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Nordic Culture Fund Strategy

2019—2022

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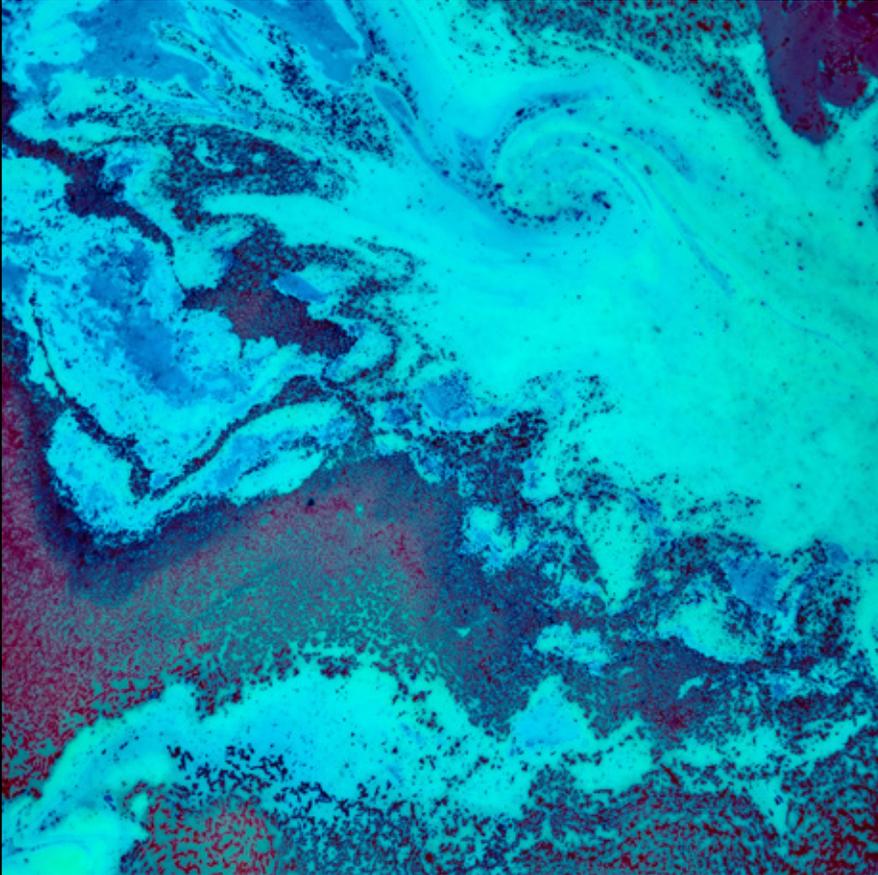
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Introduction

The Nordic region has a population of 27 million people, and covers a geographical area the size of the seventh largest nation in the world. Worldwide, the Nordic region is the twelfth largest economy. Culture and art form one of the cornerstones of the Region's extensive co-operation, and art and culture help to give the Nordic region an ever-increasing significance in relation to the rest of the world. This is the area in which the Nordic Culture Fund operates, and it is here we can make a difference.

The Nordic Culture Fund has been working in the area of cultural co-operation since 1966, on the basis of an agreement signed by the Nordic countries. The Fund is an independent body which was intended from the start be able to act freely and rapidly, without having to be subject to review by national interests.

A survey of the Nordic Culture Fund shows that we are currently creating value in several areas of Nordic arts and culture. In particular, the Fund contributes to extending Nordic networks and contacts. Such networks and contacts provide the starting-point for developing new and innovative methods, approaches and activities to enhance the artistic quality of both the supported projects and of Nordic arts and cultural life in general. At the same time, the Fund contributes to increasing the accessibility of art and culture and the international range of artists. However, we have also identified a number of challenges, trends and factors that we should address in our work going forward. Accordingly, in this strategy we have identified three overall objectives and five cross-cutting strategic focus areas that will set the direction for our work in the coming period.

The Nordic Culture Fund operates in a well-developed sphere of Nordic art and cultural life. For many years, the Nordic countries have enjoyed an extensive cultural life, characterised by strong commitment from the state, civil society and citizens. However, the Nordic welfare societies have also undergone major changes over the past 30 years, which have meant a

change in the role of cultural policy, art and culture in general. Following the economic crisis of the 1970s, there was a shift in the administration of cultural policy in the Nordic countries. As a result, the view of the role of culture in the lives of the inhabitants of the Nordic region has changed, as has the view of human life and society. The human being is now seen as both a part of society and a bearer of its own interests, in which the acquisition of culture becomes a way to develop creativity and live an independent and reflective life. The initiatives of cultural policy administration have also changed the conditions for the practitioners of art and culture. The goal of streamlining and quality-assuring cultural life has created new challenges for cultural leadership, freedom of expression and the risk-taking that is inherent to artistic endeavour.

