Culture is the core of Nordic cooperation.

_Dagfinn Høybråten_,
Secretary General,
Nordic Council of Ministers
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The Nordic Region is an open and creative place for art and culture, which is something we need to protect and continue to develop. In the Nordic countries, there is free movement of people and cultural expressions, and we maintain connections with the global and national artistic community and cultural heritage. Culture plays an important role in enhancing Nordic cooperation and the fundamental values on which that cooperation is based.

Nordic cultural cooperation has long been prioritized by the Nordic countries themselves, but the political discourse regarding this cooperation has not involved elected officials in municipalities and counties in the various countries and the regions of Greenland, the Faroe Islands and Åland to any great extent. This is something the Region Skåne and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR) would like to change. We therefore took the initiative of arranging a Nordic Cultural Political Summit during the Swedish presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers in 2018.

Our intent was to utilize the summit to highlight local and regional perspectives on Nordic cultural cooperation by sharing experiences and knowledge regarding multi-level governance and interplay in the context of cultural policy in the Nordic countries. We wanted to discuss how the countries, regions and municipalities can together promote and facilitate cultural activities within a country and the entire Nordic area. More particularly, we wanted to identify current and future challenges in the area of cultural policy, in order to enhance the role of cultural policy as a driving factor in achieving sustainable societal development. We also wanted to place the Nordic area and Nordic cooperation on the political agenda for regions and local authorities, while providing a knowledge-based image of the Nordic area and current Nordic cooperation. Doing so also enhances the local and regional perspectives in future Nordic cooperation.

It remains to be seen whether or not we will succeed in these efforts, but the discussions and reactions at the Summit indicate that there is a great need to continue the dialogue between the national, regional and local levels in the Nordic system. This was the first Nordic cultural policy summit, and we hope and trust that it will be followed by many more.

Karin Thomasson
Vice Chair
Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions

Maria Ward
Chair of the Culture Committee
Region Skåne
The Nordic Cultural Political Summit

On 8-9 May 2018, Region Skåne and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR), in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture and Democracy, the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Nordic Culture Fund, arranged a Nordic cultural policy summit in Malmö. This initiative was part of the Programme for the 2018 Swedish Presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers.

An objective of this cultural policy summit meeting was to gather relevant persons and agencies on the Nordic, national, regional and municipal levels to:

- Formulate local and regional perspectives and suggestions regarding Nordic cultural political cooperation.
- Share experiences and knowledge regarding multi-level governance and interplay relating to cultural policy in the Nordic regions, and regarding how states, regions and municipalities can work together to promote and facilitate cultural activities on the national and/or Nordic level
- Identify current and future cultural political challenges, such as strengthening the role of cultural policy as a driving force for creating sustainable societal development
- As well as placing the Nordic Region and Nordic cooperation on the regional and municipal political agenda and providing an updated knowledge-based image of the Nordic region and current Nordic cultural cooperation.

The conversations and discussions during the meeting were based on the following issues:

1. What challenges do you see in society where cultural policy can play an important role?
2. With what can cultural policy contribute?
3. What are the most important cultural policy challenges or priorities for you?
4. How can one coordinate the work between the local, regional and national levels to improve the conditions for meeting cultural policy challenges and priorities?
5. On which questions can it give added value to co-operate at a Nordic level?
6. How can the Nordic co-operation take advantage of the cultural efforts being made at the municipal and regional levels?

The programme in its entirety can be found in Appendix 1.

Participants

Elected officials and civil servants from the Nordic countries, including ministers of culture from the Faroe Islands, Iceland, Sweden, Norway and Åland attended the meeting. Of a total of about 160 attendees, just over half were civil servants and the rest were elected officials. All the Nordic countries, as well as the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland, were represented at the meeting. The attendees adequately represented the various levels of the political system. Civil servants and elected officials on the local, regional, national and Nordic levels were involved, and the meeting was held in the Scandinavian languages, with interpreting to Icelandic and Finnish.

The purpose and content of this report

This report summarizes and analyses the results of the summit meeting, and is meant to serve as a source of knowledge and inspiration for cultural policy efforts on the municipal, regional and Nordic levels. The report was authored by Ida Thomson of Bättra Konsult in close cooperation with Region Skåne and SALAR.

