

Focus Projects

– Effects and
Results of Funding



Nordic
Culture Point





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Ola Kellgren,
Director of Nordic Culture Point

Foreword

The Nordic Culture Point in Helsinki is a cultural institution, under the auspices of the Nordic Council of Ministers, with the objective to further meeting grounds for Nordic culture. This objective is primarily achieved by the administration of three different funding programs for cultural exchange and benefit of the Nordic or Baltic countries and indeed the rest of the world. The Nordic Culture Point annually grants around 4.6 million euro to different projects aiming to develop the collaboration between cultural workers while promoting a greater artistry in each field. The different grant programs are well known and in much higher demand than current resources are able to supply.

As the director of the Nordic Culture Point for the past year, I have been deeply impressed by the work that is done within our grant programs. In part by my program advisors, but also partly because of the independent Nordic and Baltic experts from various fields of art and culture that conduct all of our application assessments with great integrity and dedication.

Even more impressive are the actual effects of the grant programs. Apart from the substantial artistic results, the outcome often leads to closely connected and invaluable networks that branch out way beyond the capital areas. I have experienced first-hand the kind of opportunities that are made available for Nordic artists.

One example being ICE HOT, a contemporary dance festival supported in part by the Nordic Culture Point. They have shown the ability to draw expertise from even remote corners of the region and displayed it to the world in a thrilling combination of established and up-and-coming art. The last festival, held in Copenhagen, lasted several days and attracted participants and audiences from 35 countries from around the world.

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Director of Nordic Culture Point

Introduction

For long, arts and culture have had an acknowledged value with effects that go far beyond its creators. Only the specifics of the value have been and are still being debated. Study after another shows the effects reaching all levels from individual to national and going across cultural, economic, educational and political sectors. Yet, finding a cohesive and comparative way of quantifying the impact of arts and culture has proven problematic.

The value of arts and culture that primarily lies in its inherent ability to create meaning and enrich our understanding of the world as well as in the experience of culture should be the starting point in determining the effects. Thus, the first difficulty arises from the intrinsic value being, in part, a philosophical assertion and therefore impossible to measure in numbers. The relation between the pri-

vate experience of culture, as it often is, and the spill over to the collective discourse adds to the complexity of measuring these effects.

Without in any way diminishing the intrinsic value of arts and culture it is safe to say that the sector also creates societal, perhaps slightly more tangible, effects. If clearly communicated, these effects have the potential to raise awareness on the importance of arts and culture.

Keeping the complexity and variety of the context in which arts and culture exist in mind, the purpose of this analysis is to illuminate some of the effects and results of the funding granted by Nordic Culture Point to projects and activities in the Nordic and Baltic regions. For this purpose, one project has been chosen from each form of funding administered by the Nordic

Culture Point adding up to six projects. Each project has been followed up, interviewed and analysed.

The projects being few and diverse, they leave little possibilities for general conclusions but the examples show both project specific and societal effects. None of the chosen projects are merely isolated actions with effects limited to time and place but have contributed to equality, integration and rising awareness on global warming among many other things.

Collecting this information is one step in understanding the collective, non-numeral impacts of Nordic Culture Point's grants. For further understanding longitudinal follow-ups must be carried out and data for additional projects must be collected to better understand the width of the results and effects and also to find

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out which effects are absent or could be enhanced. Mapping the effects is a piece of puzzle both in securing the effects and developing the grant programmes so that the effects become ever more comprehensive and widespread.



Tiinltkonen **Home 5**
Kuummiut, 2015

The travels have resulted in numerous exhibitions around the world and Itkonen has made friends and new contacts for already commenced and for future collaborations.

Tiina Itkonen

For over twenty years has Finnish artist Tiina Itkonen taken an interest in Greenland. The fascination awoken by Greenlandic mythology and the tale of the Mother of the Sea as well as friendship with Greenlandic artist Julie Hardenberg, led to Itkonen's first trip to Greenland in 1995.

Her perpetual path of exploring the polar landscape and the people living in it has so far resulted in series of landscape photographs of the vast island and portraits of the indigenous Inughuit.