In this light, the Nordic Culture Fund may be regarded as a public player with independent funds, the distribution of which does not derive from directly politically-controlled decisions. This position has become even more important in our own day, and must form the starting-point for the future work of the Fund. Through this strategy, we aim to ensure that culture can be without borders and open to encounters – so that all Nordic citizens, both new and established, can enjoy the same right to participate in cultural civil society, and so that Nordic relevance can be enhanced and renewed, with a global focus in mind.

- ¹ State of the Nordic Region 2018, Nordic Council of Ministers
- ² Interessent- og omverdensanalyse Nordic Culture Fund 2018, Oxford Research

Facts

The activities of the Nordic Culture Fund are governed by an intergovernmental agreement called the 'Agreement between Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden on the Nordic Culture Fund', which was signed in 1966 and most recently amended in 2002.

Under the agreement, the sphere of activity of the Fund encompasses Nordic cultural co-operation in its full extent, both within and outside the Nordic region. The agreement is intergovernmental, and any changes to the agreement must be ratified by each Nordic country.

The Nordic Culture Fund is an independent legal entity associated with the Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers.

The Nordic Culture Fund is bound and managed by a board, whose 13 members are appointed by the Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers. Each Nordic country is represented by two participants, while the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland each have one representative.

The Fund currently has a budget of approximately DKK 36 million. The grants of the Nordic Culture Fund are financed from the budget of the Nordic Council of Ministers, which is approved by the Nordic Council.

According to its agreement, the Fund may also receive other funding for its purposes. Most recently, the Fund has received financial support from the Nordic Council of Ministers for Culture, the Ministry of Education and Culture in Finland, the Danish Arts Foundation in Denmark and the Swedish government for a joint Nordic initiative in the field of music.

On an annual basis, the Fund allocates financial support to around 250 cultural projects in and outside the Nordic region. It also supports, creates and participates in the promotion, development and communication of knowledge of art and culture, and simulates the development of cultural policy in the Nordic region.

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Mission

The Nordic Culture Fund works to support innovative and dynamic artistic and cultural life in the Nordic Region that is diverse, accessible and of high quality.

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Overall objectives

Through this mission, we wish to stimulate the development of art and culture at all levels in the Nordic region, as well as in a global context. A qualitatively well-functioning arts and culture milieu helps to develop the creative communities and environments that characterise the Nordic region. This is the foundation for ensuring that art and culture can be free and open to new encounters, new players and new discoveries.

Overall objectives

The Nordic Culture Fund has three overall objectives. Common to all activities of the Fund in the coming period is that it they will support one or more of these three overall objectives

The Nordic Culture Fund will promote the production, innovation and communication of arts and culture in the Nordic region and globally.

The Nordic Culture Fund must work on the basis of knowledge-based administration of its grants allocations. The grants must help to improve the possibilities for artists and cultural players to jointly create quality, and thereby produce and communicate art and cultural expressions with Nordic relevance, in both Nordic and global contexts. In its grant allocations, the Fund will support risk-taking, networking and knowledge development. As a general rule, the Fund will not provide support for the basic financing of companies.

The Nordic Culture Fund will promote artistic and cultural networks at all levels within the Nordic cultural co-operation.

