

EVENTS AS KNOWLEDGE PLATFORMS

THE CASE OF THE VERBIER ART SUMMIT
THROUGH AN AUDIENCE PERSPECTIVE



MASTER THESIS

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Events as knowledge platforms

The case of the Verbier Art Summit through an audience perspective

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ABSTRACT

Events are long known for providing individuals with opportunities to experience meaningful connections with others who share a similar passion and interest. More recently, they have also been understood as catalysts for learning experiences, knowledge creation and exchange. Events are nowadays seen as relevant contributors in a knowledge and experience driven society, as they help generate a great deal of knowledge, contribute to identity building, and encourage knowledge sharing through collective experiences. The societal role of events goes beyond the impact of a single time occasion as they become platforms able to generate long-term reverberations. The aim of this study is to understand what makes an event a knowledge platform, and to what extent event audiences contribute to shaping the knowledge platform character of events. In order to investigate such aspects, this research focuses on the specific case of the Verbier Art Summit, non-profit organization and annual event that takes place in Switzerland. The event functions as an international platform for discourse, giving knowledge the leading role and stimulating knowledge exchanges amongst its audience. The research was developed through a single case study and collected data through in-depth interviews with thirteen participants of the 2020 Verbier Art Summit, and two employees of the organization. This study contributes to the existing knowledge on events as platforms, and provides a great insight into the perspectives of event participants. The results confirm the meaningful role of audiences, the richness and complexity of the knowledge processes they experience during and after an event. They also provide relevant insights into the societal value of events. Events that function as platforms are able to generate beneficial impacts to those who are directly or indirectly involved with the platform's activities. The results show that knowledge platforms nurture an atmosphere that favours meaningful social interactions and knowledge exchanges in physical and virtual realms, and they are concerned with providing long-term accessibility to knowledge.

KEYWORDS: events, knowledge, platforms, audience, Verbier Art Summit

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1. Introduction

In the past 20 years events have become increasingly popular worldwide. (Getz, 2016; Lundberg et al., 2017; Richards, 2019). In this period, as an opposing movement to the extreme digitalization of our experiences and relationships, a significant increase in festivals and events attendance has been observed in many countries (Hernández-Mogollón et al., 2018). The motivations for engaging in events have been related to the search for one's identity and sense of belonging, as well as to the tendency from individuals to seek connections and meaningful interactions with others who are like-minded. Event participants encounter those aspects in events especially due to their general character of providing gatherings of communities that share similar values, preferences and societal views (Christou et al., 2018). Events attendees are often interested in group involvement in which moments and experiences can be explored and better understood collectively.

In more recent studies, another significant driving factor for experiencing an event has been noted: the desire to acquire new knowledge (Comunian, 2017; Podestà & Richards, 2017; Colombo & Marques, 2019). Besides being important forums for the development and nurturing of social interactions (Marques et al., 2020), many events function as platforms for multiple learning processes and sharing of ideas, information, diverse perspectives and theories (Sacco, 2017; Richards, 2020). Such events are, as noted by Podestà & Richards (2017), *experience creators* and *great catalysts for knowledge creation and exchange*.

In the current knowledge economy we live in (World Bank, 2006; Popkova, 2019) knowledge has become not only valuable, but an essential asset of many companies and organizations (North & Kumta, 2014; Edwards, 2015). The importance of preserving and sharing knowledge among individuals goes beyond the organizational sphere, as numerous research has shown the impact of knowledge exchanges on several socio economic benefits, such as innovation, increased critical thinking and learning, awareness and social cohesion (Sorenson et al., 2006; Phelps et al., 2012; Bolisani & Bratianu, 2018). Events are nowadays seen as major contributors in a knowledge-intensive and experience driven society, since they produce a great deal of knowledge and stimulate exchanges through communal experiences (Henn & Bathelt, 2015).

More recently, a few studies have been looking at events as creators of platforms and networks that generate broader values to society (Sacco, 2017; Orefice, 2018; Biaett & Richards, 2020; Marques et al., 2020; Richards & Jarman, 2020). These events adopt a

dynamic and multidisciplinary approach in their activities, keeping their audiences engaged both during and after the event. They are able to provide a long-term connection between event, audience and other external stakeholders. Some of the research developed so far understands events as generators of platforms (Richards, 2020), while others see events as platforms themselves (Sacco, 2017). Although, they have in common the lack of insights about the role of audiences in these platforms. Considering that the idea of events as platforms is yet quite novel, the role of knowledge in such events is also still understudied.

This study addresses this gap in knowledge processes experienced by event audiences, the understanding of the role of knowledge in events and of what makes an event a knowledge platform. The thesis aims to provide answers to the following main research question: *To what extent do audiences contribute to events as knowledge platforms?*

The investigation was done through a single case study, based on empirical data collected from the audience and organization members of the *Verbier Art Summit*, an annual event that takes place every winter in Verbier (a small city located in the south-west of Switzerland). In each edition the event focuses on a different theme, and partners with a leading cultural institution director who then curates the event. Knowledge is an essential part of the Verbier Art Summit: talks and debates are offered aside from a more diverse programme with many other activities (film screenings, art walks, etc). The speakers invited to provide talks in Verbier are influential artists and innovative thinkers, and the audience who attends the event is also highly knowledgeable and engaged in the cultural field. The speakers share knowledge within their expertise, always trying to make a bridge between their knowledge domain with the theme of that year's Summit.

As it is known in events with a knowledge-intensive programme, the speakers play a significant role in adding to their knowledge sharing character, since they spread their knowledge to a wide public (Reychav & Te'eni, 2009) - the same applies to the Verbier Art Summit, where speakers are in the center of the knowledge experience. However, to this moment, the role of audiences in contributing to knowledge-intensive processes during and after events remains underexplored.

This research hopes to add an in-depth investigation to the existing theoretical work on knowledge processes experienced by event audiences, as well as to contribute in filling the gap of studies focusing on knowledge in events and on the character that shapes events as knowledge platforms. Although it is hard to generalize the findings of a case study, this research shows a great density of material and a transparent methodological path that can help to build theoretical foundation for further research in events and knowledge platforms.

This research path could also potentially stimulate the development of events that know and value their audiences and look beyond their local economic impact, seeking to generate broader societal improvements.

The work presented here consists of a discussion of relevant theory and empirical evidence to answer the main research question and the other sub questions developed to help the unfolding of the investigation. The thesis is structured in the subsequent manner: following this introduction, the second chapter presents the theoretical background that provides the foundation for the data analysis. Through a review of the contributions by relevant authors and literature sources, the theoretical framework section presents an exploration of notions such as *knowledge*, its dimensions and interpretations, knowledge processes such as *knowledge seeking, sharing, exchange, application* and *dissemination*, and the understanding of events as *knowledge platforms*.

The third chapter presents the methodological processes utilized to conduct this research. The investigation was developed through a qualitative approach, more precisely through a single case study, with a data set consisting of primary sources, namely fifteen in-depth interviews, with thirteen participants of the 2020 edition of the Verbier Art Summit, and two employees of the organization. The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner in order to give the participants enough flexibility and freedom to share, while still following a structured guideline. This chapter also presents a brief description of the Verbier Art Summit as an event and organization, which is followed by the fourth chapter, where the results obtained from the data analysis are shown and further examined through a critical in-depth discussion. The findings are put into dialogue with the literature reviewed in the theoretical framework, which enlightens the interpretation of concepts and views arising from the interviews, and help with answering the research question.

The fifth and final chapter comprises concluding remarks and the answers to the questions posed in this research. This is done through the interpretations of both event participants and organization on the role of knowledge and knowledge processes in the Verbier Art Summit, and through the understanding of the distinctive characters and values of knowledge platforms. This thesis ends with remarks on the contribution of this study and with recommendations for future research.

2. Theoretical Framework

Recent research has shown that events are highly valuable to societal and economical development. Another relevant contribution of events is their learning and knowledge spreading character, since knowledge is shared in the specific space/time frame of the event, and disseminated to external stakeholders and environments (Comunian, 2017; Podestà & Richards, 2017; Richards; 2020). However, the role of knowledge and knowledge processes in events remains understudied (Henn & Bathelt, 2014; Yi-De Liu, 2017; Richards, 2020). The focus of studies on knowledge networks and knowledge spillovers from events to external environments and communities has overlooked the potential of knowledge circulating in the event itself and the knowledge processes experienced by event audiences. Therefore, this chapter aims at examining the existing literature in knowledge, knowledge processes and events as platforms, in order to construct a coherent path for the methodological guidelines and consequently, a solid collection and analysis of the data.

2.1 Knowledge forms

The debate of what knowledge is can take quite a philosophical turn. Since the approach here is towards understanding the knowledge-intensive dynamics happening at events, the conceptualization of knowledge is to serve the understanding of a knowledge processes perspective.

Knowledge can be found in several forms, and it is shaped and understood differently, depending on the kind of setting, organisation and culture in which this knowledge is inserted (Mingers, 2015). For years and years in the Western theories and epistemology of knowledge, one of the most vital attributes of knowledge was truthfulness. The ‘justified true belief’ holds that if a certain claim meets the three conditions: justification, truth and belief, then it means that this claim is filled with knowledge (Sorenson et al., 2006). However, this standpoint puts knowledge in a very static position and does not account for its relativity, liveliness and ability to reshape. In a more recent approach, many authors argue that knowledge is dynamic and context-specific, and it changes and transforms according to different environments and time. (Nonaka et al., 2000; Phelps et al., 2012; North & Kumta, 2018).

2.1.1 Data, information and knowledge

Without being inserted in a specific context, knowledge is merely information or data. Davenport & Prusak (1998) explain the differences between data, information and knowledge. Data are detached facts about the world, that when apart, do not have a meaning and are difficult to be used in order to make clear sense of this world. Information is when data is processed and interpreted in particular ways and contexts, and starts to gain meaning and help the sense making process. Therefore, a piece of data inserted in a particular context becomes a fragment of information. Knowledge arises from understanding, a cognitive capacity that involves making sense of this information and adding on top of it experiences, insights, personal interpretations, creating something valuable and unique. Knowledge has an active nature, and is fundamentally related to human action and behaviour.

2.1.2 Experiential knowledge, skills and knowledge claims

The most recurrent classifications of knowledge in the knowledge management literature are constituted of two types: *explicit* and *tacit* knowledge. The former consists mainly of structured information that can be easily translated into codes, which makes it simpler for it to be stored and shared, while the latter is more personal and subjective, and therefore, harder to preserve and exchange (North & Kumta, 2018).

As noted by a number of authors (Castillo, 2003; Collins, 2010; Szelągowski & Berniak-Woźny, 2019; etc.), these definitions have been widely interpreted and applied, but they miss aspects of recent societal developments and remain relatively rigid. Dombrowski et al. (2013) and Brătianu (2015) defend a more versatile approach and a less dichotomous view of knowledge, and speak of three main knowledge types: *experiential knowledge*, *skills* and *knowledge claims*. This interpretation embraces more malleable perspectives, since the authors acknowledge the reshapable character of knowledge, meaning that these knowledge forms are not stiff, rather constantly susceptible to change (Bolisani & Brătianu, 2018).

Experiential knowledge is a personal knowledge that can only be obtained through experience. It is based on perception and reflection, that is, the way in which people will perceive the knowledge acquired and reflect (use) it in their lives will vary from one to another, since the knowledge is experienced in different, individual ways. The definition of this type of knowledge is closely related to most interpretations of *tacit knowledge*.

Skills are basically our *know-how*, or our knowledge of how to do something. They are strictly related to our practical learning processes. Skills are also based on experiential

knowledge, but they are much more aligned with action. For instance, we acquire skills such as playing an instrument by the repetition of the act of playing it, we learn by doing.

Knowledge claims are what (we think) we know, because, to this day, it is impossible to know what we actually know. These claims are a combination of both *explicit* and *tacit* knowledge, as they are “what we frame in an explicit way by using a natural or symbolic language” (Bolisani & Brătianu, 2018, p. 24). This means we basically use language to transform our experiential knowledge (emotional or rational experience) into knowledge claims that we can share with others.

Knowledge claims are often associated with information, and classified as superficial knowledge, since the reliability of these claims is constantly hanging by a thin thread (Mohapatra et al., 2016). This happens because claims are not always an outcome of research and a dive into knowledge seeking, but work more as statements loaded with emotions and beliefs on one’s own truth (Mingers, 2016). Knowledge claims are important for the processes of sharing knowledge, but they should be constantly evaluated through highly cognitive processes such as critical thinking, awareness and self-perception (Dombrowski, 2013).

2.1.3 Abstract and practical knowledge

A large part of the knowledge literature makes a distinction between *practical* and *abstract knowledge*, also known as theoretical knowledge (Rix & Lièvre, 2008; Edwards, 2015; Valleriani, 2017). According to Valleriani (2017), “practical knowledge is the knowledge needed to obtain a certain product—for instance, an artistic or mechanical artifact, or specific outputs, such as healing practices or mathematical results—that follows a defined workflow. The workflow can be a construction procedure, a recipe, or even an algorithm [...]” (p.1). This type of knowledge is closely related to Dombrowski’s idea of skills, as it demands action, or what was called by Valleriani as workflow, which entails focus and repetition.

Abstract or theoretical knowledge, on the other hand, relates to one’s individual cognitive capacities to absorb knowledge, connect different knowledge structures and is hard to be externalized (Rix & Lièvre, 2008). The translation from abstract knowledge into something transmittable demands what was defined by Akbar (2003) as *high-level knowledge*, which encompasses a complex set of analytical skills, advanced intellectual traits, possession of in-depth knowledge about a certain field and the ability to pass knowledge on to others.

While practical knowledge is very often put to use in social groups and seen as a more useful knowledge type (Rix & Lièvre, 2008), many authors argue that abstract knowledge is also of extreme relevance for social interaction spheres (Edwards, 2016; North & Kumta, 2018). Inspiration, motivation, awareness, open-mindedness, are also forms of abstract knowledge, that combined with individual emotions and experiences can develop into driving forces for social cohesion and innovation, not only within businesses and organizations, but in society as a whole (Janus, 2016).

2.2 Knowledge processes: seeking, sharing, exchanging and applying knowledge

Knowledge is not always easily transmissible such as information. The sharing and exchanging processes require added knowledge and active involvement from all parts involved. Knowledge processes grow in a longer period of time and demand a great deal of interaction (Rosli & Rossi, 2015). In these interactions, the individuals involved engage in constructing knowledge, rather than merely transferring it.

Knowledge processes such as seeking, sharing, exchange and application help the development of collaboration and innovation among those involved (Edwards, 2015). They encourage the elaboration of solutions, stimulate critical reasoning towards a vast number of societal issues, and promote change through new insights and re-evaluation of ways of thinking and behaviour (North & Kumta, 2014).

2.2.1 Seeking knowledge

Knowledge seeking happens when individuals look for (and are able to find) knowledge sources and channels. Within knowledge seeking, individuals take action upon the information found by making use of it, point where the following knowledge processes of sharing, exchanging and assimilating begin taking over (Veeravalli et al., 2019).