Before photographing people Itkonen every time ensured she got to know them and was invited to their homes. She also chose to photograph, not to document, moments when nothing special was being done; she chose not to romanticize the way of life led in some of the world's northern-

most settlements. The elaborately composed landscapes depicting the vastness and tranquility of the island have equally demanded time, time to patiently observe and wait for the right conditions.

Between the years 2009 and 2016 Itkonen has traveled to Greenland three times with Mobility Funding from Nordic-Baltic Mobility Programme. These trips have been done in new constellations and for different purposes, yet each time contributing to Itkonen's photographic work.

The travels have resulted in numerous exhibitions around the world and Itkonen has made friends and new contacts for already commenced and for future collaborations. She has, for instance, worked side by side with polar scientist Kristin Laidre for the exhibition "Imaging the Arctic: Communi-

cating Climate Science through Art” and the two plan to continue their collaboration.

Itkonen’s latest trip took place in the spring of 2016. After 14 years she returned to Thule and stayed with the people she met and photographed during her early visits to Greenland. Two year old Aliqa was now twenty year old mother, young boy Juulut a great hunter and many a friend had passed away during the years.

Furthermore, during her stay were Itkonen’s works exhibited in Greenland for the first time. The large-scale, weatherproof photographs were shown in Qaanaaq, Savissivik and Uummanaq. Itkonen donated all the photographs to the people of the settlements and the works were permanently located in a hospital, nursing home, school and other public spaces.

Apart from being written about in a long list of magazines and newspapers in and out of the Nordic countries Itkonen often talks to people about her visits to Greenland. She has for example gotten an invitation

to her child’s school to give a presentation, which she happily accepted. That way she can make people aware of issues like effects of global warming in Greenland.

The future holds for Itkonen more travels and new work among hunters in eastern Greenland together with polar scientist Kristin Laidre. Although Itkonen from the very beginning had no intention of directly addressing the climate change, she now hopes to with her work draw attention to the changing conditions in Greenland.

Global warming is among other things causing the sea ice to melt making it hard, if not impossible, to hunt and forcing people to relocate and leave their livelihoods. Itkonen wishes to photograph east Greenland’s hunters and their disappearing lifestyle. She means it is worthwhile paying attention to people forced to undergo these changes caused by the doings of others and without means to do something to prevent it themselves.



Tiina Itkonen in Greenland.

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An interior picture from **Moks**. On the wall hang **Evelyn Grzinich's** sketches.

When special solutions are required the artists often turn to and receive help from the local building and wool workshops, blacksmith or recycling centre. They frequently work together in order to find solutions to different problems.

Artist residency MoKS, Mooste Külalis Stuudio

MoKS, Mooste Külalis Stuudio, is a non-profit artist-run organisation. It is the setting for an international artist residency programme in Mooste, south eastern Estonia. The organisation has been running since 2001 and has lately gained a given place on the Nordic-Baltic map of residency centres while also being a vital part of the rural village of Mooste with its population of about 500 people.

Artists from a variety of fields and countries have visited Moks ever since the residency program started running on regular basis in 2003. "In the beginning neither Moks, Mooste nor Estonia were an obvious choice for a stay for Nordic and Baltic artists", says Evelyn Grzinich who has been running and developing Moks ever since the start, and goes on saying: "But it is no longer difficult to attract that group of artists to Moks, on the contrary".

This change can be traced back to receiving support from Nordic Culture Point for the first time in 2011. From then on MoKS has been able to develop the residency programme and to offer a competitive residency option for Nordic and Baltic artists.

Moks' studio apartments and multifunctional spaces make it possible for the artists to practice a series of different techniques. When special solutions are required the artists often turn to and receive help from the local building and wool workshops, blacksmith or recycling centre. They frequently work together in order to find solutions to different problems.

Furthermore the artists are encouraged to take part in local activities, host workshops and to interact with other artists, curators and researchers in order to create synergies and

new collaborations. New contacts are made locally and internationally. While Moks and the visiting artists gain Nordic and international relations that are vital in the art field today, the flow of influences in to and out from Moks, Mooste and Estonia grow stronger.