The report begins with a comprehensive analysis of the themes, challenges and success factors in cultural policy efforts on the municipal, regional and Nordic levels that were highlighted at the meeting. The report then describes a number of conclusions regarding future Nordic cooperation in the cultural policy area and a number of materials distributed by the organizers of the summit meeting. Appendix 2 contains a summary of the speeches from the podium and the content of the group discussions.
More focus on similarities than on differences

The meeting was more focused on similarities between the participants’ views on cultural policy challenges, needs and success factors than on differences. On the overarching level, there was a consensus as to the areas and values that can be strengthened and nurtured by Nordic cooperation. As could be expected, there was also a great deal of agreement as to the ability of culture and cultural policy to make useful contributions and create added value in other policy areas and in society in general. By adding new approaches, fundamental values and language, culture can promote and facilitate the shared development of a more efficient, sustainable and enjoyable society.

While these similarities were very much a focus of the meeting, it should be mentioned that one main purpose was to begin a dialogue regarding Nordic cultural policy cooperation by identifying areas of commonality. In the future, more theme-orientated discussions will most likely feature greater examination of the differences in positions between different countries and areas, as well as between local, regional and national levels. These differences will not necessarily limit Nordic cooperation, but can instead enrich it by offering a chance to compare and to use new perspectives on various levels.

Shared priorities – in line with the strategy for cultural cooperation

The summit meeting highlighted a shared Nordic interest in a number of cultural policy issues. Language, cultural heritage, indigenous peoples and the rights of national minorities, to preserve and develop their culture, mobility, conditions in sparsely populated areas and small local authorities proved to be important concerns for many of the participants at the meeting, as was also the need to prioritize the access to culture by children and adolescents and cultural expression by these groups.

Three values that set the tone for many of the plenary and group discussions at the meetings were accessibility, diversity and freedom.

Accessibility was viewed from a broad and high-quality perspective with culture accessible to all, regardless of where one lives and the resources and interests one has.

The importance of diversity permeated discussions during the meeting, both as relating to the diversity of cultural expression and its creators, as well as regarding the diversity of consumers of culture. Many discussions also emphasized the importance of promoting a culture that stresses inclusion and equality. On the whole, these discussions were on a relatively general level. The issues of how cultural policy can promote and facilitate diversity and where the limits of control should be set were brought up but did not lead to more concrete solutions.

Freedom of expression and the principle of arm’s length distance were stressed on various occasions during the summit meeting. The overarching conclusion was that cultural policy choices must constantly protect cultural freedom, and that in cultural policy, control aspects must be clearly formulated and communicated.

This is an example of an area of commonality that continues to be of interest in Nordic cooperation. These are also the values and prioritizations that the current strategy of the Nordic Council of Ministers highlights. It indicates that the content of the current strategy reflects important prioritizations in Nordic cultural policy cooperation.

Clearer cultural policy goals and arguments

Despite agreement regarding the important role of culture in society and the substantive and value-related issues to be prioritized, there were challenges and obstacles that the participants felt needed to be addressed if culture was to reach its full potential. Participants called for more clearly expressed visions and goals for cultural policy on all levels. Similarly, many who were there wanted a clearer unique selling point (USP) for culture – a powerful argument in support of the value of culture that can win support in other sectors of society – in other words, messages that can reach elected officials and civil servants in these sectors.

Discussions touched on the importance of prioritization in government support of art and culture, without restricting artistic freedom. Similarly, the public sector should become better at communicating the fact that cultural policy governance and free cultural expression do not have to be opposing values.

Regarding the handling of these challenges, many expressed a desire for continued sharing of experiences and knowledge with their Nordic neighbours.
A clearer division of responsibility

Several discussions included calls for a clearer division of responsibility for cultural policy between the local, regional and national levels. The focus was especially on the regional function in cultural policy. In those countries where a formal regional level with responsibility for cultural policy exists - or is planned, a clearer role was called for, more specifically, a function with a mutual connection between the local and national levels. Several discussions stressed the importance of not viewing the regional level as an intermediate level for the carrying out of national cultural policy (top-down) on the municipal level, but rather as a way of channelling the needs and wishes of the various regions to the national level (bottom-up).

At various times, the importance of basing the national cultural policy upon a comprehensive analysis of local needs was emphasized. There was a consensus that the national policy had a responsibility to facilitate broad, high-quality and equal access to culture. On the issue of the need for clearer prioritization and governance than what is currently the case, the majority of the participants agreed that this was needed, but few practical ways to achieve this were suggested. On the other hand, the meeting showed a desire to continue and deepen discussions on the issue of how the national cultural policy can relate to municipalities and regions that face major challenges in their access to culture of the professional level.