Knowledge seeking demands an active behaviour, and it is strictly related to the seeker's intrinsic motivation to learn. Knowledge seekers are therefore, according to the study developed by Jensen (2007), proactive researchers that have a strong desire to develop themselves and improve their knowledge base. The search for acquiring new knowledge provokes stimuli for diving into the investigation of unknown issues and the exploration of sources that can provide 'feeding' material. These channels can vary significantly, ranging from books and video platforms to social interactions. The seek for knowledge through social relations is highly regarded, because individuals often find in the exchange of ideas with

others not only a source for new knowledge, but also for inspiration and enjoyable encounters (Fazey et al., 2014). Social interactions are able to provide knowledge loaded with personal experiences and multiplicity of views.

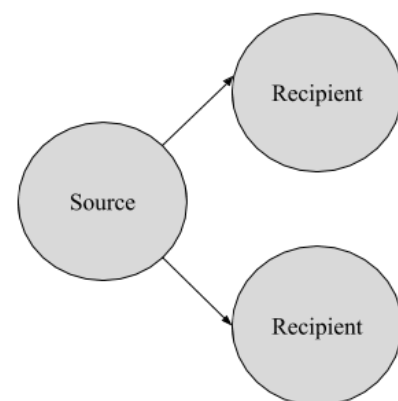
2.2.2 Knowledge sharing/transfer

Part of the knowledge literature makes a distinction between knowledge sharing and knowledge transfer (King, 2011; Paulin & Suneson, 2015; Tangaraja et al., 2016). These differences can at times be subtle and do not affect the purposes of this research. Therefore, these processes will be understood here as one.

Nonaka et al. (2000) stress the importance of knowledge sharing to any organization or sector of society that deals with people. Individuals hold precious knowledge, especially the type of experiential/tacit knowledge which is hard to translate, and consequently, also hard to transfer. Nurturing knowledge sharing is critical to societal development, since, through sharing, loss of know-how can be avoided, and innovation and collaboration are fostered (Farooq, 2018).

To describe knowledge-intensive dynamics within individuals and companies, Nonaka et al. (2000) refer to the two main ends of the knowledge sharing chain: the *knowledge source* and the *knowledge recipient*. Both can be an individual or an organization, but also a system, a data bank, or an online tool. One side of the knowledge sharing process is represented by the holder of knowledge, or the party that generally originates the process since it possesses the information. The other side consists of the receiving end, which acquires the knowledge shared, and assimilates it in order to make use of it, and/or transfer it to others.

The Knowledge sharing model (1) developed by the researcher shows a simplified visualization of a knowledge sharing process. Here, the knowledge source shares its knowledge with the recipients. Such a process relates to the knowledge that flows from one source to different recipient (s). It can take place among individuals, and within or between organizations (for instance, when a team of an organization shares certain knowledge with external companies or partners). It is therefore a process that happens in collectivity, but it does not necessarily involve a returning



Knowledge sharing model (1).
Source: own elaboration

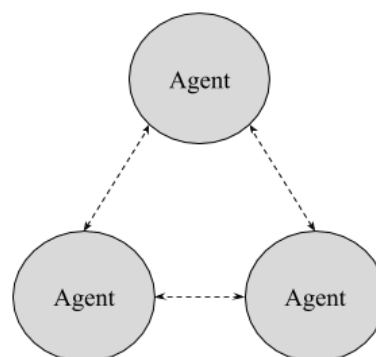
flow of knowledge, or what is called in knowledge processes as a two-way dialogue (Reed et al., 2014; Nedon, 2015).

2.2.3 Knowledge exchange

If knowledge sharing or transfer generally works as a one-way communication process - source shares with recipient (s) - in which the recipient of knowledge does not necessarily take part in spreading this knowledge to a larger chain, knowledge exchange happens when both source and recipient of knowledge engage in an interrelated mutual connection (Nedon, 2015). In such a process, a knowledge recipient can easily become a source, once this knowledge is disseminated further, or other knowledge inputs are fed to who/what was originally the source.

It is possible that knowledge is transferred from one knowledge-rich source to a knowledge-poorer source, and in this case one side comes out of the exchange having learned something. But that is not always the case. Knowledge exchange is a complex process, especially due to the difficulty of tracing the knowledge flow (Contandriopoulos et al., 2010). Therefore, in the knowledge exchange dynamics among individuals, groups and organizations, it is hard to determine who is actually the knowledge source and knowledge recipient, as this depends on many factors, such as the kind of knowledge being shared, the type of interaction, the place in which the exchange is occurring. It is equally impossible to say who is leaving this exchange with more, better or deeper knowledge.

The most likely is that in knowledge exchange dynamics, what we understand as knowledge source and knowledge recipient is merged and mingled, becoming knowledge *agents* who function as active knowledge vehicles, receiving and sharing knowledge. This can be seen in the illustration below, in which source and recipient are merged into one agent.



Knowledge exchange model (2). Source: own elaboration

Social interactions and knowledge exchange

Even though knowledge exchanges have been taking place more and more in virtual environments and commonly happen between technological systems, Nonaka et. al (2000), note that social interactions are of extreme importance for exchanges of knowledge. The authors call attention for the importance of exchanges among groups of people, with the goal of preserving and reverberating valuable knowledge (otherwise easily lost), creating new knowledge, and therefore, innovation.

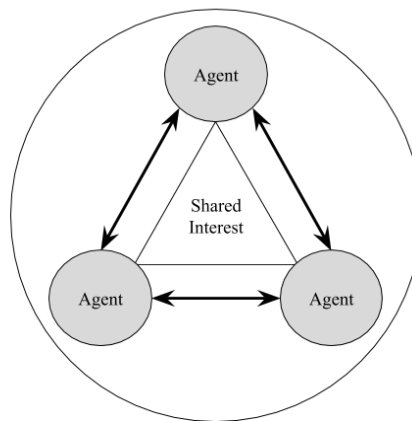
New knowledge is often generated when different types of knowledge interconnect, and consequently, when different types of people and expertise interact. The researches of Thomas-Hunt et al. (2003) and Berliant et al. (2006) show similar results: heterogeneity among actors involved in an exchange of knowledge plays a significant role in this exchange. “When individuals are too alike, they cannot accomplish much and little knowledge will be obtained. In contrast, if individuals are too different, they will not have productive exchange.” (p. 73)

The results of the research of Thomas-Hunt et al. (2003) and of Berliant et al. (2006) provide a relevant insight for understanding social interactions and the production of knowledge: a balanced heterogeneous group is vital for meaningful knowledge exchange. The balance in a heterogeneous group is often seen through a combination of individuals with certain common aspects, such as interests and expertise, with a level of diversity in other characteristics such as professional status, age, gender, and pre-existing bond with others present in the group (Thomas-Hunt et al, 2003).

But not only a balanced group of people affects knowledge exchange outcomes. In order to facilitate a two-way communication process, favourable circumstances in which the exchange takes place can enable trust and intimacy among knowledge agents (Reychav & Te’eni, 2009). As the study developed by Henn & Bathelt (2014) shows, a relaxed atmosphere can be a stimulant for open knowledge circulation. This type of ambience can be created by the offer of informal settings such as shared meals and playful activities. The research of Reychav & Te’eni (2009) noticed that to facilitate knowledge exchanges a combination of informal and formal settings is ideal, since it allows for both recreational and mentally challenging moments. They stress that when individuals create a closer bond by spending more time together in different types of situations, they feel more connected, and therefore, more comfortable to share with one another. Furthermore, Mingers (2015) and Janus (2016) stress the importance of carefully curating physical spaces in order to invite

collective gatherings and at the same time respect individualities. By doing so, environments (organizations, meetings, events, conferences) generate a friendly and welcoming atmosphere that promotes diversity, dialogue, openness and freedom of speech.

In light of the literature so far analysed, the following model developed demonstrates a scenario of an optimal knowledge exchange. Here, the knowledge agents share a common interest, and they are surrounded by a favourable atmosphere. These are factors that contribute to more fruitful exchanges of knowledge.



Knowledge exchange model (3). Optimal exchange. Source: own elaboration

2.2.4 Assimilating, applying and disseminating knowledge

When organizations have the “ability to recognize the value of new information, assimilate it and apply it to commercial ends” (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990, p. 128) they hold what was called by Cohen & Levinthal as *absorptive capacity*. The ability to assimilate and apply knowledge has been considered as a relevant attribute for any enterprise, and is highly dependent on the *absorptive capacity* of individuals, that is, their cognitive skills on learning and understanding and their dedication and effort put on research (Sjödén et al., 2019).

Cycles of knowledge processes come to conclusive stages when individuals involved in sharing and exchanges of knowledge are able to assimilate what has been received. Assimilating knowledge begins with the process of recognizing the value of the new knowledge input: individuals first need to judge which knowledge is worth preserving and which one won’t be adhered to the new knowledge base. Once the valuable knowledge has been recognized, it is then assimilated, deeply understood, “digested” by the brain. Assimilating is making sense of the exchanged knowledge and acknowledging the potential of what has been learned for future application and dissemination.

Applying knowledge is often disseminating it. According to the research developed by Sjödén et al. (2019), individuals tend to apply new knowledge gained from exchanges in

collective settings and environments, that is, applying knowledge becomes spreading knowledge, helping it to remain circulating and renewing itself. The dissemination can take place in a more personal sphere, when this knowledge helps building moral, cultural and societal values, as well as in a professional sphere, as knowledge acquired from exchanges can help implementations of novel techniques, innovative skills and behaviour change in the work space.

2.3 Experiencing knowledge processes in events

Events are gatherers of knowledge holders, fact that makes them knowledge hubs (Podestà & Richards, 2017). As audiences become knowledge agents in events with a focus on knowledge sharing and exchange, it is relevant to understand to what extent they contribute to these processes, and how they experience being part of knowledge-intensive interactions.

According to Pope et al. (2017) event audiences seek what was defined by Bolisani & Brătianu (2018) as *experiential knowledge*. Their research found that audiences tend to return to events that provided them with, among other factors, the possibility of experiencing something unique and to gather new knowledge. Richards & Jarman (2020) recently confirmed that acquiring new knowledge and experiencing something new/special are regarded by audiences as some of the most important characters of events. But according to Tjandra et al. (2020), audiences of events do not only seek to gain knowledge, but also pursue something broader, such as a sense of belonging, identity, connection and community experiences. These are obtained by active processes such as knowledge exchange through social interactions.

When it comes to events where knowledge processes are at the core of their dynamics, research investigating conferences and academic events have made significant advances in understanding how their participants engage in knowledge interactions (Hatcher et al, 2006; Reyhav & Te'eni, 2009; Henn & Bathelt, 2014; Hansen et al., 2020). In such events, the audience's perception of the event overall experience is highly influenced by the post-event feeling of self-growth/development and improvement of existing knowledge base (Getz, 2012).

It has been noted that this feeling of acquiring new knowledge is closely related to knowledge exchanges involving social interactions. Research developed by Hatcher et al. (2006) and Reyhav & Te'eni (2009) showed that, as opposed to the common idea that such events transfer knowledge to their audiences in a more passive manner, e.g., by listening to

speakers, participants felt that they learned most while interacting with others, very often in more informal settings in the sidelines of these events (Hatcher et al., 2006).

In a more recent view of conference-like events, more specifically academic events, Hansen et al. (2020) showed that the active participation of audiences can contribute to the quality of events, and to knowledge sharing and networking outcomes. Event organizers have noted that from debate sessions and social interactions happening during coffee breaks and other informal environments, topics for further published articles came up and partnerships and collaborations were started.

Another relevant point that can be taken from the study of academic events is the online and offline engagement prior and post event. According to Hansen et al. (2020), events considered by participants as successful and enriching were constantly busy with engaging their audiences before and after the actual event. Online discussion groups have been created after the events, and the organization stimulated networking between fellow participants through an online platform, where people could get in touch with each other.

Still in the post phase, some events developed smaller conferences with topics suggested by other academics present in the audience. Before the events, social media campaigns and online quizzes kept the audience in contact with speakers and stimulated them to contribute by sending questions and videos (Henn & Bathelt, 2015). These post additions were considered by many event participants as a positive way to help assimilating knowledge gained at the event, and at the same time encouraged them to disseminate what was learned through the development of actions within their own personal and professional environments (Bathelt & Cohendet, 2014).

Richards (2017) recognizes that audiences have been showing a growing interest in being more engaged with the events they attend, in such ways that they can contribute to the event itself or to the debate around it, and to actually feel part of a community who shares similar passions and interests. Such as observed by Hansen et al (2020), there has been a rise of this engagement through social media and other online community environments, in which audiences can express their thoughts and opinions about what will happen (or happened, in the case of post event engagement), in the form of votes, likes, comments, videos (Walmsley, 2016).

This involvement has also been possible with the emergence of platforms that provide not only one single event, but different occasions, tools and opportunities for socialization and active participation, as well as multiple forms of engagement with the event itself, often supported by the use of technology (Bathelt & Cohendet, 2014). The increase in events that

function as multidisciplinary platforms, focusing on learning experiences and sharing knowledge has been recognized by numerous literature sources (Bathelt & Cohendet, 2014; Podesta & Richards, 2017; etc.)

2.4 Events as knowledge platforms

There are many literature sources that recognize the social dimension of events (Reychav & Te'eni, 2009; Getz, 2012; Rihova et al, 2013; Richards, 2015, De Geus et al, 2016; Marques et al, 2020) but very little research so far has focused on events as being platforms where dynamic and complex knowledge processes take place.

More recently, studies have been exploring the understanding of the broad scope of events, and among them, a few investigate the idea of events as platforms (Sacco, 2017; Orefice, 2018; Biaett & Richards, 2020; Marques et al., 2020; Richards & Jarman, 2020). The research developed by Orefice (2018) suggests that events working as platforms adopt a more interdisciplinary and dynamic approach, offering not only the event itself, but a range of activities, tools and environments where participants are able to interact with each other and develop a deeper engagement with the event, its thematic and the other partakers. Studies of Marques et al. (2020) and Richards (2020) show that platforms are able to generate value that goes beyond the individual sphere, playing a relevant role in building community identity and spreading benefits to a wide range of stakeholders.

If we take events as enablers of knowledge interactions, they often do not only provide a space and sphere for social gathering and leisure, but as noted by the European Commission (2011), they are vital for promoting intercultural dialogue, and they offer the unique opportunity of having the possibility of learning, enjoyment and exchange of knowledge concentrated in one place. Therefore, we can argue that events have an intrinsic characteristic of being enablers of engagement, exchange and new experiences, traces also strongly observed on platforms.

Although some of the existing literature view platforms as spaces for exchanges of experiences and knowledge, Richards (2020) acknowledges that the conceptualization of events as platforms is still almost non-existent, and when any source is encountered, the definitions are imprecise and terms are used in a confusing manner. He calls attention to the fact that the terms network and platform are used interchangeably. He speaks of events as generators of networks and platforms. These networks can “provide connections to actors external to the city, providing the potential for inflows of knowledge, resources and people”

while “a platform does not connect specific actors, but acts in the fashion of a broadcast, sending information that is legitimated by its presence in the platform” (p. 4). External stakeholders such as partners or collaborators can be seen as part of an event network. Platforms emerge from the event’s network, supporting a specific sector and offering links to ensure the long-term success of the event.