Latvian visual artist Eva Vevere took part of Moks artist in residency programme 2016, alongside with a Canadian and a Finnish artist. For her the residency was a possibility to escape familiar environment and daily tasks in order to concentrate on her work, both the work exhibited as a result of the residency but also her work independent from the exhibition. Nevertheless, she appreciated the possibility to bring her family with her as that is not always the case.

Apart from creating new work Eva took part in Moks' "Artists to Schools" programme. She planned and implemented a three-part workshop for a group of students at Viluste Põhikool, a primary school in the region of Põlva.

All in all, while providing artists with an appropriate environment for work, an existing network and possibility to take part of as well as create activities the residency is an asset to the local community and the region.

Both the artist and the students were enthusiastic over the meeting. A short introduction to Eva's work gave the students an idea of the artist's interests and ways of working. And no time was wasted when the students themselves got to try out the techniques involved in Eva's first workshop.

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Artist **Eva Vevere** leads a workshop at Viluste Põhikool, an elementary school in the region of Põlva.





A view from the exhibition **In Residence**.
Courtesy of the Oslo Architecture Triennial.

The similar cultural and historical conditions and the joint challenges in the Nordic countries provided good grounds for a collaboration which in its turn was intended for a greater impact in comparison to that of a national project.

In Residence

Migration and demographic changes in societies create need for new strategies and ideas to extend the sense of belonging to entail people with a variety of prerequisites. OAT, Oslo architecture triennial, decided to investigate how architecture and town planning can contribute to that sense of belonging and to empowering people in their place of residence.

OAT continued its earlier Nordic collaboration in order to explore the issue. The similar cultural and historical conditions and the joint challenges in the Nordic countries provided good grounds for a collaboration which in its turn was intended for a greater impact in comparison to that of a national project. The project was granted support from the Culture and Art Programme.

Under the title *In Residence - Strategier for tilværelser i forflytning* and as part of the Oslo Architecture Triennial 2016 with the name *After Belonging*, the project was set out to see through five case studies with resulting strategies for how to embrace people in transition in Nordic cities and towns through physical, economic and social interventions. Five groups of architects and other professionals within the field from all over the world were chosen through an open-call to execute the task.

Kirkenes in northern Norway, Tensta in Sweden, Copenhagen in Denmark and Oslo as well as Oslo airport Gardemoen were selected as the objects for the case studies. All the case-studies were began about a year before the actual triennial and were set to outlive the triennial.

Focus Projects – In Residence

OPENtransformation, a project in the exhibition *In Residence*, by Elisabeth Søliland, Silje Klepsvik, Åsne Hagen, courtesy of the Oslo Architecture Triennale.

For instance, the project *Open Transformation* with Torshov in Oslo as case-study, explores, through notions of hospitality, ways of meeting asylum-seekers' needs and means to overcome the distinction between "us" and "them," which often create an invisible division between people.