Complex but important multilevel coordination

In addition to the emphasis on the values of accessibility, diversity and freedom, a recurring theme was the importance of having more co-ordination and dialogue between all levels of the cultural policy system. Both the discussions on the podium and in groups indicated the complexity of multilevel coordination of cultural policy. The content and form of this co-ordination is an important issue that deserves continued attention on both the national and Nordic levels.

There were a number of common themes present in the discussions. As mentioned, the local and regional levels called for a greater sensitivity for local conditions and needs in the national cultural policy and cultural policy cooperation in the Nordic Council of Ministers. The national and Nordic levels, on the other hand, emphasized the importance of identifying and deriving benefit from experiences on the local and regional levels and creating the best possible conditions for a broad, high-quality and equal cultural life for everyone. In general, the meeting showed that on all levels there is a striving for more systematic cooperation between the local, regional and national levels.

Local and regional level participants provided many good examples of cooperation and coordination that don’t always require national level involvement. Repeatedly mentioned was the importance of identifying opportunities for natural and needs-driven cultural cooperation between municipalities, for example.

While there was a consensus regarding the need for closer and more formal cooperation between the various administrative levels, it also become clear that there was little desire for a universal or common Nordic solution regarding how well-functioning cooperation should be structured. Instead, it is important to recognize, utilize and be inspired by successful solutions tried in various countries and regions. It is also important to take the initiative of evaluating various forms of cooperation, as well as trying out new forms of cooperation as part of Nordic cultural policy cooperation.

During the various discussions, many of the participants emphasized trustful relationships as a basis for long-term cooperation. The summit meeting was viewed by many as an important opportunity to establish and deepen relationships, which then could serve as a basis for concrete cooperation.
Based on the results of the meeting, here are a number of conclusions about Nordic cooperation in the area of cultural policy.

**An important area for Nordic cooperation**

Firstly, the meeting showed that cultural policy cooperation on the Nordic level is considered important, as we are similar enough to learn from each other, and different enough for a dynamic exchange and learning. As to both content and values, there are many similarities with respect to prioritizations and challenges that Nordic cooperation can focus on. There are also shared issues about goals and governance of cultural policy. Several opportunities for learning and cooperation were identified in the areas of goal formulation, research, evaluation and structures, such as the division of responsibility between the local, regional and national levels. Overall, there is a demand for Nordic co-operation in the area of cultural policy that supports, promotes and facilitates cooperation based on these areas of commonality.

**Several types of Nordic benefits**

The meeting also showed that there are many dimensions of Nordic benefits that cultural policy cooperation can facilitate. Many of these overlap, but can nevertheless illustrate many dimensions of benefits stemming from Nordic cultural cooperation. Individual benefits relate to an added value that an organization on the local, regional or national level can derive for its activities by learning from other organizations. This benefit consists of the organization being able to develop by utilizing good and less than good experiences of others. The collective benefits relate to measures that can create shared additional value. These can be dealing with issues such as mobility for artists in the Nordic countries, translation of cultural works to all the languages of our region and copyright. International benefits relate to the capacity of the Nordic countries to act as a joint cultural region on the larger global scene. The benefit deals with protecting and promoting those values on which Nordic cultural cooperation are based.

In addition, the realization of benefits through Nordic cooperation requires a joint attitude of give and take. This means accepting that sometimes one needs to provide support and advice, and in other cases, receive support and advice. In other words, an approach permeated by generosity and solidarity.

**Arenas for Nordic cooperation**

At the same time as the summit meeting indicated common conceptual values and substantive issues for Nordic cooperation, it became clear that different models for this cooperation were needed to order to go forward with these discussions. Multi-level cooperation in the form of summit meetings are important in order to identify, on an overarching level, the interest in, and views of cultural policy cooperation on the Nordic level and form relationships. This type of cooperation is important, but needs to be accompanied by cooperation that is more focused on certain issues and involves persons who are clearly involved with those specific issues. The results from the meeting showed there was a demand from the Nordic level to also support needs-driven cooperation regarding specific issues by identifying relevant issues, and then identifying regions and municipalities that are interested in Nordic cooperation on a given issue and leading appropriate cooperation processes. For certain issues, multi-level cooperation can be appropriate, while in other cases, it may be more suitable for civil servants on the regional level to meet regarding a pressing area for improvement. One specific matter that was raised was the need of cooperation in sparsely-populated areas that have particular difficulty in ensuring a broad and high-quality culture offering. At the same time, the summit meeting identified the need for a Nordic co-ordinating organization with the ability to facilitate effective, needs-driven cooperation on all levels of the cultural policy system.