According to his observations, while event networks provide connections that allow for interactions outside the environment where the event happened, events become platforms when they are able to provide visibility to the outcomes of network interactions. Platforms are alive and they seldom stop creating flows of ideas and generating buzz. They are not constrained by the time and space of the event itself, providing content to their networks all year round.

As revisited by Richards (2020), many authors have been discussing the value generated by events, calling attention to the value derived by event participants through experience co-creation (Crowther & Donlan, 2011; Andersson et al., 2012; Rihova et al., 2013; Lundberg et al., 2017). According to Rihova (2013), in a business and marketing context, co-creation used to be considered as an interaction between customer and service provider, in which a *service dominant logic* would allow for customers to provide significant input, generating a value-rich experience. More recently, in a more *customer dominant logic*, co-creation is a process that can be strongly observed in interactions between customer and customer, and in the case of events, interactions among participants. Experience co-creation in events relates to the complex processes of value generation, in which participants gain individual intrinsic value from the social interactions they develop among fellow audience during the event (Richards, 2020).

As pointed out by Richards, Holden (2006) describes three types of value that can be generated from cultural activities consumed by the public: intrinsic, instrumental and institutional. *Intrinsic value* refers to the ability of cultural activities to affect people in a personal way, such as strengthening of identity, providing happiness and entertainment, but also in a more collective form, such as nourishing group belonging, increasing social capital. *Instrumental value* relates to culture’s ancillary effects on external/indirect stakeholders, generating social and economic impact. In the case of events, this impact could be seen as an increase in tourism, economic growth, and even knowledge spillovers, which according to Podestà & Richards (2017) is the process by which an event taking place in a certain area generates a subsequent overflow of knowledge, causing an impact in society and/or economy.

The last type of value identified by Holden, *institutional value* regards the practices and work processes adopted by organisations when producing these cultural activities. In a societal sphere, *institutional value* is relevant due to the fact that organizers and funders develop a network of services and communication, building sustainable knowledge that can be applied into other organisations and activities.

Richards calls attention to the importance of understanding the processes of value generation in values derived by consumers of events and by other stakeholders, that is, external wider values that can affect people who did not attend the event. The values identified by Holden were used by Richards as the foundation to investigate processes of strategic value creation through event networks and platforms. In a nutshell, the model describes how networks can contribute to direct an event's flow of resources, while platforms create a focus of action towards a specific sector/field (e.g. economy, social issue) in order to achieve a distinctive character.

For this study, certain aspects regarding values discussed by Richards (2020) were used as a source of understanding of the value generated by platforms. Furthermore, the models of knowledge sharing and knowledge exchange developed by the researcher were used to interpret the knowledge processes experienced by the Verbier Art Summit's audience.

Besides values generated by platforms, Richards also considered values generated by event networks, a factor that was not investigated in this research. When it comes to the platform's values, the focus here was given to two main aspects: the intrinsic and instrumental values derived by attendees of the Verbier Art Summit. Intrinsic value was analysed through the audience experience, from which attendees derive individual values, and their experience with the platform, from which they observe the distinctive character of platforms and how these characteristics affected their event experience. Instrumental value was investigated in this research through the eyes of the audience and the organization, that is, their subjective indication of the effects of the event on indirect stakeholders.

It is important to note that this has been a rather abstract approach, since there has been no impact study conducted to analyse the social and economic reverberations of the Verbier Art Summit. Therefore, the instrumental value of the event as a platform must be considered as a perception of attendees and organization members regarding the external benefits of the event, and a more in-depth statistical research would need to follow in order to determine the actual socio-economic impact of the event. Further methodological implications will be systematically addressed in the coming chapter.

3. Methodology

This chapter focuses on providing a detailed description of this research's operationalization. Here, transparent methodological guidelines are shown, accompanied by a thorough explanation of the relevance of this study, as well as a critical view of its fragile aspects.

As it was observed in the previous chapter, the theoretical framework of this study was composed by a thorough discussion of the relevant literature used as foundation to develop this research. It started untangling several definitions of knowledge, to then analyse knowledge processes such as sharing, exchange and dissemination, and at last, collected perspectives of the understanding of events as platforms. The following table makes a compilation of all the important concepts discussed in the theoretical framework:

Concepts	Description	Authors
Data	Detached facts about the world No meaning without context	Davenport & Prusak, 1998
Information	Processed data used in specific context	Davenport & Prusak, 1998
Knowledge	Personal interpretations are added on top of information. Unique, personal Active, relative, dynamic, reshapeable	Davenport & Prusak, 1998 Nonaka, Toyama, & Konno, 2000
New knowledge	Result of the interaction between different knowledge types Outcome of knowledge exchange	Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995
Experiential knowledge	Personal, individual, obtained through experience	Dombrowski, 2013; Bolisani & Brătianu, 2018
Skills	Know-how. Related to practical learning processes. Involves action	Dombrowski, 2013; Bolisani & Brătianu, 2018
Knowledge claims	Affirmations of what we think we know. Superficial knowledge.	Dombrowski, 2013; Bolisani & Brătianu, 2018
Practical knowledge	Similar to skills, Demands action	Rix & Lièvre, 2008; Valleriani, 2017
Abstract knowledge	Relates to cognitive capacities, connects knowledge structures	Rix & Lièvre, 2008; Valleriani, 2017
Knowledge seeking	Search for knowledge, demands research and motivation to learn	Jensen, 2007

Knowledge sharing	Interaction between knowledge source and knowledge recipients	Nonaka et al., 2000; Nedon, 2015
Knowledge exchange	Interaction between knowledge agents Source and recipient merge into one	Contandriopoulos et al., 2010; Nedon, 2015
Knowledge assimilation	Depends on absorptive capacity. Recognition of knowledge's value	Cohen & Levinthal, 1990; Sjödin et al., 2019
Knowledge dissemination	Spreading knowledge. Applying it into social environments	Cohen & Levinthal, 1990; Sjödin et al., 2019
(Knowledge) platforms	Interdisciplinary and dynamic. Benefit external stakeholders, generate values. Create long term flow of knowledge. Simulates knowledge exchange	Sacco, 2017; Orefice, 2018; Richards, 2020; Marques et al., 2020

Table of concepts (1). Source: own elaboration

3.1 Research aims and objectives

The focus of this research is on the specific annual event Verbier Art Summit, giving special attention to the view of the audience towards knowledge-intensive processes experienced in (and due to) the event. The main aim of this research is to answer the following main research question:

To what extent do audiences contribute to events as knowledge platforms?

In order to help answering the main question, three sub questions were developed:

- (1) What is the role of knowledge in the audience's experience in such events?
- (2) How do knowledge processes (such as knowledge seeking, sharing, exchange, assimilation, dissemination) happen during (and after) the event?
- (3) Which conditions enable events to become knowledge platforms?

In the following table it is possible to see how the concepts summarized in Table of concepts (1) relate to the sub questions of this study:

Concepts	Sub questions
<i>Interpretations of knowledge</i> Data, information, knowledge, new knowledge Experiential knowledge, skills, knowledge claims Practical and abstract knowledge	<i>What is the role of knowledge in the audience's experience in such events?</i>
<i>Knowledge processes</i> Seeking, sharing, exchange, assimilation/learning, dissemination/application	<i>How do knowledge processes (such as knowledge seeking, sharing, exchange, assimilation, dissemination) happen during (and after) the event?</i>
<i>Knowledge platforms</i> Interdisciplinarity, external benefits. Intrinsic, instrumental and institutional values Long term engagement, atmosphere that enables exchanges Nurturing interactions and circulation of knowledge	<i>Which conditions enable events to become knowledge platforms?</i>

Table of concepts (2). Source: own elaboration

3.2 Research strategy and design

This research was conducted through a single case study, which in this instance offers the possibility of a more in-depth look, that can capture the singularities of the case. The Verbier Art Summit was chosen as the object of this study due to their unique character of functioning as a platform that focuses on knowledge-intensive processes, and due to a professional relationship established between the researcher and the organization between 2018 and 2019. Knowledge is at the core of the Verbier Art Summit, as they are an organization whose main focus is to promote the sharing of knowledge and stimulate dialogue and debate. The event presents complex knowledge circulations amongst its stakeholders, as well as a particular organizational structure. Besides these specificities, the organization functions as a year-round platform, stimulating the spreading of knowledge in different forms.

To the present moment, the perspective of events as platforms has been little explored. (Bollier, 2015; Marques et al., 2020; Richards, 2020). The term *knowledge platform* is frequently used in reference to software or other online tools where companies and organizations can exchange information, or more *explicit* forms of knowledge (Edwards, 2016). The idea of an event as a knowledge platform is yet quite novel (Bathelt & Cohendet, 2014). Therefore, this study's main relevance lies in the contribution to building an exploratory path towards the understanding of events as platforms. In times where we must

rethink the way in which we conduct events, it is of great importance to investigate how platforms work and how audiences experience their involvement with these platforms.

Another significant contribution of this study is to the available literature in event audiences, which lack more in-depth interviews with event goers and explore their full experiences (Gerritsen & van Olderen, 2014; Getz & Page, 2016). While the majority of event audiences research focus on quantitative studies on topics such as visitor satisfaction, this study hopes to bring a less generalized approach and explore the complex conceptualization surrounding knowledge dynamics, as well as the particularities of this single case's audience.

This research seeks to investigate the contribution of the audience of the 2020 Verbier Art Summit to the event being a knowledge platform. Through the views of the participants it was possible to understand to which extent the event is actually functioning as a platform that spreads and shares knowledge and stimulates its exchange through meaningful debate and dialogue. The question aims to help the understanding of how audiences perceive their participation and contribution in the event itself, but also outside of the event environment.

According to Bryman (2016), a case study is a detailed analysis of one specific case. The case study is concerned with the complexity of a single or multiple cases, and generally focuses on getting a deeper understanding of a contemporary phenomenon inserted in a particular context (Farquhar, 2012). Case studies are an intensive examination of a case, that is, a person, an organisation, an event or a place, aiming to shed clarity into a research problem. The case study method was chosen for this research because of its thorough analysis character focusing on one specific investigation. The case of this research shows singular characteristics that would be hardly comparable with other events. These particular features will be discussed further when the case of the Verbier Art Summit is described.

In spite of the non-generalizable and non-objective character of case studies, this research provides a transparent path towards the findings, and hopes to provide future research with a ground and inspiration for developing broader studies in knowledge platforms, and audience's event experience.

3.3 Research method

The data set consists of primary data which was collected through 15 in-depth semi structured interviews, from those 13 being with the event audience and 2 being with employees of the Verbier Art Summit. The interviews methodology has been applied to a significant number of

participants, with the goal to evaluate their experiences and views regarding the learning processes during the event, how they apply the knowledge acquired there in their post event circles, and how (and to what extent) their knowledge related experiences contribute to the event being a knowledge platform. With the use of dialogue and exploratory inquiry, it was possible to explore in depth the impressions of the audience towards their knowledge processes. Interviews are significant for this study in order to investigate the context and circumstances in which knowledge-intensive processes happen, as well as to acquire broader and multiple views on the topic (Bryman, 2016). The semi-structured method allowed for both guidance and flexibility while conducting the interviews, in such a way that particularities on the participants' views could also be explored.

The qualitative method was chosen especially because of the complexity surrounding the interpretations of knowledge and knowledge processes such as sharing, exchanging and disseminating. A quantitative approach would possibly overlook the broad scope of the concepts and reduce possibilities of interpretation. By using interviews, it was possible to explore the richness of the concepts, and what knowledge and its application in different settings actually meant for the participants.

In order to help the thorough development of the main research question, three sub questions were formulated, breaking up the main question into smaller in-depth examinations. The sub questions and the theoretical framework were the foundation for the development of the interview guide and the code book used for the data analysis, which can be found in Appendix C and Appendix D.

3.3.1 Sampling

One significant factor that influenced the choice of the subject of this research was the internship followed by the researcher in the organization, from the period of October 2018 to July 2019. During this time, the researcher was able to gather knowledge on the organization's dynamics, and develop a relationship based on mutual trust, which culminated with the collaboration of the Verbier Art Summit in sharing the audience's contacts and contribution by giving their own testimonies.

As Yin (2013) points out, a single case study already has a predetermined sample, which is the case itself. Within this case, different sampling logics can be applied, depending on the type of approach used by the researcher and the type of population presented by the case. In the specific case of the 2020 Verbier Art Summit, the event received 550 people. The audience (whole population) is divided into three main segments: members (around 350

attendees), students (around 50) and general public (approximately 150). The Verbier Art Summit talks are also live streamed via YouTube, but unfortunately tracking the online viewers was not possible. Therefore, this study did not consider the online audience.

The researcher found it important to have a representative sample from each audience segment. Therefore, a stratified random sampling method was applied. According to Babbie (2016), stratified sampling can be applied when a population group is composed of different smaller subsegments. The Verbier Art Summit's audience falls in such population type, since it is composed of three different audience segments. This type of sampling was chosen since it ensures that an appropriate number of elements is drawn from each homogeneous segment of the population, increasing the chances of representativity.

The list of email contacts of all participants was provided by the organization, considering that the event participants had previously authorized having their contacts shared. The invitations to participate in the research were only sent to those who had given permission to be contacted, which was the majority of the list.

Since the participants of the Verbier Art Summit are closely engaged with the event and the chances for participation were high, the email invitations were sent to around 15% of each segment. Email invitations were sent to 52 random people from the general public, 23 random members, and 8 random students. Invitations were sent randomly to the contacts of each segment and in total 13 people agreed to participate. From the total of 13 participants 5 came from the members segment, 4 from the general public and 4 from the students group.

For the purposes of understanding the organization's view in contrast to the audience's, 2 interviews were carried out with staff members of the Verbier Art Summit: Alison Pasquariello, (former) Project Manager and Fleur Greebe, 2020 Committee Strategy.

3.3.2 Data collection

15 in-depth semi-structured interviews were carried out between 29/06/2020 and 18/08/2020, accounting for approximately 11,5 hours of interview material. Most interviews were conducted online via video chat (Skype or Zoom) and a few happened via telephone. 13 of the interviews were conducted with the audience of the Verbier Art Summit, while 2 were conducted with staff members of the organization.

In conformity with social science research ethics, the interviewees were sent an Informed Consent Form (Appendix A) beforehand, which they were instructed to carefully read and sign or give their oral consent before the start of the interview. On the day of the

interview, the form was discussed by the researcher together with the interviewee, to ensure clarity of all aspects.

With the consent of the interviewees, the interviews were recorded in the form of audio and later transcribed verbatim to the effects of data analysis. In respect to the confidentiality of the participants, the transcriptions and recordings of the interviews are not available for public access, but they remain in the researcher's possession for supporting the findings of this study.

3.3.3 Data analysis

The interpretation of the data collected was done through a thematic analysis, meaning that the researcher carried several attentive readings to all transcriptions of interviews, that culminate with the identification of common themes and concepts, as well as contrasts in the views of the participants.

Concepts, categories and subcategories were developed based on the theoretical framework. Four main concepts (which can be seen as the main sections of the Theoretical Framework chapter) were the starting point for the unfolding of categories and subcategories that culminated with the codes. This conceptual umbrella was composed by the following main themes: audience (which then unfolded into event experience, audience motivation and profile, etc.) knowledge (referring to the types of knowledge described by participants), knowledge processes (extending to knowledge seeking, sharing, spreading, etc.) and knowledge platforms (analysed through intrinsic and instrumental values).