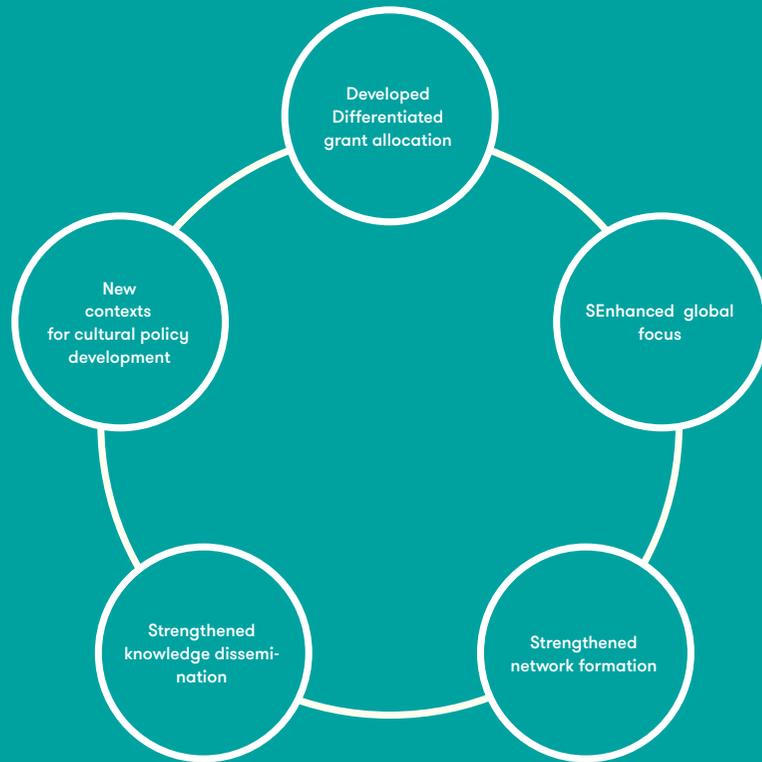
Networking, knowledge-sharing and mutual inspiration are essential to ensure that the work of the Fund is anchored in art and culture in the Nordic region, and that the Fund continues to have a legitimate role in Nordic cultural co-operation. Besides supporting the formation of long-term relations

through financial support, the Fund will work proactively to promote and participate in networks, e.g. in specific sectors and at regional, national and international level.

The Nordic Culture Fund will develop and communicate knowledge of arts and cultural life in order to stimulate the development of cultural policy in the Nordic region.

The Nordic Culture Fund is uniquely positioned to play a role as an active disseminator of knowledge, creating new possibilities and structures in order to collect and convey knowledge of art and culture. The Fund will thereby stimulate the development of cultural policy discussions in order to support and influence the opportunities for arts and culture to develop and form a significant, legitimate and contemporary part of society in the Nordic region and the rest of the world.

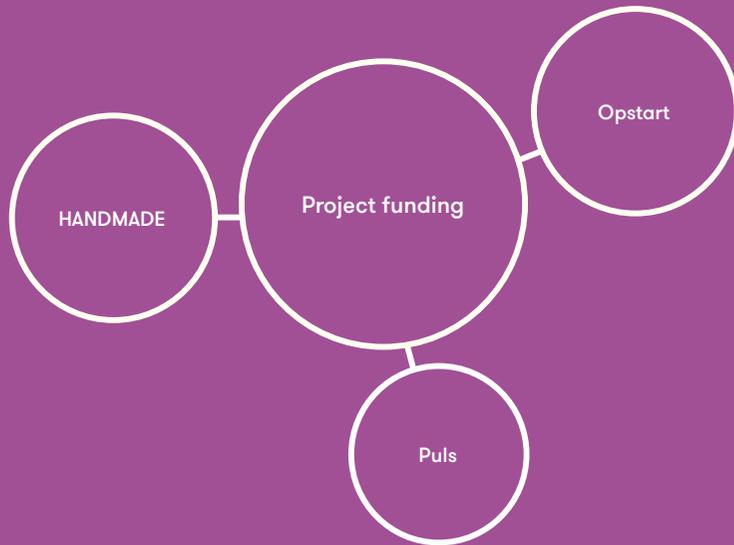


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Cross-cutting strategic initiatives

On the basis of the overall objectives, we have formulated five cross-cutting strategic initiatives, each of which supports the overall objectives, thereby setting the direction for the Fund's work in the coming period.

The five strategic initiatives reflect development potentials and challenges that the Fund's secretariat, experts and board have analysed and discussed with resource persons in separate strategic networks. At the same time, they are an expression of efforts in areas where we can see that the Fund can continue its development and make a difference. Although they exert a mutual influence on each other, the five strategic focus areas are presented separately in the following sections.

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Developed differentiated grant allocation

What do we see?

The ambition to support arts and culture that is characterised by diversity, accessibility and high quality requires a differentiated grant allocation practice that is open and able to capture new trends. This has been developed by the Fund in recent years through the OPSTART, HANDMADE and puls support programmes, with new criteria for all project support. This has allowed us to reach entirely new target groups and facilitate the building up of new, strong relations and forms of co-operation.

