, she discusses that, "the challenge is usually about making people feel that their stories and feelings matter and that the space is safe to share personal information in." Addressing the agency of art and its institutions by pushing the collective forward and giving each participant space to talk, analyze, share, and learn from each other, her approach resonates with Saadia's.

Saadia's approach of continuation of thoughts and feelings over the mural in layers and in sharing the mural space for everyone's designs became a space of negotiations and adjustment to the difference in perspectives. The idea that one could always feel and see the ownership of their artwork but in conjunction with someone else's idea of what art means, was a refreshing communication to witness. During my field visits I was invited to work on the mural and add my effort to it, just like everyone else. From that perspective, it took me only a few minutes to feel like a co-producer amongst all the participants. In conversing with the adult participants while painting, they reflected upon the adaptability that the mural room presents and how it was slowly transforming into everyone's personalities. This observation helps us relate back to the discussion on the potential of an artistic method of co-creation as well as a communal physical space of creation in comprehending multiplicity in our societies. Although we would need a longer research period to explore these relationships in depth to recognise the impact they hold on the individuals and their communities.

### **Understanding of Integration and Segregation**

The idea of integration, to a large extent, is about entering into a certain kind of space. Usually, it is understood in two ways: 1) responsibility of the immigrant to adapt, accept and become a part of this space, and 2) mutual responsibility of the immigrant and the host society. The Swedish integration policy puts a significant emphasis on learning the Swedish language and thereby enabling an entry into the labour market. The responsibility of implementation of these efforts relies substantially on the local municipalities. The difference in ideology and practice

of integration policies in Sweden, noted in the beginning of this report, plays out between the national discourse and a municipality's consequent efforts to integrate new people. More so, a study by Sesil Benjaro from Malmö University highlights the mismatch between what the Swedish government expects from the immigrants and how the information is received by the individual immigrant. "The migrant believes that the responsibility is to be put on the shoulders of the governmental institutions to inform them about all these programs/initiatives, while the government perceives the migrant not as a 'service-receiver' but as a 'partner' who also needs to do their part seeking and collecting information that matters to them and their integration process." (Benjaro, 2018). The context in which LFI, Delmos, and Grafikens Hus are working within the project sits somewhere in between Södertälje municipality's idea of integration, national discourse, and the expectations of Södertälje's multicultural community. These ideas are not necessarily in conflict with one another but do create episodes of friction and therefore a lack of collaborations amongst different actors. Once again, touching upon the conversation with Telge Bostäder to show this friction or rather a lack of understanding, the LFI team was suggested a new lokal space which would have shared space with an organisation holding music classes. When discussing how LFI's approach of högläsning, reading, theatre and the artistic tasks for the project would need a quieter space, it seemed to have fallen on deaf ears as the response asked them to simply use curtains to separate the two spaces. On repeated occasions, LFI and Grafikens Hus have shared that they often encounter a mixture of this lack of interest as mentioned above but also a steady support and understanding from the Södertälje municipality in investing in participatory and co-creation activities. This helps us acknowledge, once again, the differing stances of municipality, civil society, and cultural organisations, in our case, can work towards addressing the role of art and social investment in addressing the issues of integration and segregation.

The adult participants in *Täljestories* are referred there by Arbetsmarknadsenheten. The process of that, however, is not as informative for the people as one would expect. During a conversation with the participants at the workshop, they shared how their handläggare do not familiarise them with the workshop's purpose, expectations, or even the approach of it. Consequently, during Nachla's workshop on learning intuitive expression by means of writing and reading poetry and drawing the feelings, I wondered about the participants' receptivity to these artistic approaches, having little to no explanation for their purpose. The long and tedious process of entering into the labour market, asylum, and skill accreditation processes, as well as the societal burden of expectations that follows with it, is shown to be the cause of negative

health effects through extensive research. (Brell, Distmann & Preston, 2020; Hainmueller et al. 2016; Karlsdóttir et al. 2017:8). All the three artistic methods, through participation and co-creation, are focused on increasing one's trust in their own ability which can translate into a healthier relationship with their immediate surroundings as well as with the society at large. LFI's perspective is that wherever participants come from, they do not lack in anything, and from my field observations this viewpoint formed the basis of all their interactions and relationship development with the participants whether it was workshop times or other occasions. Interactions through humour and literature opened up possibilities for the participants, especially the adult group, to relate their personal journeys to the locality where they are living today and also to communicate what they need and want from their communities. Likewise, in the mural painting initiative, Saadia's approach puts faith in creative flows to emerge by providing an allowing space and freedom to the process. It gave a physical space to the inhabitants to define and talk about "their Södertälje" through their personal narratives.

Speaking of building narratives, the language of the workshops was accommodative and understanding to the plurality existing in the room. Using poetry, drawings, colours, graphics and shapes, the language of expression put the Swedish language as a tool instead of being seen as a survival mechanism. From my personal experience, as an immigrant in Sweden for the last three years, the pressure to integrate through Swedish language has always been high. Rather than facilitating my acceptance into the society, it alienated me. While attending Nachla's workshop, I felt comfortable with the fact that I did not know enough Swedish for the first time in my three years of being in Sweden. In tune to that, Linnea underlines the significance of plurality of perspectives in her approach.

“I am an image maker (illustrator and animator), and my artistic practice is often about telling stories. My aim is for everyone to feel as included as possible in the stories I tell, but I also work towards everyone being able to tell their own stories.”