For the development of the codes, a mixed technique was applied. Part of the codes was created prior to the collection of data, and other codes emerged after the attentive readings of the interviews. Bryman (2016), referring to Altheide's approach to analysing qualitative data (ethnographic content analysis, Altheide, 1996) called attention to the importance of utilizing mixed coding techniques in qualitative research. Codes defined a priori and codes that came to surface after the researcher's familiarization with the data allow for a systematic but not rigid analysis, and consequently a refinement of the research as whole.

In a first stage, the 15 interviews were thoroughly analysed per participant, further developing into a second stage, in which all responses were compared, finding particularities in the description of several concepts, and identifying differences and similarities of perspectives and understandings.

3.4 Trustworthiness and limitations

Case study design has received criticism due to its questionable level of external validity, or in qualitative terms, its trustworthiness. How is it possible to apply the findings and methods of such research into other contexts, when they are so context specific? It is indeed hard to generalize the findings of a case study and to apply the method into other research without a thorough revision (Farquhar, 2012). However, the strength of a case study lies in the fact that it gives voice and a deep analysis to a particular occurrence that would otherwise be bundled into general conclusions in a larger sample study (Babbie, 2016).

Another point of concern toward case studies is the lack of objectivity, since researchers tend to dive too deep into the case and sometimes have difficulty dissociating themselves to the units of the study. However, it is important to stress that case studies are not aiming to achieve objectivity (Bryman, 2016), as they present an in-depth approach to a specific theme, and therefore a much more immersive perspective, allowing for insights that would be harder to obtain with a more objective research.

The compromised objectivity can be considered a critical point of this study, since the researcher has been part of the Verbier Art Summit's team as an intern. Though the familiarity with the organization could represent a threat for this study, the researcher stresses the fact that when this research was carried, there was no ongoing professional relationship with the organization. The connection with the Verbier Art Summit did not represent any ties or commitment towards the organization, but only a facilitated entrance to more detailed information (such as number of attendees, organizational structure, etc.) and the sharing of the audience's contact.

Another pitfall lies in the fact that the case study of the Verbier Art Summit does not provide enough evidence to characterize knowledge platforms. In order to make sharper conclusions in this direction, research should be conducted with more events, taking place in different settings and cities/countries. The qualitative nature of this study, which provides subjective interpretations and rather individual perspectives, can also be considered a limitation, since it does not help strict definitions of concepts and makes the results hard to generalize and be applied to larger populations.

To help forthcoming this challenge, the methodology section was thoroughly elaborated, hoping to enlighten every step towards the findings, providing a clear methodological path that can be used as guidance for future research. The following section,

explaining the specific single case in more detail, also hopes to add to a structured research path, highlighting the specificities and relevance of the case.

3.5 The Verbier Art Summit case

The non-profit organisation Verbier Art Summit started from an insight of its founder, the art enthusiast and former tax lawyer Anneliek Sijbrandij, when she moved from London to the Swiss mountains of Verbier in 2013. In the vision of Sijbrandij, a remote place such as Verbier presented a perfect scenario for an annual event, in which the only focus would be art and the latest debates and innovations in the field. After many discussions in the winters of 2015 and 2016, Anneliek Sijbrandij, Beatrix Ruf (then director of the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam) together with other founding members and a board of advisors launched the first Verbier Art Summit in the winter of 2017.

The event is a space for leading thinkers within the global art world such as artists, museum directors, academics, philosophers, curators, collectors, art historians, gallerists, to kick-off debates on important social issues. By being in Verbier, participants can take distance from the busy urban life and emerge in a non-transactional context. The shift from the commercial focus seen in many cultural/artistic events to a full dedication to discussions and the generation of knowledge is, as the organization claims, a unique selling point of the event, since there people can propose alternatives and practical solutions to the role of art in society. The main mission of the Verbier Art Summit is to generate new ideas and drive social change through art.

The non-profit organisation is run by an international team led by the founder, with assistance from a Swiss accountant and both a Swiss and an international PR team. Content consultancy and guidance in relation to the direction of the organisation are provided by the board of directors and the board of advisors. Every year the Verbier Art Summit invites a different museum director for curating that year's event, selecting the theme and the speakers. By working with a rotating international museum partner the Summit is able to reach new communities each year. The organisation also works with other cultural and institutional partners such as the SDC (Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation), UNHCR (the UN Refugee Agency) and the Centre d'Art Contemporain de Genève.

In terms of funds, the annual Summit budget is financed for 50% by private donations from the 150 member-platform, for 25% by public institutions (the Commune de Bagnes, the

Loterie Romande, the SDC (FDA), etc) and for 25% by foundations and other partners (Fondation Jan Michalski, la Prairie, etc).

The yearly event consists of a weekend of talks and debates, among other diverse cultural activities developed around the city of Verbier. Many art professionals, students and art enthusiasts gather to talk about the theme chosen for the edition. The first Summit in 2017 revolved around the theme “Size matters! (De) growth of the 21st century art museum”. Since then, the event has also touched upon the issues of art in the digital age, political discourse and actions in artistic practices, and in its latest edition, the focus was on the role of art and cultural institutions in a sustainable society with the theme: “Resource Hungry: Our Cultured Landscape and its Ecological Impact” (Verbier Art Summit, 2020). Given the current worldwide scenario of the Covid-19 pandemic, the upcoming Verbier Art Summit (2021) will take place online, and will continue the ecological debate, but this time gathering a team of speakers from past Summits.

The audience of the Verbier Art Summit is generally divided into three main segments: members, general public and students. The members have access to both public and private programmes, and memberships vary in costs and profiles. The private programme is for members only, it is not publicly available and includes shared meals, drinks and debate sessions in chalets around Verbier. As previously mentioned, the members contribute significantly to the Verbier Art Summit’s budget.

The general public has access free of charge to the talks and cultural programme that take place in the W Hotel in Verbier and in other places around the city. The cultural programme consists of extra presentations, art walks in the Sculpture Park in the snow, cinema sessions, etc. (the 2020 public cultural programme can be found in Appendix E). The talks given by speakers during the event in Verbier are also live streamed, making possible for a wider public to have access to the knowledge shared at the event. The organisation also keeps a digital archive of all talks that took place in the past events, which remain available online.

Although students are also among the general public, it is common that a specific group of university students is invited to participate in the event in a more engaging manner. In the 2020 Summit, a group of students of the Master Space and Communication Design in the HEAD Genève (Haute École d’Arts Appliqués) was invited, together with their professors, the duo of designers *El Ultimo Grito*. They developed projects in collaboration with the Summit and presented them at the event. During the weekend of the event, these

students presented their projects, worked as part-time volunteers in the organizational tasks and were part of the audience of both public and private programmes.

After each event, the Summit produces an annual book which is distributed to museum book shops worldwide. The launch event is also part of the organization's yearly activities, and it generally takes place in the cultural institution led by the yearly curator. The publication works as a recapitulation of the event, with texts produced specifically for the book, or written versions of the talks that took place in Verbier. The books also include a selection of handmade drawings made by event participants. The Verbier Art Summit also produces a smaller debate event in Verbier during the summer, and it has been working on engaging its audience through online discussions.

Knowledge is at the core of the Verbier Art Summit's activities. The organization is concerned with the creation and expansion of knowledge through the long-term involvement of all its stakeholders. The main aim of the Summit is to be a platform for discourse that is able to generate innovation and drive social change. However, the stimulation of innovation through debate is not only done through the speakers invited to lead the talks and discussions, but also through the audience. The participants of the Verbier Art Summit are highly engaged with the organization and with the themes chosen to be the focus of each year's debate. The impact generated by the audience and the central role of knowledge in the Verbier Art Summit are factors that confirm the relevance of this case as an object of study. In the following chapter these roles will be explored in detail through the findings of this research and their subsequent discussions.

4. Findings and discussion

This chapter is dedicated to showing the results from the analysis of the collected data and developing an in-depth discussion of these results. The discussion and critical points were enlightened by the literature used in the Theoretical Framework.

The chapter was divided into four main sections, each of them making reference to the research questions and the main concepts thoroughly explained and elaborated in the Theoretical Framework: **Audience interests and shared passion**, **The role of knowledge**, **Knowledge processes** and **Events as platforms**. Each section contains smaller subsections for helping the structure that followed from the code book and qualitative data analysis developed.

4.1 Audience interests and shared passion

For this case study, it was important to understand what motivated the Verbier Art Summit's audience to take part in the event. As discussed previously in the literature review, audiences' motivations can vary widely. They might be interested in events that provide social gatherings where they also get to connect with other similar minded people, or they might be more keen to sit quietly and watch performances or talks (Mackellar, 2011). The motivations also vary according to age, professional and cultural background, personal taste, etc. However, there is one important common factor that glues an audience together, that ends up attracting them to the same event: the interest for a particular agenda (Pope et al., 2017). This shared interest helps in developing a bond and opens possibilities for engaging in a community of people who share a similar passion.

All interviewees showed to have a passion towards art. This passion leads to a constant search for events with an artistic focus, not only for keeping up to date with trends and discussions in the artistic world, but also with the goal to gather with people who share the same passion. The reunion of similar minded people was mentioned several times by the majority of interviewees as a relevant reason to attend cultural events. As noted by Getz (2012), shared passion in groups helps individuals to achieve feelings of relaxation and happiness. The common interest strengthens the group bond and leads to greater group cohesiveness and openness of expression.

Although the Verbier Art Summit is an art focused event and the encounters joined people who share the same love for art, some of the professionals present in the event do not necessarily work or have any professional involvement with the creative field. This was noted

as a positive characteristic of the audience, since the mix generated interesting debates with multiple points of view. Within the audience interviewed, some have art in the core of their lives, which was the case of artists, art students and professionals in the creative/cultural sector, such as Interviewee 2: “I’m a graphic designer [...] I’m very passionate about contemporary art. I really like to go for exhibitions, I am very passionate about photography. I am always looking for arts and culture events.” Therefore, being in contact with others who also have an interest in the arts meant not only experiencing a pleasant activity, but it was also considered important for their professional lives. Others who did not work closely with the cultural sector mentioned art as a hobby, something they are really passionate about but it remains aside from their professional life.

In the specific case of the 2020 Verbier Art Summit, not only the shared passion for art united the audience in a bonded community, but there was another shared common interest that came to surface: the theme of the 2020 Verbier Art Summit, *Resource hungry: our cultured landscape and its ecological impact*, was mentioned by the majority of the interviewees as being one of the main motivations to attend the event. As described by the organization, “the 2020 Verbier Art Summit asked how to envision a way forward in finding harmony between art, ecology and resources” (Verbier Art Summit, 2020).

The study of Holmes & Ali-Knight (2017) showed that novelty and creativity in themes chosen to guide an event are highly valued by audiences. The interviewees of this study found the choice of the environmental theme not only attractive and relevant, given the heated current debates surrounding sustainability and environment friendly solutions, but also a bit unusual in regards to the artistic scene. The atypical character of the 2020 theme, as also noted in the research of Holmes & Ali-Knight, was regarded here as positive. It seemed, for part of the interviewees, that there is little being said by cultural/artistic organizations about waste and sustainability in the arts. It was appreciated that the Verbier Art Summit dared to engage in this conversation, and most importantly, proposed to discuss solutions, as observed by Interviewee 1:

One thing was the theme of the Summit [...] it had a good emotional value for me. [...] And also, I see that this is a topic that is delicate in the arts, so nobody wants to touch upon it. So I value the Summit for stepping up and doing it.

4.2 The role of knowledge

Knowledge played a significant role on the reasons why people attended the Verbier Art Summit. Seeking new knowledge and learning experiences stimulated the audience to join the event, although there was no guarantee that one would leave the event having encountered learning opportunities and insightful knowledge. Throughout the interviews, it was observed that participants engaged in many diverse knowledge-intensive processes, showing that acquiring new knowledge was successfully achieved. Interviewees were faced with contrasting knowledge forms, which manifested in specific contexts and for each one of them, gained a unique character.

As observed in the multiple definitions of knowledge present in the literature review, Nonaka et al. (2000) called attention to the active and dynamic character of knowledge, constantly developing and reshaping itself depending on contexts and less or more stimulating environments. This characteristic was seen in all testimonies of this study, as in the course of the interviews participants acknowledged the transformation of the knowledge they acquired and exchanged, for instance, while listening to the talks or engaging in social interactions during and after the event. The following subsections approach the diversity of knowledge experienced by the audience of the Verbier Art Summit.

4.2.1 Experiential and high-level knowledge

In an approach to understanding knowledge forms, Dombrowski et al. (2013) and Bratianu (2015) spoke about an experiential type of knowledge, which is knowledge obtained through personal experiences. Experiential knowledge strongly resembles most interpretations of tacit knowledge, since it relates to individual processes that can be highly subjective and therefore difficult to be structured. Knowledge gained through experiences is mixed with one's personal beliefs, cultural luggage and moral values. It relies on one's extensive sensory and intuitive perceptions.

The vast majority of interviewees noticed to have been in touch with a certain type of knowledge that relates to personal experiences. These particular experiences varied widely amongst the visitors, and were at times referred to as one's own personal experiences, and at times as interpretations of others' individual perspectives. This means that participants found the possibility of hearing about personal experiences of fellow attendees highly enriching, but also valued the chance of speaking about their own, such as told by Interviewee 5:

I met a woman there, we were talking about South America, we both have lived there, and we were talking about the way people work there. It was so nice, because she was older and we could exchange a lot, and I believe we learned something from the views we had, especially when it comes to education and work in South America.

It is relevant to note the lack of relation between personal experience and expertise, theoretical or technical knowledge. Here, when talking about exchanges of personal experiences, the in-depth knowledge about more specific topics did not seem to matter much. Talking about one's personal experiences made the audience feel comfortable to share, since these exchanges did not necessarily have to do with advanced knowledge about a certain topic, as described by Interviewee 2: "in the debates people [...] were mostly talking about their experiences, like what they have lived, how they think, work and make art in their countries. So [...] I was perfectly able to talk about my experiences too." The sharing of personal experiences in knowledge-intensive interactions relates to the different learning stages experienced by individuals or groups, and as pointed out by Akbar (2003), they are in no way less valuable for knowledge exchanges, as they approximate individuals and intensify learning processes.

As opposed to personal experiences, *high-level knowledge*, a type of knowledge constantly referred to in the interviews, relates to more specific and in-depth knowledge. Participants commented on the fact that the Verbier Art Summit is able to gather not only speakers who share *high-level knowledge*, but also an audience who is intellectually driven and able to contribute to rich knowledge exchanges, since they hold advanced knowledge. When discussing knowledge levels, Akbar (2003) and Korposh et al. (2011) distinguished high-level knowledge from other knowledge types by a combination of analytical skills, educational background, high intellectual qualities and the ability of individuals to externalize this knowledge and pass it on to others. More than half of the interviewees of this study described high-level knowledge as being capable of penetrating a deeper layer, meaning that one possessing this knowledge type also has outstanding sharing capabilities. High-level knowledge was understood as a combination of extensive knowledge when it comes to a specific topic within an expertise and versatile knowledge when relating to universal/general wisdom on a wide range of subjects.