**The importance of the national level**

The discussions at the meeting showed that the Nordic cooperation can easily be viewed as hierarchical. In other words, local needs and challenges get channelled up to the national level, which, in turn, communicates the needs and positions of the given country on the Nordic level. This concept, however, assumes that the national systems to identify and benefit from local and regional knowledge, experiences and needs works well. It is not until then that the representatives of the Nordic countries sent to the Nordic Council of Ministers can also communicate the combined experience from their countries. It can therefore be crucial for Nordic cooperation to use these shared experiences to promote and facilitate the improvement of national systems and working methods for cultural policy. The resulting structure should have an efficient division of responsibility, as well as cooperation between local, regional and national levels.
**The ability of the Nordic level to reach out**

The summit meeting showed that many of the participants were not very familiar with the organization and structure of the Nordic level. How is responsibility divided between the Nordic Council and Nordic Council of Ministers? How does the Nordic financial grant system work on the cultural area? Why are these not more well-known?

It is an important pedagogical mission to clarify the structure and opportunities in Nordic cultural policy cooperation, and to continue efforts to ensure that information about matters such as existing financial grants reach those target groups for which they are intended, such as actors on the regional and local levels who can help to disseminate information about these matters.

**Needs-driven Nordic cultural cooperation**

The current cultural cooperation strategy of the Nordic Council of Ministers succeeds in including the conceptual issues and values that we find important to us all. The perspective that needs more focus in discussions regarding future Nordic cultural policy cooperation is more a question of how this should be done. In other words, what forms and structures are most appropriate to enabling and facilitating a needs-driven Nordic cultural cooperation, which should be cooperation that can be adapted to the special nature of various issues, and of the actors who are most interested in, and affected by, them.

**The Nordic region and the wider world**

The participants at the summit meeting continued to view Nordic initiatives such as Nordic Matters and Nordic Cool as important and valuable. These projects communicate internationally the values shared by the Nordic countries and their cultural diversity. Joint undertakings are viewed as important ways to market the Nordic countries as an attractive cultural region, and are important ways to protect common values and cultural freedom, cultural diversity and broad accessibility. The combined talents and abilities of the 26 million inhabitants of our region can be viewed as a force we can use in order to make a difference in the world around us.
An active cultural life, in which citizens and other residents are meeting together, is a foundation of a democratic society. Arts and culture not only provides artistic experiences but can also serve as a conduit for social and political criticism. It is therefore important to protect both artistic freedom and the intrinsic value of art. Taking part in artistic experiences and being given the opportunity to engage in one’s own artistic expression are fundamental human needs.

Municipalities, regions and associations of municipalities play a key role regarding access to culture in the Nordic countries. Cultural activities take place locally and are reinforced by cooperation on the regional level. In other words, this is where things happen.

There is a trend common to the Nordic countries that the national level transfers financial power and financial responsibility to regions and groups of municipalities. The report of the Nordic Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis regarding division of responsibility regarding cultural policy governance in the 21st century states that despite differences in how countries divide responsibility, the Nordic countries show a trend toward greater regional responsibility. In addition, the Nordic Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis perceives a number of important future issues regarding cultural policy in the entire Nordic region. These issues have to do with the uneven accessibility of broad cultural activities in various parts of our countries and the importance of ensuring that publicly-financed cultural activities fulfil political goals and missions. This strengthens our convictions that increased involvement of regions and municipalities is required with regard to Nordic cooperation and that the experiences and perspectives found on these levels are desired by the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Nordic Council.

Municipalities, regions and states can learn a great deal from their counterparts in Nordic countries. Together, we can contribute to more equal participation and access to publicly-financed culture, so that all inhabitants should be able to participate and enjoy an extensive selection of cultural programmes, regardless of where they live. We also need to increase our opportunities to recruit qualified personnel for cultural functions, such as libraries and local art schools, so that the cultural sector better reflects the composition of the general population. We also see a need to continue and intensify efforts to achieve gender equality and good work environments within the Nordic culture sector.