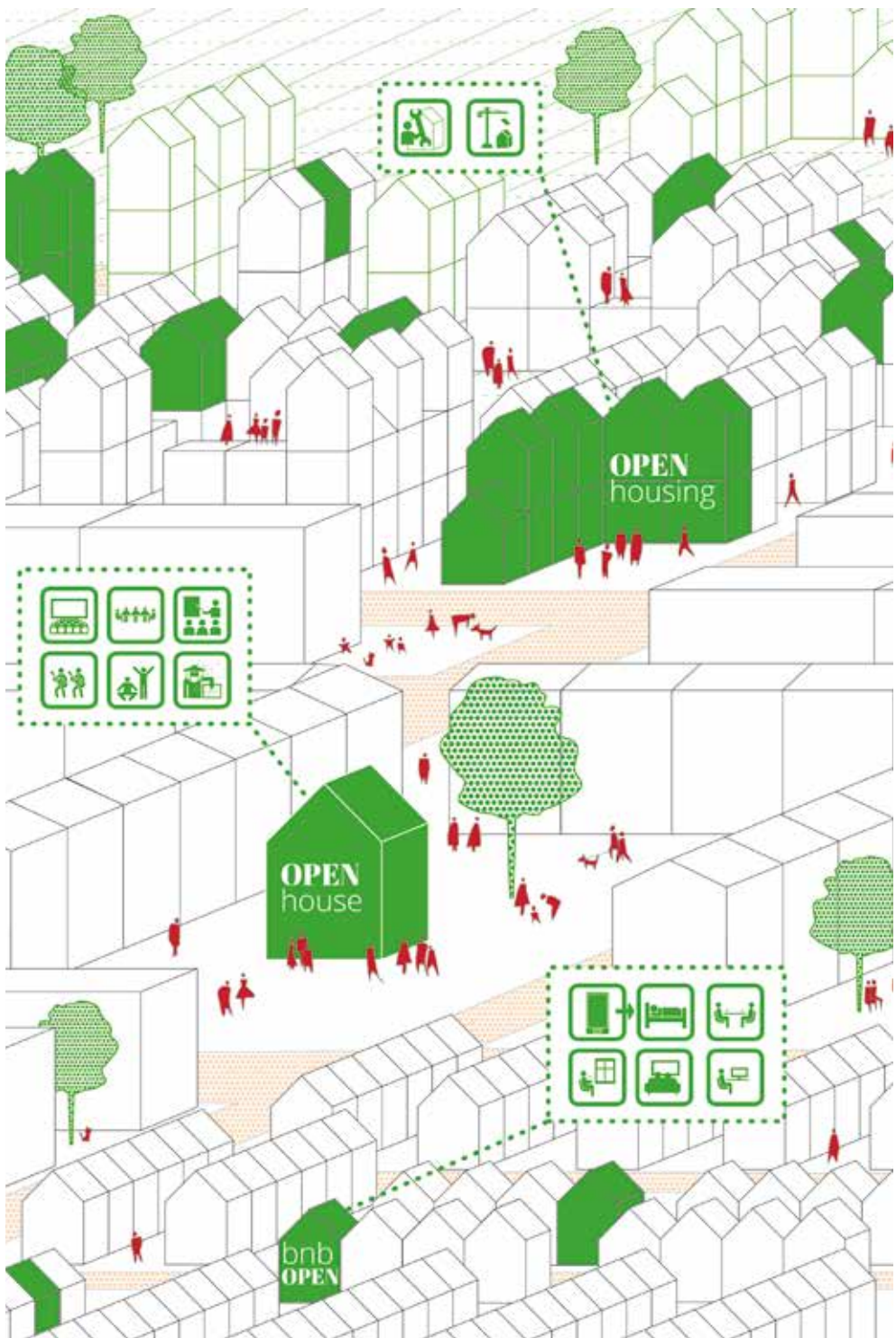
Open Transformation explores three different approaches: *bnbOPEN*, an application to allow asylum seekers to find and share ordinary housing as an alternative or supplement to reception centers; *OPENhouse*, a place for gathering in the city to share knowledge and experiences between recently arrived individuals and local communities in Oslo; and *OPEN-Housing*, an ongoing research project that aims to re-imagine housing policies in Norway to intervene in larger processes of migration.

These interventions surface in different ways throughout the city of Oslo although their point of departure is the Torshov Transit Centre. Furthermore, the team working on the project, consisting of Elisabeth Søliland,

Silje Klepsvik and Åsne Hagen, has expressed interest in continuing to develop the interventions even in the future.

Not only has the project *In Residence* created, and through the triennial exhibition made public, insights in how people today reside in particular places but it has also pointed out numerous possibilities in town planning and other structures to meet the needs of rapidly changing demographics. It has also triggered discussions on alternatives to the accommodation patterns disparate to those shaped of real estate market's forces.

The continuation of the project is strengthened even by the engagement of a wide range of architects, other professionals and people residing in the varied places of the case-studies. *In Residence* will live on even after completed project, both in time and the different places of case-studies in the Nordic countries and internationally in the places of residence of the participating professionals.





Film editing in progress.

As intended the girls got an experience of achievement, of carrying out something to be proud of.