4.2.2 Open mindedness and inspirational knowledge

Another pertinent aspect mentioned by part of the interviewees was the sense of *open mindedness* with which they have left the event. Keeping an open mind meant very often being respectful of the opinions of others and taking initiative to engage in discussions and promote dialogue. Even though authors such as Mitchell & Nicholas (2006) and Kharabsheh et al. (2016) define open mindedness as a more emotional and abstract knowledge type, the idea of keeping (or gaining) an open mind towards certain topics was seen by participants of this study as a bridge between abstract to practical knowledge. Because of feeling more open, five interviewees mentioned having observed an increased thirst for conversations. For those that perceived the Summit as a space facilitating open mindedness, the active participation in conversation circles/debates and the act of being present at the talks have provided them with opportunities to broaden their views, as described by Interviewee 10:

If I hear a speaker during one of his talks, then he is sharing his knowledge and that makes us all a better person, a smarter person, having a broader perspective on subjects and more balanced opinions on lots of subjects. I mean, every year I get out of the Summit more open, feeling like I can listen more, be more patient with the opinions of other people.

Such as open mindedness, *inspirational knowledge* lies in a more abstract corner (Valle et al., 2003). However, this type of knowledge seemed to have motivated the participants in seeking practical solutions and making changes in their lives. Many of the participants have expressed gaining inspiration by listening to the speakers, engaging in social interactions and even by having little chats during breaks.

Despite the fact that *inspirations* was not a subject of focus in the Theoretical Framework of this thesis, the literature in knowledge management regards inspirational knowledge as a relevant element for organizations and individuals (Janus, 2016; North & Kumta, 2018). Environments that stimulate social interactions combined with knowledge exchange are catalysts for inspired individuals (Valle et al., 2003). Gaining inspirational knowledge allows individuals to transition from a state of apathy or indifference towards a certain topic, person or situation, to a state of awareness and wish to transcend personal limitations (Albolino & Mesenzani, 2002).

4.3 Knowledge processes

One of the sub research questions of this study aimed to investigate how knowledge processes such as sharing and exchange happened during the event. As it was discussed earlier in the literature review, knowledge processes can be highly complex, and demand both a great deal of proactive behaviour and cognitive capacities of the parties involved (Rosli & Rossi, 2015). To help understanding these knowledge processes that took place in the Verbier Art Summit, this section was divided into the following three subsections: (1) Seeking knowledge and the learning drive; (2) Exchanging and sharing knowledge: the impact of social interactions; (3) Assimilation and dissemination processes.

4.3.1 Seeking knowledge and the learning drive

Besides the collective experience of events and the feeling of being inserted in a group of similar minded people, event audiences are also driven by more individual, personal interests, such as the wish to gain new knowledge (Lamb, 2015; Colombo & Marques, 2019). Looking back at the discussion on knowledge processes in the literature review, we can affirm that seeking knowledge is a process closely related to one's wish for self development and desire to learn (Jensen, 2007). This learning drive was prominent in the majority of the interviewees, who have shown a self growth mindset and a thirst for intellectual challenge, as it was expressed by Interviewee 9: "I like when there is a kind of depth into a topic [...] for me personally, I'm very interested in learning new things, feeding myself with knowledge, so the Summit is a good match."

Participants sought knowledge through the talks, in which they became listeners, recipients of a great inflow of knowledge shared, and also through the engagement in social interactions, in which they became agents of exchange dynamics, transferring and receiving knowledge. Participants spoke about their active contribution to the event, in which they feel they added to the knowledge character of the Summit by engaging in the discussions, making contacts that could flourish into further collaborations and by being in the constant search for acquiring new knowledge: "that was part of what I thought it was so special, these breakout sessions that you have in the mornings. That allowed us all to communicate, to contribute, even the shyest people felt very comfortable saying something." Interviewee 8

Another significant character of the audience's learning drive was their desire to continue learning even after the event. The Verbier Art Summit seemed to work as a great stimulus for them to keep on researching and investigating topics in which the discussion was initiated during the weekend in Verbier. The diversity of backgrounds present in the audience

and speakers has also been mentioned as an instigating factor, since the contact among multiple cultures and professional backgrounds generated curiosity and therefore a wish to know more, look for further knowledge.

4.3.2 Exchanging and sharing knowledge: the impact of social interactions

As Von Krogh & Roos (1996) noted, knowledge manifests itself in different dimensions, and according to the circumstances provided by these dimensions, knowledge will take on different structures and characteristics. Such circumstances can offer (or not) an atmosphere that stimulates social interactions, and therefore, exchanges of knowledge among individuals. According to part of the interviewees, these circumstances were encountered in the Verbier Art Summit. However, about half of the participants have expressed a feeling of dissatisfaction towards the (lack of) situations and opportunities to engage in interactions during the event.

Social interactions are vital for exchanges of knowledge. It is through the interaction with others that individuals are able to construct new knowledge (Nonaka et al., 2000), using their base of experiential knowledge combined with skills and expertise, generating interest and instigation in others. Through these interactions, critical thinking about this newly brought up knowledge can arise, and the exchanges of knowledge can end up generating innovative ideas and elaboration of solutions (Bolisani & Brătianu, 2018). Although it is still hard to determine to what extent an exchange is balanced, it is likely that most parts involved in an exchange got out of it having acquired some new knowledge, and/or feeling more inspired and aware towards a certain topic (Contandriopoulos et al., 2010).

When it comes to the opportunities for connecting with others and the quality of social interactions, there was a clear contrast between the views of interviewees who had access to the private programme and those who only attended the programme open to the general public. For those that were part of the general public, they felt they did not encounter enough situations in which they could engage in in-depth discussions. Spaces and moments in which exchanges could have happened were not inviting or promoting an atmosphere for debates and in-depth conversations. Most interactions remained shallow, such as chit chats before a talk started, quick conversations during the breaks. This superficiality of such encounters meant that they did not cause much impact or contributed to learning and the overall experience of the event, such as stated by Interviewee 13: “I interacted very little with other people, and I’m not shy. There was on the second day one artist from the US [...] We

started to chat a bit. It was completely superficial [...] it's not like I learned something from this."

A few participants mentioned sensing an inhospitable atmosphere during the event, in which they did not feel included and sometimes intimidated to engage in social interactions:

I think maybe it is a bit intimidating, and sometimes you're with these people and they are not very comfortable to talk or share something. [...] I think some people maybe just didn't care, or they prefer to stay in their bubble or to make connections, like networking, you know?! So if you are not from this bubble or someone important, interesting to make connections, how can you approach them? It's not that easy. Interviewee 2

The clear separation between private and public programme was mentioned by general public interviewees as a negative character of the event. They experienced a feeling of being excluded from the possibilities offered by the private programme. Even though the description and announcement of the private activities were not visible in the shared public programme, there was, according to interviewees, a clear bond amongst the audience accessing the members programme.

This is a critical point when it comes to meaningful knowledge exchanges, since the organization's mission to drive innovation and social change and the non-embracing atmosphere sensed by part of the audience are conflicting. The study of Giambruno & Pistidda (2018) looked at innovation and social development arising in cities due to knowledge exchange amongst different stakeholders and concluded: when individuals and groups felt included and equally engaged in the activities promoting exchanges, they delivered more fruitful debates, and therefore, more innovative solutions. The research called for the relevance of nurturing inclusive interactions in environments that promote exchanges of knowledge.

Also members and students who did attend the private activities acknowledged that they interacted very little with public programme attendees, and reinforced the debates in the chalets and the shared meals as more suitable situations for engaging with others and exchanging in more in-depth discussions, as told by Interviewee 6: "I experienced the small meetings in the chalet as stronger [...] The face-to-face experience is stronger than the big conference room, there I could not experience the content so well. In the smaller chalet I was also active, speaking more."

Familiarity and informality

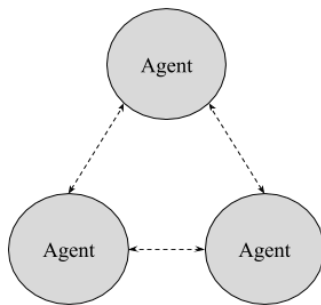
The audience who had access to the private programme expressed their satisfaction with the possibilities encountered for interacting with others. Although they felt that the private debates were where stronger and deeper connections took place, they recognized other situations in the event, such as the cultural activities and the talks programme, as contributors to building a bond with others present. They spoke of the love for art shared by all attendees, which contributed to strengthening this bond. They also mentioned the feeling of familiarity towards fellow audience, which contributed to nurturing an atmosphere of safe environment throughout the whole event.

According to participants, becoming more familiar with each other happened due to the extended character of the Summit, that provides an entire weekend filled with different activities. These circumstances offered multiple possibilities for encountering people more than one time only: crossing each other in the halls and coffee breaks, taking the art walk together after having participated in a debate, sharing a meal after having sat besides each other during a talk, helped the audience to develop meaningful connections and therefore, to engage in in-depth exchanges of knowledge.

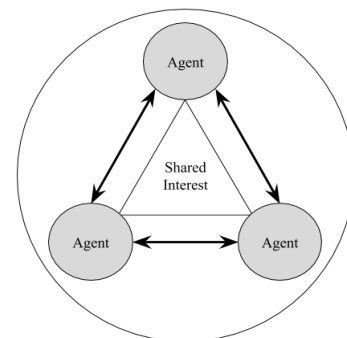
When referring to a two-way communication in knowledge exchanges, Reyshav & Te'eni (2009) called attention to the importance of informal settings in events (more specifically conferences) for building confidence and trust in individuals, which potentially culminates with rich exchanges of knowledge. When looking at the informality and familiarity among each other described by the participants, it can be observed that the knowledge blocks constructed in exchanges were not only built by listening to speakers and participating in the debates, but also during meals, breaks and side activities.

This informality was considered a great contributor for the communication among the audience, and it was sensed in many environments and situations during the event. Casual settings such as the design of the conference room, in which the audience could sit right next to speakers, the breaks in which people could interact fluidly with each other, were regarded as relevant moments for exchanges of knowledge. The relaxed atmosphere sensed did not only stimulate social interactions, but also contributed to a feeling of openness to share, meaning that the audience felt safe and comfortable to speak freely, engage in discussions and feel that others were attentively listening to what they had to say.

When applying the models developed by the researcher, we see that part of the findings agree with Model 2 and another part with Model 3. The general public audience experienced very few exchanges, and when they happened, they did not add much to their knowledge experience, meaning that these exchanges were poor (Model 2). The members and students who accessed the private programme experienced meaningful exchanges, which they considered to have been generated due to their common passion for art and a set of specific circumstances, which contributed to an optimal scenario of knowledge exchange (Model 3).



Model 2 applied to Public programme audience



Model 3 applied to Private programme audience

Knowledge reaching others

An essential part of both knowledge sharing and exchange is the ability of knowledge holders to reach others with the knowledge being shared (Janus, 2016). However, most studies on knowledge processes acknowledge the challenge of measuring such effects (Korposh et al., 2011; Mohapatra et al., 2016; Singh et al., 2019)

During the interviews, there was a clear resistance from participants when asked *if anyone had learned anything from them*. The question seemed to cause discomfort, since it provoked them to speak about their own knowledge base, their abilities to share this knowledge, and instigate interest in others. For some it also felt like leaving modesty aside and praising themselves for a moment. After probing and using other expressions that carry less weight than *learn*, such as experience, exchange, share, understanding, passing on, helping to broaden knowledge, clarification, etc., participants started to name many examples of what they thought people could have learned from them. The majority still hesitated to affirm that, but did recognize that they were able to share their knowledge and experiences with others, and promote dialogues in which others felt engaged, genuinely interested in what they had to share. They also acknowledged the idea that knowledge they transferred might have contributed to the gaining of new knowledge by the others involved in the interaction.

4.3.3 Assimilation and dissemination processes

A successful exchange happens when individuals are able to absorb the knowledge that has been traded, make sense of it, and apply it (Contandriopoulos et al., 2010). Learning something from what has been exchanged is a crucial part of a knowledge-intensive interaction (Sjödin, Frishammar & Thorgren, 2019). All the interviewees in this study mentioned having learned something in and/or from the 2020 Verbier Art Summit.

Many participants expressed having learned to be more aware towards certain topics that urge for care and concern. This feeling of acknowledgement that something is relevant and demands attention was very often combined with the sense of having learned from cultural exchanges, considering that the diversity of cultural backgrounds seen in the audience and the speakers of the Summit made the exchanges richer. Participants affirmed having learned with the way others think, work and handle different societal issues depending on their cultural background and luggage. The exchange of these differences generated more awareness and respect for the multiplicity of thinking and behaving.

As the research of Berliant et al. (2006) observed, finding a balance in the heterogeneity of actors involved in a knowledge interaction is essential for the outcome of that exchange. If the actors involved are too alike, they are not able to add any new knowledge to the table, and if they are too different, the knowledge circulating is unable to penetrate any of these actors. This balance seems to have been reached in the 2020 Verbier Art Summit, although it is not possible to affirm that with certainty (further research would be needed). What could be noticed is that the multiple perspectives presented by fellow audience, speakers and the event organizers were seen as an enabler of learning experiences.

At times, these perspectives had to do with cultural diversity, but also with the variety of areas of expertise, considering that the Summit gathers professionals from a wide range of disciplines. The mix of age groups was also mentioned by the vast majority of the interviewees as a positive feature of the event. Intergenerationality was seen as something that added up to the exchanges, since the difference of age brought up versatile knowledge. These exchanges among different age groups were observed symmetrically, the older generation mentioned having learned from the younger, and vice-versa.

There was very little mention of a lack of understanding and miscommunication due to these differences and heterogeneity of the ones present in the event. This diversity was actually seen as an important factor for more meaningful and deeper knowledge exchanges and the generation of new knowledge:

Because we are all from different backgrounds, this creates innovation, that's where innovation comes from. And also helps the global community to understand each other, also the more we learn from each other the more we respect each other, and also for helping improve the world. Interviewee 5

When it comes to the process of assimilating the exchanged knowledge, according to more than half of the participants, the format, setting and location of the event facilitated the 'sinking' of the knowledge gained. As noted by Enkel et al. (2017) and Sjödin et al. (2018), assimilation of knowledge is a highly diverse process, which can take more individual or synergetic approaches, depending on intrinsic characteristics and extrinsic stimuli. This diversity was observed in this study, as for part of the audience introspection seemed to be more suitable, as they needed a peaceful moment to process all that was discussed or shared during the talks. In this regard, a walk on the mountains of Verbier or simply a retreated moment contemplating the snowy landscape were helpful, and even inspiring.

For others, a more collective experience worked better, as the best way to assimilate the new inputs of knowledge was by speaking with others during breaks, sharing a meal, or smoking on the outside areas while hearing the thoughts of others on the same topic. By doing that, participants felt they could learn more, as they combined their views with the perspectives and understanding of others, which made the exchanges and the learning experiences even richer.