The need for multi-level cooperation on the national level, as well as in Nordic cooperation, exists already and will most likely increase. Because of this, it is important to have arenas for dialogue between national, regional and municipal levels in the Nordic system, as well. We hope that from now on, there will be resources set aside for recurring Nordic cultural policy summit meetings, and that this should be part of the programme for the presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers.

Between these occasions, we believe that it is fully possible to develop structures for increased dialogue and dissemination of knowledge about the Nordic system and its opportunities, for example, by municipalities and regions participating in Nordic contexts and having Nordic actors participating in local and regional contexts. The Nordic institutions and organizations for cooperation could offer meeting places for municipalities and regions that want to develop their Nordic cooperation.

There is a demand for needs-driven cooperation and continued discussions between levels in the Nordic countries. We believe it is a good idea to sometimes have Nordic projects directed to certain municipalities and regions based on shared developmental needs. One example of such a project that can be interesting to develop further relates to the ways the Nordic level can promote and facilitate development efforts relating to access to art and culture in sparsely-populated areas, as the issue of equal access to culture is a priority throughout the Nordic countries.

Art and culture can play an important role in social progress in practically all policy areas, provided the right conditions are present. These include social welfare areas, such as education, social and medical care, healthcare, and the social services sector, as well as economic development, integration, infrastructure planning and innovation. It is therefore important that we in the Nordic regions continue to prioritize art, culture and creativity, both separately and together.
APPENDIX 1: PROGRAMME FOR THE SUMMIT MEETING
Before the meeting

11.30  Experience world-class acoustics

Jesper Larsson, Managing Director of the Malmö Symphony orchestra, gives us an introduction to the concert hall and lets us experience its unique acoustics.

12.00  Drop-in lunch at Malmö Live

The Summit meeting

13.00  Welcome to the summit meeting  (Nordic Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis)

Alice Bah Kuhnke, Minister of Culture and Democracy of Sweden
Maria Ward, Chair of the Culture Committee, Region Skåne
Karin Thomasson, Vice Chair, Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR)

13.45  Cultural performances

Emil Jensen
Almaz Yebio

13.45  Strategy for Nordic cultural cooperation 2013-2020

Mikael Höysti, head of Cultural Division, Nordic Council of Ministers

14.00  Responsibility for art and culture

An introduction to goals and resources for cultural policy in the Nordic countries
Sverker Härd, Director-General, Nordic Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis, Nordic Council

Roundtable discussions

14.30  Coffee break

15.00  Discussion

1. What challenges do you see in society where cultural policy can play an important role?
2. With what can cultural policy contribute?

16.15  A national perspective on Nordic cultural cooperation

Panel discussion with representatives of the parliaments of the Nordic countries, moderated by Benny Marcel, Director of the Nordic Cultural Fund, Olof Laveson, Chair of the Cultural Committee, Swedish Parliament, Anna Kolbrún Árnadóttir, Member of the Welfare Committee of the Icelandic Parliament, Johanna Karimäki, Member of the Finnish Parliament and Chair of the Nordic Council’s Committee for Culture and Knowledge in the Nordic Countries, Kristin Danielsen, Director, Cultural Council of Norway

16.50  Cultural performance

Who Killed Bambi - featuring Steffen Brandt & Alice Boman

17.30  Buffet and socializing (mingle)
Welcome to today’s meeting!

Local and regional cultural policy challenges
Panel discussion with representatives of municipal organizations and county councils of the Nordic countries
Catrin Hulmarker, SALAR
Gunn Marit Helgesen, KS
Jónína Erna Arnardóttir, Association of Icelandic Local Authorities
Jesper Kiel, Danish Association of Local Authorities

Discussion
1. What are the most important cultural policy challenges or priorities for you?
2. How can one coordinate the work between the local, regional and national levels to improve the conditions for meeting cultural policy challenges and priorities?

Coffee break

Discussion (continuation)
3. On which questions can it give added value to co-operate at a Nordic level?
4. How can the Nordic co-operation take advantage of the cultural efforts being made at the municipal and regional levels?