Girls Film

Film industry is traditionally a male dominated trade. Considerably more men than women have lead parts in, are screen writers for and direct Nordic film. Unfortunately even the content of films often circles around men. Not surprisingly does the excessive male representation result in young boys, more frequently than girls, getting interested in filmmaking and the same pattern is being repeated time and time again.

Awareness of the problematics has fortunately been rising the past years and change, even though slow, is following. Reykjavik International Film Festival, RIFF, decided to draw its straw to the stack by arranging a Nordic film workshop with the intention to promote film industry among girls and to give girls courage to take their interest a step further. RIFF together with the Faroese and Finnish

partners were granted support from NORDBUK Grant Programme.

23 girls in the ages of 14–16 from Iceland, Faroe Islands and Finland were recruited by Reykjavik International Film Festival, Faroese Film Association and Euphoria Borealis in Finland. In September 2016 the girls met for the five day workshop in Reykjavik.

The workshop was built on lectures about filmmaking, equal rights education and actual filmmaking. For the practical film making the girls were divided in to smaller groups where the different countries were represented. The joint language was English. Together the girls, with guidance from professionals, got to dive in to the world of films.

The work entailed everything in between screen writing, playing the

roles and editing the film. No group ended with less than a complete short film. Everyone got to be part of the whole process. As intended the girls got an experience of achievement, of carrying out something to be proud of. Through that experience and by bringing together several girls with the same interest for film the teachers wish to empower the girls and hope for at least some of them to carry on with film making in some capacity.

On the last day of editing their films, the girls were still enthusiastic. And even if they were tired of all hard work the satisfaction for their accomplishment wasn't any lesser. They happily shared their experiences of having fun while playing their roles, of their differences in opinion during the process but also of learning both to meet the others half way and to express their own ideas. They had learnt a lot not only of filmmaking but of themselves and the prospects that they have, should they choose to continue within the industry.

Yet, the one thing that many of the girls valued most was the newfound friendships. The visitors got to stay with the islandic girls' families instead of staying at a hotel. Time for joint fun was also provided, together with the whole group and with the families.

Gathering from the organizers' and participants' comments, the girls will return to their homes with stronger self-confidence and faith in their ability to work with film but also with a new support system, namely the other participants. Consequently, they are likely to spread their knowledge and enthusiasm further among peers at home.



A group of girls taking a pause in front of the green screen. Green screen is used to easily separate background from the people standing in front of it and replace it with pretty much any elaborate landscape.

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The project partners met up in Stockholm in November for the last time within this project.

Shared practices for distributing and archiving media art

Archiving, preservation and distribution are increasingly important issues within media art, both historical and contemporary. While ever more art is born digital, many museums, collectors and organizations lack know-how on how to deal with digital content. The challenges are similar in all Nordic countries.

As a result of a seminar on the subject and the following recognition of the joint challenges, a mainly Nordic network was formed. AV-arkki, the Distribution Centre for Finnish Media Art together with Filmform in Sweden, Videokunstarkivet / PNEK in Norway, Vasulka Chamber in Iceland and LIMA in the Netherlands decided to work towards a working collaboration, knowledge exchange and workflow between the partner organizations.

The significance of the network was valued high and it was granted Short Term Network Funding from the Nordic Culture Point. During the year 2016 the network partners have been engaged in an ongoing online dialogue and have met up twice. The network process went from shedding light on everyone's actual situation and resources to sharing experiences, exchanging actual working methods and tools as well as exploring and implementing new ideas.

Building trust has, however, been the single most important thing along the way. Without trust, the partners had not been as willing to share their strategies and materials, the foundation of their work. Then again, expectations and commitment between the partners turned out to be mutual and everyone gathered around the table bringing with them all they had.

The similar structures within the field in the Nordic countries contributed also to the grade of success. Before long several concrete working tools and methods were shared, confidential templates were exchanged and a database was introduced from one country to another as well as an archiving platform. Also the peer support became invaluable.

The one concrete result of the network that applied to all the partners equally was standardizing the way of describing art between the partners. Doing so enables the partners' databases and archives to relate to one another and become comparable over the national contexts.