As discussed in the literature review, the application of knowledge is strictly connected to its dissemination (Sjödin et al., 2019). Individuals tend to apply knowledge within a collective sphere, namely work environment, local community, family and friends. Therefore, while applying knowledge gained, individuals are also spreading it to others. In the events literature, the study of Podestà & Richards (2017) showed relevant results regarding knowledge dissemination. They observed that knowledge surrounding a literary festival in Italy generated spillovers from the event to the city, in processes before and after the event. Although this research does not focus on the spillovers of knowledge from the Verbier Art Summit to the city of Verbier, it was observed that participants disseminated knowledge acquired during the event through collaborations developed in different environments and situations in the return to their homes. These collaborations will be further analysed in the section events as platforms.

When it comes to applying knowledge, the factor *time* played a significant role for most participants. Interviewee 3, for instance, mentioned that time was still needed to assimilate what was learned at the event and transform this knowledge into something applicable or more practical: “the things I learned at the Summit really affected me in many ways. But I think it takes a while to realize how those things come in and go out. I feel like that’s still happening.”

Kottmann (2017) points out that in knowledge processes such as dissemination, individuals make use of different knowledge layers gathered over time. The diversity of knowledge present in these layers helps spreading knowledge through an inclusive and effective communication. Participants of this study recognized that the knowledge gained at the Summit contributes to enriching these layers, and it “definitely adds to your knowledge base over time”, such as stated by Interviewee 8. Others spoke of accumulated knowledge and its importance in communal situations: “the idea of art is to accumulate knowledge. You use it in your collective experience, at different points in time”, Interviewee 7.

4.4 Events as platforms

As observed in the literature review, the idea of events as platforms is still underexplored, and according to the studies so far, the several definitions of platform encountered can be confusing. For this study, aspects derived from the conceptualization of value creation in events developed by Richards (2020) were adopted to investigate the values derived by the audience of the Verbier Art Summit, and the traits that contribute to the knowledge platform character of the event.

According to Richards, event-related platforms and networks generate intrinsic, instrumental and institutional values to society. Networks developed from and because of events function as connectors between the event and other external agents. Platforms are structures that emerge from events, generally promoting collaborations and feeding these networks with content. This study regards the view of platforms as enablers of collaborations, but takes a step further and considers the potential of events in being themselves platforms. In the following subsections the research looks at the values derived by the Verbier Art Summit’s audience from their experience at the event in contrast with the values observed by the organization itself. This is followed by the analysis of the characteristics that, through the eyes of the participants and of the Verbier Art Summit as organization, contribute to making the event a knowledge platform.

4.4.1 Intrinsic value

Personal growth, reinforcement of identity, happiness. These are some of the elements participants mentioned having experienced during and after the Verbier Art Summit. As Holden (2006) described, “intrinsic values are the set of values that relate to the subjective experience of culture intellectually, emotionally and spiritually (...) These kinds of values can be captured in personal testimony, qualitative assessments, anecdotes, case studies and critical reviews.” (p.14) Audiences can derive values from their experience in events, and events also possess values of their own, which will vary depending on the profile and focus of the event.

Intrinsic values derived by audience

Although intrinsic values are hard to be generalized and applied into larger groups, this type of subjective value derived by event audiences is important to understand the way in which culture affects individuals, and therefore, help to improve the development of the creative sector (Lundberg et al., 2017). In their publication “*The Value of Events*”, Lundberg et al. called attention to the factor *identity*, and the powerful intrinsic value of awareness, strengthening and construction of identity in events. Identity reinforcement and awareness promoted by events can generate a spillover effect in local communities, helping to build social cohesion and increase social capital.

When looking at the Verbier Art Summit, about half of the participants have expressed a sense of improvement in the way they see and understand themselves, and specially in the way they behave and position themselves in society. Since the theme of the 2020 Summit reminded the audience of their role in fighting climate change and the responsibility towards the environment, the participants seemed to be concerned with re-evaluating themselves, their habits and actions:

I feel like I am much more aware of my own acts, thoughts, behaviour in general. Some of the talks and discussions there really made me think about things I need to start acting upon now. It's funny that many of us felt connected as a group that have to fight the same problems, and of course, we need to act together, gather forces, you know?! Interviewee 5

Regarding intrinsic values that relate to the audience's emotional experience of the event, the vast majority of interviewees mentioned having had fun at the Verbier Art Summit, and having left with a feeling of happiness. The sense of satisfaction towards the event was mostly related to collective experiences, which were positively regarded by more than half of

participants. The activities involving group interactions seemed to have caused a strong impression, especially among the participants with access to the private programme: “I take from my experience at the Summit the people that I met, [...] the talks and topics. It’s a bit of everything. The format with different activities [...] I had a lot of fun. When I think back, I left feeling wonderful, especially because of all this social aspect” Interviewee 12.

Still concerning private programme attendees, a concept frequently mentioned by them was what could be considered as *coziness*, encountered in several settings of the event. For most members and students who had access to the private debates and meals taking place at the chalets, certain situations provided a cozy atmosphere where it was pleasant to stay. This *coziness* also contributed to the feeling of a safe environment, and consequently, the openness to share and engage in discussions, which confirms the previous application of the knowledge exchange Model 3 to the private programme attendees. The sense of coziness was often related to the combination of the snowy landscape of Verbier, with the warmth of the chalets, in which people could have coffee, food and meaningful conversations by the fireplace, as described by Interviewee 10: “the environment is beautiful [...] Every talk was in a small group of people, being with 20 or 25 people in someone's house. With beautiful art around you and everyone sits on the couch, the fire is on. All of this makes you feel warm and very comfortable.”

For the general public, having experienced fun and happy moments was much more related to their experiences outside the event, in the company of their acquaintances, in the city of Verbier, as it was told by Interviewee 13: “me and my friends we walked together, talked, we had so much fun with the snow, and eating and drinking in the evenings. The surroundings are great, and offer plenty of things for you to do.”

Event's intrinsic values

When it comes to the intrinsic values of the Verbier Art Summit, certain specific characters of the event have been noted by the organization and the event participants. Both regarded knowledge sharing as one of, if not the most important character of the Verbier Art Summit. According to the former Project Manager of the Verbier Art Summit, one of the strongest aims of the organization is to help build a stronger community who understands and believes in its potential to promote changes in society. This is done mainly through exchanges and sharing of knowledge and experiences:

The Verbier Art Summit wants to get people to connect with one another. Sometimes, this is with the goal of starting new projects or strengthening their current projects. Other times, this connection is with the goal of sharing knowledge around critical intersections for art.

The way the event promotes the sharing of knowledge and stimulates learning were seen by the participants as traits that make the Summit *unique* and *lively*. This *uniqueness* and *liveliness* are due to the knowledge-intensive processes stimulated by the event and to its format: taking place in a special (unusual) location; offering different settings, environments and activities; adopting captivating and relevant yearly themes; providing chances for social engagement; gathering a diverse public and group of speakers.

Interdisciplinarity, which refers to the mix of people coming from different knowledge branches observed in the audience and speakers, was considered a highly positive trait of the event. The diversity of the programme, relating to the multiple and dynamic activities offered by the Verbier Art Summit, was also greatly valued, and together with interdisciplinarity, was contemplated by more than half of the interviewees as a facilitating character for knowledge exchanges and learning: “I really enjoyed this combination between a more intimate discussion as well as a more typical presentation [...] So there were the discussions, the presentations, film screening, performance moments, these multiple ways that you were thinking and engaging” Interviewee 3.

In line with the view of participants, the organization claimed that in order to support the sharing of knowledge during the event and ensure the quality of the debates, they offer an energetic and diverse programme, accompanied by an interdisciplinary approach. They also highlighted the live stream of the talks happening in Verbier, which makes the knowledge shared at the event accessible worldwide.

In regards to having a format that enables social interactions, and therefore exchanges, the contrast between the views of private and public programmes attendees was clear, as previously observed. When asked about the event’s actions to facilitate social interactions for everyone, both Project Manager and Strategy Director emphasized the informal activities as extremely important. “I believe that the dining part, so the informal places and situations, are maybe our strongest points for facilitating knowledge exchange in the Summit.” said the Strategy Director. The activities named by her as strongest are directed to the members programme. When asked about situations offered in the public programme, she considered the activities of the cultural programme as relevant: “also the extra events besides the general

talks, such as the cinema, and the art walk, are great opportunities for sharing knowledge, also to make sharing possible at a higher level”.

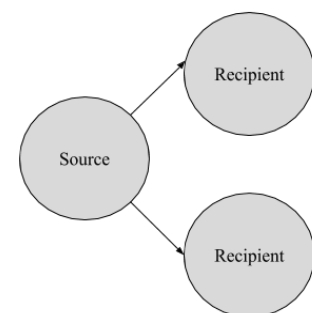
The former Project Manager, on the other hand, recognized the difference in approaches. She mentioned the fact that the debate sessions in the chalets, and the casual meals are designed in such a way so that “each member can meet each other member”. The atmosphere in these situations is well thought for facilitating knowledge exchanges. The open activities such as the talks, the cinema and the art walk happen in a more free format, in which people are encouraged to dig themselves for the social interactions and networking.

This was one of the critical points raised by public programme attendees, who felt that more attention should have been paid by the organization to simulating social interactions in this specific group. Interestingly, although the general public interviewees mentioned having experienced the social aspect poorly, most of them still saw the Verbier Art Summit as a great knowledge sharing event. Looking back at the literature review, one of the distinctions between knowledge sharing/transfer and knowledge exchange lies in the one-way versus two-way communication process (Rosli & Rossi, 2015). Sharing refers to more passive relations between a knowledge source and a knowledge recipient, while exchange demands proactive behaviour from all agents involved.

When public programme attendees reinforced the knowledge sharing character of the Summit, they were especially referring to their individual learning processes they experienced from having participated in the talks sessions, as stressed by Interviewee 11:

What I learned came from listening. Listening to the selected speakers, the topics, but if they would like that the audience interacts more [...] they should make a workshop set up [...] Not like we are just students listening to the high-level experts give their talks [...] They should also have discussion groups [...] then you learn more from exchanging with other people.

The talks, as described by Rosli & Rossi, were constructed in a more passive sphere where the participants received knowledge from a knowledge source (e.g. speaker). When re-evaluating the application of a model to the general public, the findings show that Knowledge sharing Model 1 would be more suitable, since this audience group acted more as recipients than agents of a knowledge exchange.



Model 1 applied to Public programme audience

4.4.2 Instrumental value

Instrumental value is when culture is used to generate values that can be translated into concrete numbers, which can be seen in the form of social and economic impact (Holden, 2006). Almost fifteen years ago Holden called attention for the difficulty of attesting these values and determining a causal relation between culture and socio-economic benefits, due to, among others issues, “temporal remoteness, complexity of the interaction, the context in which it takes place, and the multiplicity of other factors impacting on the result.” (p. 16). In a more recent evaluation of Holden’s values, Letunić (2019) noticed an improvement in studies measuring the social and economic impacts of cultural activities, but mentioned the importance of qualitative studies that understand instrumental values through the perspectives of individuals who experience culture.

As previously mentioned, this research does not approach the instrumental values generated by the Verbier Art Summit through quantitative data, but acquires a brief look from the audience towards their interactions with indirect stakeholders (external interactions taking place outside the event space/time) and the view from the organization in how they see the engagement of their audience after the event. Therefore, it was hard to determine here the instrumental values generated by the event, but the research rather showed a glimpse of the potentials of knowledge reverberation from the Verbier Art Summit outwards.

Long-term (on and offline) engagement

According to Bathelt & Cohendet (2014), platforms are concerned with the full engagement of its audiences. This full engagement can be understood through direct involvement, such as all year round online and/or offline engagement and contact with the platform itself. Full involvement can also be given in a more indirect form, in which audiences feel a subjective connection with the platform. This happens when they use the knowledge gained, keep contact or develop collaborations with the people they met via the platform, and even by spreading the knowledge to others outside the platform’s network (Orefice, 2018).

When asked about the long-term engagement of its audience, the organization noted the importance of keeping the audience involved all year round, so that their connection with the organization does not get lost. According to both Project Manager and Strategy Director, the engagement before and after the event in Verbier happens mainly through online campaigns, namely social media posts, short videos taken from the event uploaded to YouTube, and the newsletters.

The participants of this study shared mixed views regarding the long-term engagement with the Verbier Art Summit. When it comes to online engagement, most interviewees considered it weak, both prior and post event. The online presence of the Verbier Art Summit was seen as minimal and not inviting enough. Most negative criticism was directed precisely at the online campaigns named by the organization: the event's social media was seen as non-interactive and running behind the possibilities offered by such online platforms, and the newsletter was considered too extensive, containing dense and uncaptivating text.

Even though most participants have not felt included and engaged by the event's online actions, the majority acknowledged the relevance of the event's live stream, that makes the talks available online, reaching a wider audience. They also expressed interest in a more engaging digital platform, if one was to be developed as an extension of the event. In the context of lockdowns due to Covid-19, participants mentioned the importance of being in touch with platforms that stimulated online discussions, and events that followed up with a more personal touch by, for instance, creating smaller online discussion groups in which everyone had the chance to share knowledge.

Although the Strategy Director reinforced the live stream as a unique feature of the Summit, she recognized the weakness regarding the organization's online presence:

I believe that this [engagement] is one of the struggles we are facing currently. So basically we don't engage our audience before and after the Summit. At least not enough. We try, but the results are nihil. So we are constantly discussing ways to improve this, and working gradually on it.

Regarding the offline involvement, the students interviewed who also volunteered at the Summit felt very engaged, since they maintained communication and had encounters with the organization before the event. The fact that they had to develop a project to be shown at the event stimulated collaborations among students and professors of the HEAD Genève (Haute École d'Arts Appliqués) before the event, and strengthened the bond among the students of the Master Space and Communication Design after the Summit.

Although measuring the impact of knowledge spread by the attendees in their local environments was not within the scope of this study, it has been observed that for most participants, the long-term engagement with the platform happened through a more indirect form. They were able to share the knowledge gained during the event with their local

networks in the return to their home countries/cities. This knowledge was spread through collaborations that started during the weekend in Verbier and were extended to other situations after the event, but also through external collaborations with individuals and organizations who did not have per se a close connection with the Verbier Art Summit.

For the audience, a common understanding of collaboration was the idea of encountering people sharing similar values and the same wish to develop joint projects. Some of these encounters were initiated in the spirit of finding partnerships and contacts that could help solve professional issues. Others did not start with this goal, but ended up yielding fruitful ideas for further joint actions. Here, the contrast between public and private programme attendees was again noticed, as most interviewees who had access to the private programme mentioned having developed fruitful collaborations after the event, while public programme audience voiced not having encountered many possibilities for developing collaborations, but expressed their willingness and wish that it would have happened.

This contrast was mainly observed in the opportunities for starting collaborations. When it comes to the spreading of what had been learned during the event in their local environments, the majority of participants (private and public programme) communicated their enthusiasm in sharing the knowledge gained at the Summit with work colleagues, family and other individuals and organizations they were in touch with, when returning from Verbier. As it was told by Interviewee 3, knowledge gained at the Summit was also translated into more practical forms, such as writing an application for funding:

Within our Research Centre after I came back, I shared a lot of things with the other members of my team. We talked a lot about the kind of messages we want to send and how we might structure future seminars. That was directly passed on in a way, and I think some of that knowledge definitely contributed to writing funding proposals that we've been working on [...] All these things I learned, it's definitely affecting my thinking and in consequence the people that are around me.