However, the development of differentiated grant allocation also requires the development of an overall view. It is no longer merely a question of considering applications for individual projects, but about developing networks and relations in a long-term perspective. It takes time to build up lasting relations, and sometimes there is also a need to try out different collaborative constellations before the applicants can find out what works and who they work well with.

In the coming period, the Fund's grant allocations will therefore provide opportunities for project support on the basis of a broader overall view and a longer time perspective.

Initiatives

As a cross-cutting strategic initiative, the Fund is working to develop differentiated grants allocations in more holistically-oriented processes, both internally and externally. This means that we work in the following developmental tracks:

- We are working for applications in the interim to be processed in a uniform and well-developed application system which provides better possibilities for creating an integral whole and gaining knowledge of the supported projects.
- We are developing our support programmes with a long-term dimension in mind, so that the grants can improve the possibility of creating networks that will provide a foundation for increased quality and innovation.
- We are working to develop our following-up on the support provided, to allow more knowledge of artistic and cultural life to be collected, thereby ensuring a relevant approach to funding opportunities and a balance in relation to the development of targeted thematic initiatives.

Enhanced global focus

What do we see?

The starting-point for many approaches and initiatives under the agenda of “internationalisation” argues for the relevance of seeing oneself in relation to the world, and the world in relation to oneself. Many countries simultaneously act with



contradictory demands for a national focus and a competitive strategy in relation to the rest of the world. But the world is becoming ever more borderless, in a time of dissolution, when the models that were previously characteristic of international efforts are no longer quite so relevant. The public diplomacy efforts of the foreign service and national branding seem to be undermined in the new world order and with the changes that are taking place. Countries and regions are no longer the bearers of their own narratives – and we are influenced by the challenges of other countries in a new way.

For these reasons, it is important that we can help at all levels to contribute to global efforts. The UN’s global goal of sustainable development is becoming increasingly relevant

to arts and culture, and demands, for example, increased accountability, less inequality, and the promotion of quality at all levels. At the same time, artistic and cultural life in the Nordic region has an opportunity to take the lead in the development of deep and long-term networks which are distinguished by being borderless and global. There are already many Nordic players in global contexts who are able to interact with each other and can help to create a new form of global relevance for Nordic co-operation. Here, the Nordic Culture Fund could take on a new role in supporting this development.

Initiatives

We will contribute to the development of a new global focus that is relevant to art and cultural life in the Nordic region. The Fund will work to develop new formats and relevant forms of support, criteria and initiatives that do not take place under the auspices of other international efforts. These cross-cutting strategic efforts must be characterised by the following:

- We will explore new tracks and arenas for artists and culture practitioners in a global context, and we will collaborate with resource persons who can contribute knowledge of relevant artistic and cultural arenas in key international art and culture environments.
- We will experiment with new formats and create artist

platforms as well as facilitating deep and sustainable networks that can have global relevance.

- We will participate in global networks that discuss the development of art and culture.

Strengthened network formation

What do we see?

The role of the Nordic Culture Fund in relation to network formation is becoming ever clearer. This takes place both through the Fund's financial support, which always incorporates an element of networking in itself, and by virtue of the unique role that the Fund has as a proactive driver of and participant in networks. Social networking has seriously gained ground as a concept in sociology, where it denotes a network of relationships between



people. These can be linked through strong or weak bonds, depending on the degree of knowledge, accessibility, confidentiality and support between the persons involved.

We are all linked to each other through many different social networks, such as families, friends and work networks. Relations in professional networks are often based on organisations that have specialised themselves in relation to each other, or work in the same field, as is the case with the Fund's thematic initiatives. Such networks may be seen as a means of organisation that breaks with both old market forms and with the usual hierarchically-structured organisational forms.

The value of networks is enormous. Relations here grow exponentially, and strong networks create the possibility of relating to other networks in other contexts – including globally.

In recent years the Fund has accumulated valuable experience in this area, and we have encountered a wish for this



experience to be brought into play in more areas. There is also a demand for a player who can bring together the national artistic and cultural institutions across the Nordic region and ensure that they meet and exchange knowledge and experience. This applies inter alia to national public institutions and philanthropic funds that do not have the networks or sufficient knowledge to enable them to lift their programmes and the projects they support to a Nordic and international level. Strengthening these networks will increase the mutual relevance and impact of everyone's efforts and work.