Even though the effects of the network initially are felt by the partners the reach is much wider than that. Together the partners represent hundreds of artists whose work will be more appropriately archived and distributed, the best case scenario being better visibility and more sales. Furthermore, not only the practices and skills of the partaking organizations

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are affected but also other organizations like museums and collectors will be assisted in the matters.

The new skills and knowledge will naturally also sip through to the partners' national collaborators leaving the field of media art in the partner countries extensively enjoying the best practices shared and gained through the project.

"Generous actions!" applauded Kati Åberg from AV-arkki the project partners. She looks enthusiastically forward to continuing the work with the network as it has proven to give results and many more actions are yet to be taken.



The network at work.



Opening ceremony at the Nordic house in Tórshavn.

**The activities have also
functioned as a mirror of
contemporaneity.**

Dagarnir 2016 - "Seminar, Workshops & Readings"

Nordic Performing Arts Days are arranged every other year in one of the Nordic countries. The turn to accommodate theatre productions, meetings, exchange and networks among performing arts professionals had come to Faroe Islands in May 2016. As hosts for the festival functioned *Leikarafelag Føroya*, the Faroese union for performing arts professionals. The 2016 festival was named *Dagarnir* (the Days) while the main theme for it was chosen to be interactivity.

As a new element of the festival the Faroese host presented *Seminar, Workshops and Readings*, a series of gatherings to address challenges in the individual Nordic countries and joint perspectives within performing arts. For this action was *Leikarafelag Føroya* granted *Support for Capacity Development* from the *Culture and Art Programme*.

Each Nordic country was represented in the program and professionals from Faroe Islands, Nordic countries and beyond visited the festival. Eight Nordic guest performances were executed during the festival. Most of the activities were open even for the general public. Although, main part of the program was concentrated to the Nordic House in Torshavn, the festival appeared in different locations in the city.

While the locals got access to enhanced range of performing arts events during 24th-28th of May, the professionals within the field participated in formal and informal network meetings, workshops with titles like *Children and Creativity*, *The Toolbox of the Production Dramaturge*, and so forth. New collaborations, both national and Nordic, were initiated during the festival while already exist-

ing collaborations found new ways of continuing their cooperation.

The activities have also functioned as a mirror of contemporaneity. The dialogue that took place during the activities has both confirmed the conception of Nordic countries being alike, but also shown that differences do exist. Vár Berghamar Jacobsen, festival coordinator at Dagarnir, pointed out the refugee situation in Europe as an issue that barely exists in the Faroe Islands but that many professionals from countries like Denmark, Sweden and Finland address in their work. She means that the Performing Arts Days are not only a source of artistic inspiration to all participants but also a way of having a dialogue on societal issues.

Nonetheless, the Faroese organizer valued even the artistic inspiration provided by all the parties that contributed to the programme. New influences give, thought Berghamar Jacobsen, possibilities for individual and collective development within the field. At the same time, the Faroese

performing arts union Leikarafelag got confirmation on their own ability to produce high quality theatre side by side with the other Nordic groups. And not least, the Faroese theatre has gotten valuable publicity both domestic and international.

Satisfied with the 2016 festival, Leikarafelag, is looking forward to continuing collaboration with the Nordic partners, to learn from each other and to continue working on the joint Nordic challenges. Berghamar Jacobsen goes on saying that she hopes for the festival to return to Faroe Islands in the future.



Performance by Blixen Unplugged (DK): A Ship's Boy's Tale and the Ring.

List of grants awarded to the presented projects

Tiina Itkonen was granted Mobility Funding from the Nordic-Baltic Mobility Programme for Culture

MoKS, Mooste Külalis Stuudio, was granted Support for Artist Residencies from the Nordic-Baltic Mobility Programme for Culture

In Residence – Strategier for tilværelser i forflytning was granted support for *Production-based Activities* from the *Culture and Art Programme*

Girls Film was granted support from NORDBUK Grant Programme

Shared practices for distributing and archiving media art was granted Short-term Network Funding from the Nordic-Baltic Mobility Programme for Culture

Dagarnir 2016 (The Days - Faroe Islands) – "Seminar, Workshops & Readings" was granted Support for Capacity Building from Culture and Art Programme.

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