Most interviewees also spoke of an urgent feeling to take action, arising after their participation in the Summit. They felt inspired and motivated to promote changes and take a more practical approach in their local environments, as explained by Interviewee 5: "I got out of there with so many ideas, motivation to make an impact, take some real action. I am a teacher, so I brought these discussions to my students [...] We even started a project inspired in the works of Joan Jonas."

As the Verbier Art Summit claims to be an “international platform for discourse”, it was pertinent to ask the organization about their role in facilitating and nurturing knowledge processes after the event. They stressed that the Summit is committed to simulating post event collaborations amongst its visitors and speakers, but that happens almost naturally due to the event’s non transactional character. That means, according to the Strategy Director, that since the Summit’s main focus is on exchanging knowledge, visitors have the chance to switch from commercially oriented to collaborative interactions:

When you bring influential people together, like a famous art collector together with a museum director and an artist, they get inspired by each other and have more opportunities to start new projects, instead of other art related initiatives where it’s all based on the financial value of art.

Furthermore, both Strategy Director and Project Manager have mentioned their yearly publication as their main resource for spreading knowledge after the event. The book, which focuses on the event’s yearly theme, gathers speakers’ exclusive contributions in the form of text and some additions by the audience, such as drawings, notes, doodles. They are distributed as gifts to members, and the launch events are open to the public and announced in the event’s newsletter, social media and website. The sale of the books is also available online and in museum shops worldwide for a price ranging from €14 to €23.

When the interviews of this study were carried, the book was still not publicly available, therefore it was not considered as a point of relevance. However, it is important to mention that when participants were asked about it, some knew about the existence of the book, others did not. But overall, the publication was not seen as extremely special (except for Interviewee 3, which specifically mentioned the book as a pleasant connection with the Verbier Art Summit after the event).

The Strategy Director said that when it comes to stimulating and facilitating exchange and sharing of knowledge by audience and speakers after the event, the organization still has a long way ahead: “I believe we have a lot to improve. I think we can organize more Q&As online, give people all over the world the opportunity to ask questions, for the general public, making the live streams not only sending but letting them participate.”

5. Conclusions

This research consisted of an exploratory journey, with the main goal to investigate the extent to which audiences contribute to shaping the knowledge platform character of events. To help develop an in-depth exploration, sub questions were raised about the relevance of knowledge in the audience experience, the knowledge-intensive processes that took place during and after the event, and what makes an event a (knowledge) platform. In order to attain the insights that unfolded from these questions, the focus was given to an in-depth single case study, namely the Verbier Art Summit, an organization/yearly event that functions as an international platform for discourse. The study looked at the audience who attended the 2020 Verbier Art Summit, and also gathered brief testimonies from employees of the organization.

The findings suggest that knowledge played a significant role in the Verbier Art Summit's audience participation in the event. They were in line with the research developed by Lamb (2015) and the study of Colombo & Marques (2019), showing that one of the main motivations for the participants to attend the event was their search for learning. Beyond being a major motivation, knowledge seemed to be at the center of the audience experience. It has been manifested in many different situations, and took on different shapes depending on the sphere in which it was inserted.

As recognized in large part of the knowledge literature by authors such as Nonaka et al. (2000) and Dombrowski et al. (2013), knowledge has an active nature and it is constantly reshaping and readapting. The findings showed a wide diversity in the forms of knowledge experienced by the audience: they gained a sense awareness towards many topics, felt inspired and more open minded, transformed reflexion into practical actions, felt more respectful towards different opinions, and applied changes/improvements to their daily lives. This diversity and richness of knowledge forms shows a pertinent approach of the Verbier Art Summit's towards passing on knowledge, unravelling novel discussions and clarifying complex topics.

Another question raised in this study was in relation to the knowledge-intensive processes that took place during the event. The drive to learn and the wish for self-improvement were points that stood out from the results of the research when it comes to the search for knowledge amongst participants. This supports a large part of the literature on seeking knowledge, as according to Jensen (2007), knowledge seekers are proactive researchers, who are constantly looking for ways to gain new knowledge and develop themselves through this fresh knowledge acquired. It was interesting to notice that the

audience of the Verbier Art Summit sought knowledge in many different ways inside and outside the event time frame. Not only the talks and debates were considered channels for gaining new knowledge, but informal social interactions were seen as equally meaningful to learn something new. When the event had finished, the search for knowledge continued, as the audience felt the need for researching and diving deeper into certain topics that were introduced during the event. This shows that the process of seeking knowledge is not only contained to the event itself, but it remains afterwards.

When it comes to assimilating knowledge gained at the event, the findings of this study agree with the literature in terms of the absorptive capacity of organizations (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990) and individuals (Sjödin et al., 2019). For the audience of the Verbier Art Summit, learning was closely related to attaching value to the knowledge gained. Although not vastly discussed in the literature, this research observed the individual versus the collective aspect of knowledge assimilation. While part of the audience needed more introspection in order to absorb what had been received and exchanged, others saw in the collective experience a more suitable way to assimilate knowledge. This reinforces the importance of a versatile and embracing approach when it comes to event organization and design, that should take into account the diversity of knowledge processes experienced by audiences.

The contrast in the way the different segments of the audience experienced processes of sharing and exchange of knowledge is worthy of attention. As several studies have noted, social interactions are crucial for meaningful exchanges of knowledge among individuals (Nonaka et al, 2000; Reychav & Te'eni, 2009; Nedon, 2015). The opportunity for engaging in social interactions during the Verbier Art Summit varied immensely depending on the audience group. The *members* and part of the *students* (with access to the private programme) engaged in fruitful social interactions that generated exchanges of knowledge. The *general public*, who participated in the public programme activities, did not consider having exchanged knowledge since they encountered little opportunities to take part in social contact with others. This separation of the event in private and public activities can seriously compromise the knowledge platform character of the Verbier Art Summit. General public attendees expressed feelings of discomfort and exclusion, and have sensed at times an inhospitable atmosphere during the weekend of the event. This seemed to have generated a gap in the experience of knowledge exchanged. Although the Verbier Art Summit claims to be an international platform that aims to make knowledge accessible, it was noticed that the main tool for possibilitating this accessibility seems to be the online live stream of the talks,

as it was stressed by the organization itself. During the event, strategies to nurture exchanges of knowledge among all participants are still flawed, seeing that there is a clear unbalance in opportunities offered to private and public programme attendees.

When it comes to the investigation of the knowledge platform character of the event, questions were raised about the traits, circumstances and conditions that can shape an event as a knowledge platform. The idea of understanding events as platforms is still underexplored within the existing event research. In the past five years, a few authors have been investigating the broader values, benefits and impacts of events in external environments and stakeholders. The view of events participants is not often considered, and that is the gap that this research tries to fill. For Richards (2020), certain events are able to provoke the emergence of platforms and networks, which consist of connectors between the event and external agents. In the view of Marques et al. (2020), events can turn into platforms for social interactions that strengthen community identity and contribute to social cohesion. The research of Sacco (2017) and Orefice (2018) defend that events become platforms when they are able to nurture strong and long-term ties with all their stakeholders, especially their audience.

In this research, the findings suggest that events can be considered platforms due to a combination of factors. Platforms are concerned with the well-being of their audiences, they are able to recognize their intrinsic values and make these values clear in such a way that they are appreciated by their stakeholders. Events that function as platforms are able to spread messages that circulate in the event environment outward. They generate awareness surrounding their chosen agenda and instigate practical actions and societal improvements in the long run. When it comes to knowledge platforms, they focus on knowledge processes and give knowledge the leading role. It can also be argued that being a knowledge platform means offering physical and virtual realms where individuals have both a space and a sphere that collaborates to a long-term knowledge rich experience. In a knowledge platform, individuals feel safe and comfortable to engage in knowledge-intensive interactions, in which they do not only work as passive recipients of knowledge, but they become active agents in exchange dynamics. Knowledge platforms are concerned with spreading and expanding knowledge accessibility in a more permanent manner.

This study tries to place an event on a gradual scale of factors that help shaping the attributes of a knowledge platform. The Verbier Art Summit presented, through the perspectives of the audience and of the organization, several characteristics that contribute to the knowledge platform character of the event.

Primarily, the event has knowledge at the core of its activities: the talks, debates, cultural programme and the other activities developed outside the event environment are focused on the generation and spread of knowledge. The event also presents many attributes that contribute to knowledge sharing and exchange: the attention to achieving a balance in the audience, ensuring, at the same time, diversity and a common denominator among participants (shared passion for art, common interest in the theme); the interdisciplinarity observed in the speakers' talks, factor that helps participants to gain multiple perspectives in a wide range of disciplines; and the dynamic programme, which is able to provide different approaches to knowledge and therefore, contribute to multiple situations in which knowledge processes take place.

However, there are two factors that play a significant role in enabling exchanges and therefore, add to the knowledge platform character of events, but seem to be weak points of the Verbier Art Summit: the existence of an atmosphere where people feel comfortable and stimulated to share, and the long-term engagement with its audience. The separation of the event in two different types of programmes seems to undermine the potential of an environment where knowledge is abundant, but social interactions and opportunities for exchanges are not fully exploited. The lack of actions and online presence pre and post-event do not nurture long-term engagement and diminish the potential for knowledge exchanges and collaborations among the audience. These points should be carefully weighed by the organization when developing strategies for making knowledge accessible and sustaining the position as a platform for debate.

The main limitation of this research lies in the single case study design, and its difficult generalizability. This makes the findings specifically applicable to this particular case. Even though the results show an extensive and elaborate analysis of the audience's view when it comes to their knowledge experiences during and after the Verbier Art Summit, it is hard to affirm that they could be extended to understand knowledge processes in other events. Other weakness lies in the qualitative method used, since the semi-structured interview approach leaves a large window for multiple interpretations of concepts. The conceptualization of events as (knowledge) platforms can also be considered shortcoming. The idea of perceiving events as platforms is yet quite novel, which gave the researcher little ground to assemble the theoretical framework regarding this point. This possibly led to flaws in building an in-depth conceptualization of what constitutes the platform character of events.

As recommendations for future research, expanding the study of platforms to larger populations would mean a great addition to the characterization of events as platforms.

Furthermore, the models of knowledge sharing and knowledge exchange developed in this study helped to understand the specific dynamics of such processes and the optimal scenarios for exchanges to flourish. As future research, the author suggests applying and readapting these models to different types of events and observing its pitfalls and advantages. Another relevant path would be to go beyond these models and develop a scale of the platform character of events, which would demand larger studies on different types of events and what potential they bring to the table.

This research has also shown the enormous contribution of audiences. They play a relevant role in shaping the distinctiveness of an event. In the case of knowledge platforms, audiences can function as agents that have an active role during the event and afterwards, when they spread knowledge to a wider sphere. Even with the acknowledgement of their significance in events, there is much more to uncover when it comes to audiences. Their role as knowledge spreaders in their local communities is still underexplored, as well as their potential as advocates and actual collaborating partners of events.

Another point slightly touched upon in this research was the audience desire to engage in online experiences in which they can actively contribute. This shows the potential for future research to investigate how audiences and events will evolve in the virtual scenario. In the light of the past societal events of 2020, we have seen the struggles of the creative and cultural sector, especially when it comes to events. Lockdowns and social distancing brought financial instability and doubts in how we will conduct events in the future. But we have also seen the resilience and quick adaptation of the field, which is at this moment still looking for ways to remain sustainable and relevant in society. Online forms of events such as webinars, live streams, zoom lectures and discussions are completely reshaping our understanding of events, audiences and experience. When we need to limit our physical encounters, exchanging knowledge through screens seems to be at the center of online events, and the limits between the idea of audiences and active contributors become even blurrier. Will all events be as per definition knowledge platforms? Will we still use terms such as audience and visitor to describe individuals that take part in events? Regardless of the answers to these questions, human connection is now more meaningful than ever. Events, independently of their virtual or physical aspect, are able to nurture and further develop our collective bond, and therefore, they will remain evolving and contributing to a more connected society.

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Appendix A

Informed Consent Form



CONSENT REQUEST FOR PARTICIPATING IN RESEARCH

Project Title	Events as knowledge platforms: the case of the Verbier Art Summit through an audience perspective
Name of Principal Investigator	Maria Manoela Hartung Ribeiro Email address: 484993mh@eur.nl
Name of Organisation	Erasmus University Rotterdam
Purpose of the Study	<p>You are invited to participate in a research about how audiences contribute to events as knowledge platforms. This study focuses on the specific case of the Verbier Art Summit.</p> <p>The purpose of the study is to understand the way in which the participants of events exchange and use the knowledge acquired during the event's activities. As well as achieving a better perception of how audiences experience events and what makes events function as knowledge platforms.</p>
Procedures	<p>You will participate in an interview lasting approximately from 45 to 60 minutes. You may interrupt your participation at any time.</p> <p>This research project involves making an audio recording of the interview with you.</p>
Potential and anticipated Risks and Discomforts	There are no obvious physical, legal or economic risks associated with participating in this study. You do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to answer. Your participation is voluntary and you are free to discontinue your participation at any time.
Confidentiality	<p>Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law. Unless you prefer to be fully identified (first name, last name, occupation, etc.), your participation will be anonymous. No personally identifiable information will be reported in any research product.</p> <p>Results of this study will be made available to you upon request.</p>

	Transcribed segments from the audio recordings may be used in published forms (e.g., journal articles and book chapters). In the case of publication, pseudonyms will be used.
Compensation	There is no monetary compensation for your participation.
Right to Withdraw and Questions	<p>If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalised. If you decide to stop taking part in the study, if you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or if you need to report an injury related to the research, you may contact (anonymously, if you wish):</p> <p>Lenia Marques, Erasmus School of History, Culture and Communication, Department of Arts and Culture Studies, Erasmus University Rotterdam.</p> <p>Email address: marques@eshcc.eur.nl</p>
Statement of Consent	<p>If you sign this consent form, your signature will be the only documentation of your identity.</p> <p>You do not need to sign this form. In order to minimize risks and protect your identity, you may prefer to consent orally. Your recorded oral consent is sufficient.</p>
Audio recording	<p>I consent to have my interview audio recorded</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> yes</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> no</p>
Signature and Date	NAME PARTICIPANT
	SIGNATURE
	DATE

Appendix B

List of interviewees

Audience

Interviewees	Professional background	Cultural background	Audience Group	Interview Date	Interview Length
Interviewee 1	Space & Communication Design Student	India	Student	29/06/2020	00:44:57
Interviewee 2	Graphic Design Student	Italy	Student	30/06/2020	01:01:30
Interviewee 3	Artist and researcher	United Kingdom	Member	30/06/2020	00:40:47
Interviewee 4	Artist	Sweden	Member	01/07/2020	00:57:53
Interviewee 5	Teacher	Spain	General Public	02/07/2020	00:35:28
Interviewee 6	Arts student	Germany/ Brazil	Student	07/07/2020	00:45:24
Interviewee 7	Financial investor	Israel/ Sweden	Member	07/07/2020	00:34:49
Interviewee 8	Financial investor and fundraising consultant	United States	Member	08/07/2020	00:43:57
Interviewee 9	Cultural consultant	United Kingdom/ Colombia	General Public	08/07/2020	00:39:35
Interviewee 10	PR & Communications expert	The Netherlands	Member	08/07/2020	01:18:09
Interviewee 11	Environmental consultant	China	General Public	14/07/2020	00:45:00
Interviewee 12	Space & Communication Design Student	Lebanon/ France	Student	15/07/2020	00:35:15
Interviewee 13	Artist	Switzerland	General Public	16/07/2020	00:51:09