Initiatives

In accordance with its overall objectives, the Nordic Culture Fund must participate in and facilitate professional networks on several levels. We must utilise the unique knowledge and experience that we thereby acquire to strengthen the further anchoring of the networks in art and culture. The cross-cutting strategic efforts imply that:

- We must play a clearer co-ordinating and unifying role for relevant national arts and cultural institutions in the Nordic region.
- We must explore the possibilities of working with private and philanthropic arts and cultural funds in the Nordic countries, so that they can lift their programmes onto a Nordic, international level.
- We must create frameworks for strong and long-term networks in connection with thematic initiatives, enabling players to promote the quality and sustainability of their own efforts.

Strengthened knowledge dissemination

What do we see?

The role of art and culture has changed in the welfare society, and there are discussions in many contexts concerning how this role may be viewed from a modern welfare society point of view. In the past, the role of arts and culture was both to create equal conditions for citizens and to provide consumer goods from which we, as citizens, could benefit to a greater or lesser extent. Today, research is moving in the direction of investigating what actually happens in the encounter between arts, culture and civil society, examining not only effects, but also the communities that arise in relation to arts and culture. It is important that we all gain new knowledge of this area, in order to learn more about the democratic infrastructure and freedom of expression represented by arts and culture. The Fund regards it as important for these discussions and this research to be monitored and developed, so that they can become real knowledge at Nordic level.

The Fund's contact with many experts in the sector and researchers in arts and culture, together with cultural policy experts and politicians, gives us a unique opportunity to produce and disseminate qualitative and relevant knowledge about the field of arts and culture. However, capturing these new currents will also require changed structures and resources. One challenge is that there is a large amount of silent knowledge and implicit structures within the field. It is therefore important that we try to collect and make explicit this

knowledge across national borders, thereby creating greater benefit and inspiration for others.

Initiatives

As a cross-cutting strategic initiative, we will take on a role as an active communicator of knowledge and create new possibilities and structures to collect and convey knowledge about the field of arts and culture. The initiative implies that:

- We must monitor and investigate the possibilities to follow or support relevant research in the field of arts and culture which can contribute to the creation of new knowledge across national borders.
- Our knowledge of networks and conversations with resource persons from the cultural field must be developed, concretised and disseminated to relevant partners in the arts and cultural field, as well as in relevant public and cultural policy contexts.
- We must develop the following-up of grant allocations and conduct specific analyses, so that we can to a greater extent share knowledge and experience

New contexts for cultural policy development

What do we see?

The Fund's strategic efforts as an active producer of knowledge provide an opportunity to create new contexts for the de-

velopment of cultural policy at Nordic level. In its organisation, the Nordic Culture Fund is anchored in politics and in the implementation of this, which makes the Fund a unique body in the context of Nordic co-operation and cultural policy. Cultural policy should here be understood in a broad sense, as a way of shaping the function of arts and culture in society.

The changing conditions of culture and society emphasise the need for cultural policy to constantly act on an informed basis, and to engage in contexts that go beyond national borders.

In recent years, the Fund has evolved into an active co-creator of arenas that create new contexts for cultural policy. In this way, we have stimulated the development of cultural policy discussions at regional, national and Nordic level. We have also worked to create better national and Nordic anchoring for the strategic thematic initiatives. This has also revealed to us the need to understand national administrative initiatives, support schemes and cross-border cultural policy priorities. This knowledge is a prerequisite for raising cultural policy onto the international level, of which the Nordic countries are a part.

The Fund has for example identified leadership in the cultural sector as an area which is under ever-increasing pressure. Special demands are placed on the management of creative employees in an organisation, in which the quality of the artistic product is usually the most important goal. Today, we see increased demands for private financing, audience development, innovation, goal achievement and digitisation.

For the Fund, it is also a question of how we at the Nordic level can create more knowledge about and synergy between cultural policy, cultural leadership and practice in arts and culture.

Initiatives

The Fund must create new contexts for conversations and knowledge-sharing, and anchor its efforts at either national or Nordic level. These cross-cutting efforts mean that during the interim:

- We will strengthen our co-operation with national authorities for cultural support, and create better opportunities for Nordic cultural co-operation to be seen as an integral part of international cultural co-operation.
- We will create arenas that can generate new contexts for cultural policy and cultural leadership in the Nordic region.
- We will strengthen the dialogue between diverse players in the area of cultural policy and cultural life, and anchor the work in a Nordic context in co-operation with the Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers.



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