Correspondingly, Saadia's approach and perspective on how co-creating and sharing art with people from different parts and backgrounds is a way to share the power in a society, brings together the idea of integration and its responsibility, as felt by a migrant and a nation, and the profound role art can play in that.

“Integration has been a burden mainly placed on the migrant in a society. And art is often still very much an activity for the privileged ones with more power in a society. Working



actively with co-creation and sharing art then becomes about sharing that power. To normalise our diverse identities as a nation and that integration is an active act for everyone in a society and not only assigned to those who are new in a society, sharing knowledge, stories and experiences need to be foundational.”

## Evaluation and Way Ahead

The research had started with a quest to find a praxis that can show us a way to de-segregate Södertälje. It explored the role artistic practices can play in collectively approaching the integration of differences in our societies by studying the project *Täljestories*, a collaborative artistic practice designed by a cultural institute, Läsfrämjarinstitutet and an art institution, Grafikens Hus for the neighbourhood of Hovsjö, Södertälje. Both the organisations are driven to provide *power of word*, *a space to act* and *building relevance to the society with art*. After having looked through a fraction of their project, it is apparent that their approach and process are crafted in alliance with the community’s needs and wants. In addition, the responsiveness of their approach has helped them in negotiating skeptical attitudes and unavoidable challenges in a more productive way than many small-scale organisations are able to achieve. But witnessing the lack of a cultural center in Lina Hage and the unfortunate relocation became a traumatic point for LFI and their work, something which this research also highlights and therefore makes the case for amplifying and multiplying participatory and collaborative artistic practices in our societies.

It is reasonable to expect that the research concludes with an evaluation of *Täljestories’* impact or effect on the participants as well as on Hovsjö’s neighbourhood. There are however a few things to consider here before that can be done. A project which is dynamic in its nature and is focused on building a praxis before it takes up a theoretical framework, cannot be studied using only traditional research methods. The effects of an interpersonal and interactive approach of learning cannot be measured in tangible or countable successes, whether it is done at the end of the workshop or at the end of the whole project.

Upon discussing the same with the artists, Linnea shares that the content she puts up online for her participants’ easy access, over time becomes *a sense of measurement* for her. “Sometimes in terms of numbers (views, content, messages, comments), but it has also happened that workshop participants have reached out, years later, for advice about applying to an art school, for example. This is not something I ‘measure’, but for me it is an important result.”

For Saadia, the transformation of the space being painted, seeing it growing with colours, forms and patterns has been a *measurement* of creating and experiencing a visual change together. She says, “The smiles, the energy in the group and their willingness to keep coming and participating despite of Covid-19 has been a strong and positive indicator.”

On speaking with Nachla, she mentions how her understanding of *measurement* developed and changed over time and her thoughts about focusing instead on the interpersonal relationships and collective learning experiences certainly echo with the other artists. She states, “In the beginning the concrete result was important for me. I structured the lessons with different exercises so that the results were in written material and art. But I then refocused my purpose on the process instead. The major goal was not on how much is produced rather needs to be seen as how has the group come together during the process? How is everyone feeling in the environment? Has this helped in the development of each participants? Has this helped the self-esteem?”

Similarly, educator Zalgai Aho points out that *Täljestories*’ approach is more demonstrative than instructional. In a way, the project has shown its impact already by establishing a communal cultural space and by using expressive language and co-creating artistic works to build personal as well as societal narratives. Moreover, there is a power shift for both the educator and the participant as the approach deviates from the traditional form of teaching and the hierarchical power relationship between an educator and a learner.

Not surprisingly, the concerns of evaluation were also shared by the facilitators of the project. Berolin Deniz, project leader and business developer at LFI, understands the need to show concrete outcomes at the end of the project as the approach’s development and continued implementation in the society partly depends on that. It can get a bit unsettling to not foresee results while the praxis takes its shape but by keeping the focus on representation, participation and providing the power of an expression to people so that the discriminatory opinions and narratives about multicultural neighbourhoods can be shifted, there emerges a need to study small-scale institution’s efforts in boosting the social and cultural investment for our societies. This need is more urgently felt by the facilitators as they expressed their frustration on the argument that youth will take the path of violence if they are not enrolled in activities like *Täljestories* whenever a dialogue is initiated with varied decision-making authorities.

This research’s extremely short time period was limiting in crafting a thorough frame of analysis for *Täljestories*’ collaborative artistic practice. It undoubtedly demands an

exhaustive study and that could possibly be the way ahead for this present research too. But based on the understanding of how evaluations could be done in the case of such collaborative and participatory art practices, there needs to be more emphasis on studying the following:

- 1) the methods of engagement developed with people in multicultural and/or socio-economically vulnerable areas,
- 2) the impact of common and safe creative spaces in building dialogues amongst neighbourhood members,
- 3) the relationship a community develops with its local art and cultural center,
- 4) the role of co-creation in developing the language of expression both for individuals and communities, and
- 5) increased accessibility to artistic practices and its effect on integration.

Following these ideas for further research will not only help in creating a frame of analysis to study the role and impact of collaborative and participatory arts in addressing segregation in diverse societies but will also bring the focus on the potential of community building in encouraging an active political, public, and social engagement for its members. The project *Täljestories* is developing a praxis that offers a nuanced, creative, and interactive method aimed at enabling such a potential and encouragement in the neighbourhood of Södertälje and it will require an in-depth analysis of its approach and impact in the near as well as distant future.

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