Organization

Interviewees	Professional background	Cultural background	Interview Date	Interview Length
Alison Pasquariello	Former Project Manager of the Verbier Art Summit	United States	17/08/2020	00:23:12
Fleur Greebe	2020 Strategy Committee of the Verbier Art Summit	The Netherlands	18/08/2020	00:24:27

Appendix C

Interview Guide

Research questions	Concepts	Interview questions
<i>Introductory questions</i>	Introduction	<p>First, I would like to get to know you. What is your background and/or profession?</p> <p>Could you tell me a little bit about your relationship with the Verbier Art Summit?</p> <p>What were the motivations for you to participate in the event?</p> <p>What are you looking for in such an event? Why this event and not others?</p>
<p><i>What is the role of knowledge in the audience's experience in such events?</i></p> <p><i>How do knowledge processes (such as knowledge sharing, exchange, etc) happen during (and after) the event?</i></p>	<p>Audience and event profile/ Knowledge exchange/ two-way communication</p> <p>Knowledge exchange and social interactions</p> <p>Creation of new knowledge/ Knowledge characteristics and relevance</p>	<p>Can you describe what is the event like and what have you done there? (<u>Probe questions</u>: which people did you interact with? Why and what for did you interact with them?) How did these social interactions go? how easy or difficult were these exchanges? Why?)</p> <p>In which way do you think these social interactions contributed to your overall experience in the event? (<u>Probe questions</u>: did they make it better, or worse, neutral? How did the event affect your social network?)</p> <p>Did you learn anything at the event? Can you give some examples? (<u>Probe questions</u>: Do you believe you acquired new knowledge during the weekend of the event? If so, in which situations?)</p>

	<p>Creation of new knowledge/ Knowledge characteristics and relevance</p> <p>Knowledge seeking/ Knowledge sharing & exchange/ Knowledge dissemination/ Collaboration</p> <p>Platform instrumental values</p>	<p>Do you think others learned anything from you? Can you tell me more about the situations in which this happened?</p> <p>To what extent is sharing knowledge important in the event? Why / Why not?</p> <p>Did you apply the knowledge gained at the weekend in other situations after the event? Can you tell me how you applied, and in which situations?</p>
<p><i>Which conditions enable events to become knowledge platforms?</i></p>	<p>Safe environment/ interaction/multidisciplinarity Interdisciplinarity/Programme diversity</p> <p>Active participation/Engagement/ Permanent, long term involvement/ Platforms Instrumental values</p>	<p>Do you think you had spaces/situations/possibilities for connecting with other people during the event activities? Can you please describe them? (<u>Probe question</u>: how did you experience the many activities offered during the weekend of the Summit?)</p> <p>Do you think the Summit provided you with opportunities to stay engaged before and after the weekend of the event? How, in which way?</p>
<p><i>Closing questions</i></p>	<p>Platform intrinsic values</p> <p>Conclusive remarks</p>	<p>What did the participation in the Verbier Art Summit bring to you? What do you take from this event?</p> <p>Do you have any questions for me? Is there anything else you would like to add?</p> <p>Thank you!</p>

Appendix C1

Interview questions Audience

1. First, I would like to get to know you. What is your background and/or profession?
2. Could you tell me a little bit about your relationship with the Verbier Art Summit?
3. What were the motivations for you to participate in the event?
4. What are you looking for in such an event? Why this event and not others?
5. Can you describe what is the event like and what have you done there? (Probe questions: which people did you interact with? Why and what for did you interact with them?) How did these social interactions go? how easy or difficult were these exchanges? Why?)
6. In which way do you think these social interactions contributed to your overall experience in the event? (Probe questions: did they make it better, or worse, or neutral? How did the event affect your social network?)
7. Did you learn anything at the event? Can you give some examples? (Probe questions: Do you believe you acquired new knowledge during the weekend of the event? If so, in which situations?)
8. Do you think others learned anything from you? Can you tell me more about the situations in which this happened?
9. Do you think you had spaces/situations/possibilities for connecting with other people during the event activities? Can you please describe them? (Probe question: how did you experience the many activities offered during the weekend of the Summit?)
10. Do you think the Summit provided you with opportunities to stay engaged before and after the weekend of the event? How, in which way?
11. Did you apply the knowledge gained at the weekend in other situations after the event? Can you tell me how you applied, and in which situations?
12. To what extent is sharing knowledge important in the event? Why / Why not?
13. What did the participation in the Verbier Art Summit bring to you? What do you take from this event?

Appendix C2

Interview questions Organization

1. Could you please describe what your role at the Verbier Art Summit is/was?
2. In your opinion, what sets the Verbier Art Summit apart from other cultural events?
3. What does the Verbier Art Summit want to achieve with the annual events?
4. What are the characteristics (profile) of the Verbier Art Summit's audience?
5. How does the Verbier Art Summit see the audience's motivations and expectations for the event? In other words, what does the organization think that the motivations and expectations of the audience are?
6. How does the Verbier Art Summit attract this audience?
7. How does the Verbier Art Summit keep the audience engaged before and after the event?
8. To what extent is sharing knowledge important to the Verbier Art Summit?
9. How would you describe the way in which the Verbier Art Summit facilitates the sharing of knowledge during the event? And after the event?

Appendix D

Code book

Concept	Category	Subcategory	Codes	Description
Audience	Audience profile	Heterogeneity/ Diversity	Multiplicity of international backgrounds	Mix of people with different nationalities/cultural background
			Multiplicity of professional backgrounds	Mix of people with different professional backgrounds
			Intergenerationality	Mix of people belonging to different age groups
		Intellectual level	High level audience	Audience interested in being intellectually challenged, who is able to engage in in-depth conversations, debates
	Audience motivation	Shared passion/ Belong to Community	Interest in art	Passion for art and cultural sector in general, varying from art as a hobby or professional involvement
			Interest in theme	Big interest in being up to date with environmental/ ecological debates
			Search for social interactions	Audience looks for events where they can talk, share meals, discuss with like-minded people
			Build connections	Investment in in-depth personal and professional relationships, that can last after the event

Knowledge	Knowledge characteristics	Personal interest/ Self development	Search for new knowledge	Renewing one's knowledge, looking for new ideas
			Search for new experiences	Appreciation for the unknown, interest in immersing oneself in a new environment, setting, city, climate
			Broaden professional network	Desire to expand contacts for work collaborations
		Experiential/tacit knowledge	Personal experiences	Relates to individual knowledge that comes from one's unique set of circumstances such as cultural/professional background, traveling exposure
			Understanding	Participants value the gaining of clarification about a wide range of topics and different cultures/cultural specificities
			High level knowledge	Knowledge that is considered in-depth, able to generate reflexion and cause an impact
			Mind opening	Feeling of getting out of the event with a mind more open to dialogue towards divergent opinions
			Reshapable knowledge	Knowledge that is able to change from abstract, for instance, acquired from listening to the talks, into concrete or applicable, e.g. used in discussions or in applied into something practical
			Insights	Revelations, ideas that popped up during the event
			Awareness	Knowledge about a topic that needs attention, sense of perception or realization that something is relevant

		Knowledge claims/information	Inspirational knowledge	Knowledge that is a catalyst for reflexion, presents itself in a more abstract manner, hard to be applied
			Superficial knowledge	Shallow knowledge that is not adding much to the event experience
			Superficial interactions	Small talk, quick chats, encounters that last short and add little to the event experience
Knowledge processes	Knowledge seeking	Learning drive	Active contribution	Contributing by actively engaging in discussions and developing contacts for future projects
			Active knowledge search	Participants feel the drive to gain knowledge by asking questions, engaging in conversations and discussions
			Stimulation for post event knowledge seeking	Participants feel stimulated to seek further knowledge after the event
	Knowledge sharing/transfer	Lack of social interactions	Inhospitable environment	It does not provide atmosphere for engaging in new encounters and meeting people, feeling of intimidation in approaching people,
			Superficial interactions	Small talk, quick chats, encounters that last short and add little to the event experience
			Private x public programme	(Negative) contrast between programmes, often creating a feeling of being left out, exclusion
			Few opportunities	Refers to little possibilities encountered by participants to engage in in-depth social interactions

		Presence of social interactions/ communication	Familiarity	Meeting the same people multiple times, and therefore creating a certain bond
			Intimacy/Safe environment	Feeling comfortable around fellow audience, no fear to speak and share knowledge
			Informality	Refers to the relaxed atmosphere, casual settings encountered in the event
			Openness to share	Ability to speak freely and openly with others and the feeling of being heard, helped by the sense of a safe environment
			Broadening social network (professional + personal)	Participants are able to develop connections during the event, leaving with a broader network of contacts, both work and private life related
	Application/ Dissemination of knowledge	Learning	Openness to share	Ability to speak freely and openly with others and the feeling of being heard, helped by the sense of a safe environment
			Multiple perspectives	Feeling of learning something from the several ways of thinking and diverse backgrounds of participants
			Cultural exchange	Exchange of personal/professional experiences among people with different nationalities/cultural background
			Personal enrichment	Participants feel that they gained knowledge that can improve their personal lives

			Professional enrichment	Participants feel that they gained knowledge that can improve their professional lives
			Rethinking professional/personal values	Learning experiences generate re-evaluation of work practices and life purposes
			Awareness	Sense of acquiring new knowledge about a specific topic that needs attention and care, sense of perception or realization that something is relevant
		Applying/disseminating Knowledge	Taking action	Feeling of urgency to take actual steps and measures upon topics discussed at the event, generally followed by actual achievements
			Collaboration	Participants are able to encounter possibilities for sharing and receiving knowledge during the event, and for projects and partnerships after the event
			Time effect	Applying knowledge gained during event takes time
Events as knowledge platforms	Intrinsic value	Audience experience	Reinforcement of identity	Feeling of getting out of the event with a better understanding of one's identity
			Fun, happiness, coziness	Participants have a feeling of satisfaction and enjoyment throughout the event, and experience contentment after the event
			Collective experience	Situations experienced in group settings make the event special, generating a sense of belonging to a community

			Learning	Feeling of getting out of the event with new, fresh knowledge
			Personal growth	Participants feel that their knowledge base is enlarged, renovated, which consequently generates improvements in their personal lives
		Platform experience	Interdisciplinarity	Mix of people coming from different branches of knowledge
			Dynamism/Programme diversity	Lively character of the event, especially due to the mix of knowledge-intensive activities (talks, debates) with more relaxed settings such as drinks, meals, walks. Refers to the multiple and diverse range of activities offered during the weekend of the event
			Format enabler of social interactions	Format with talks and debates facilitated the exchanges amongst participants
			Format disabler of social interactions	Format with little opportunities for social gatherings did not facilitate exchanges
			Uniqueness	Distinctive character of the event, often related to its location, format, setting and choice of themes
	Instrumental value	Indirect stakeholders	Presence of long-term involvement	Participants feel that there is enough opportunities for engagement (on and/or offline) before and after the event
			Lack of long-term involvement	Not enough opportunities for engagement (on and/or offline) before and after the event

			Knowledge spreading/spillover	Participants feel the need to spread knowledge gained at event in their local environments
			Post event engagement/collaborations	Participants were able to encounter possibilities for projects and partnerships after the event
			Wish to generate local impact	Desire to help changing and improving local causes and environments by taking action

Appendix E

2020 Verbier Art Summit Public Programme

2020 PROGRAMME

FRIDAY 31 JANUARY

Mid-day inspiration

13.15-14.15: Workshop by Julie's
Bicycle – **Alison**

Tickell

W Hotel, Verbier

13.15-14.15: Verbier 3-D Foundation
– *Erratic Expedition* with **Karsten**

Födinger

Medran

14.30-18.00 Talks programme

W Hotel, Verbier

14.30-14.35: Welcome – **Anneliek**
Sijbrandij,

Founder Verbier Art Summit

14.35-14.45: Introduction – **Jessica**
Morgan,

Dia Art Foundation

14.45-15.05: **Joan Jonas**: Artist in
conversation

with Jessica Morgan

15.05-15.25: **El Último Grito**:

Professor of Design Practice Roberto
Feo & Rosario Hurtado

15.25-15.45: **Djamila Ribeiro** –
Philosopher

15.45-16.00: Q&A panel

16.00-16.30: Break

16.30-16.50: **Adrian Lahoud** –
Architect

16.50-17.10: **Dominique Gonzalez-**
Foerster – Artist

17.10-17.30: **Philippe Rahm** –
Architect

17.30-17.45: Q&A panel

17.45-18.00: Closing remarks

– **Jessica Morgan**,

Dia Art Foundation

Evening programme

22.30-0.00: Screening of three short
films from the Biennale de l'Image en
Mouvement:

Karimah Ashadu, *Red*

Gold; **Eduardo Williams** with Mariano
Blatt, *Parsi*; **Korakrit**

Arunanondchai, *No History in a*
Room filled with People with Funny

Names. The film screening will be
followed by a talk with Eduardo

Williams and Biennale curator, **Andrea**
Lissoni

Verbier Cinema

SATURDAY 1 FEBRUARY

Mid-day inspiration

13.15-14.00: Verbier Festival – Talk
and live performance of **Gabriel**

Prokofiev's Suite for Global

Junk, *Import/Export* with

percussionist **Joby Burgess**

W Hotel, Verbier

13.15-14.15: Verbier 3-D Foundation –

Sculpture Park art walk in the snow

Medran at 13.00

14.30-18.30 Talks programme

W Hotel, Verbier

14.30-14.35: Welcome – **Anneliek**
Sijbrandij,

Founder Verbier Art Summit^[1]_{SEP}

14.35-14.45: Introduction – **Jessica**
Morgan,

Dia Art Foundation

14.45-15.05: **Andrea Bowers** – Artist

15.05-15.25: **Dorothea von**

Hantelmann –

Professor of Art and Society

15.25-15.45: **Elvira Dyangani Ose** –
Curator

15.45-16.00: Q&A panel

16.00-16.30: Break

16.30-16.50: In conversation: **Cristina**
Davies – UNHCR & **Daniel Maselli** –
the SDC

16.50-17.10: **Jennifer Allora** – Artist

17.10-17.30: **Stefan Kaegi** – Artist

17.30-17.50: **Alison Tickell** – Julie's
Bicycle

17.50-18.05: Q&A panel

18.05-18.30: Aperitif & Closing
presentation – **Jessica Morgan**, Dia
Art Foundation

Evening programme

23.00: DJ set featuring **Gabriel**

Prokofiev offering a fresh approach to
classical and electronic dance music

L'Étoile, Verbier

SUNDAY 2 FEBRUARY

16.00-17.30: **Table Ronde on**

ecology with local stakeholders: la

Commune de Bagnes, Altis,

Televerbier, la Société de

Développement de Verbier et Verbier
Festival.

Chalet Orny, Verbier