Summery of discussions

Cultural performance
Anna Einarsson, Cecilia Lindwall, Carol Conrad

Lunch

The Ministers of Culture speaking about Nordic cultural
Alice Bah Kuhnke, Minister of Culture and Democracy, Sweden, Trine Skei Grande, Minister of Culture, Norway, Lilja Dóugg Alfreðsdóttir, Minister of Culture and Education, Iceland, Rigmor Dam, Minister of Education, Research, and Culture, Faroe Islands, Mette Bock, Minister of Culture and Religious Affairs, Denmark
Tony Asumaa, Minister of Education and Culture, Åland

Why culture is important to Nordic cooperation
Dagfinn Høybråten, Secretary-General, Nordic Council of Ministers

Concluding summary
Alice Bah Kuhnke, Minister of Culture and Democracy of Sweden
Maria Ward, Chair of the Culture Committee, Region Skåne
Karin Thomasson, Vice Chair, Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR)

Coffee break
APPENDIX 2: SUMMARY OF THE CONFERENCE SESSIONS
The following is a summary of the speeches and panel discussions that were held on the podium (plenary sessions) as well as the group discussions. The sessions are presented in chronological order.

**Discussions and speeches from the podium - welcome to the summit meeting**

Karin Thomasson, Vice Chair of SALAR, began by welcoming everyone to this unique meeting – a meeting where elected officials and civil servants on the local, regional and national levels and from different parts of the Nordic countries are meeting for the first time to share learning and their respective experiences. Karin Thomasson emphasized the opportunity to learn from local cooperation, which occurs naturally in many national border areas. She stressed that this meeting is an important opportunity to identify obstacles to cooperation and find ways to get past them. Maria Ward, the Chair of the Culture Committee of Region Skåne, warmly welcomed all those assembled. Maria Ward emphasized the power that culture has to activate and make use of human capabilities, and how, in the final analysis, culture is about the ability of democracy to keep its key promise of respecting and benefiting from the intrinsic value of every individual. This is why accessibility to culture plays a central role. Maria Ward concluded by thanking everyone who safeguards Nordic cooperation and the values that are associated with this.

**Strategy for Nordic cultural cooperation 2013-2020**

Mikael Höysti, head of the Division for Culture and Resources at the Nordic Council of Ministers, described the Nordic Council of Ministers’ strategy for Nordic cultural cooperation that applies from 2013 to 2020 and the five themes that form the foundation of this strategy:

1. The sustainable Nordic region
2. The creative Nordic region
3. The intercultural Nordic region
4. Young people in the Nordic region
5. The digital Nordic region

He highlighted the fact that this strategy focuses on the type of measures that benefit all the Nordic countries. He stated that the Nordic Council of Ministers is promoting cultural cooperation pursuant to this strategy via common political initiatives and the accumulation of knowledge via Nordic support programmes, activities in building and institutions associated with the Nordic Council of Ministers, as well as joint projects.
The study also showed that, in the area of cultural policy, parallel systems often exist. In such a case, regions are assigned a certain responsibility, but sometimes do not have resources available, or else the state directs projects directly to the local level.

A national perspective on Nordic cultural cooperation - panel discussion with representatives from the Nordic countries

Benny Marcel, Director of the Nordic Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis led a discussion in which participants had to answer the question, “If I were the Minister of Culture, what would be my programme for Nordic cooperation?”. Kristin Danielsen, Director, Cultural Council of Norway began by emphasizing the importance of formulating clearer goals for cultural policy – goals that help describe why culture is important, and which protect cultural policy from the notion that culture can do anything. She also stated that there must be clear statements as to how responsibility for these goals should be divided between various levels in the system. Kristin Danielsen concluded by declaring that there are currently 28 million people living in the Nordic countries, and that they have a joint responsibility to protect diversity of cultural expression. She also noted that there is great potential for closer cooperation regarding interesting cultural products in order to become an even more relevant cultural area than what the Nordic region currently is.

Johanna Karimäki, a member of the Finnish Parliament and Chair of the Nordic Council’s Committee for Culture and Knowledge in the Nordic Region declared that art and culture should be placed on the agenda within other policy areas as well. Johanna Karimäki also wanted to see a stronger connection between national and Nordic cultural policy priorities. She promised that, in her role as Chair of the Nordic Council’s Committee for Culture and Knowledge in the Nordic Region, she would propose that other policy committees would be invited for a joint discussion about how Nordic cooperation can become more needs-driven and better related to other political levels.

Anna Kolbrún Árnadóttir, member of the welfare committee of the Islandic Parliament, in her speech, strongly advocated on behalf of the languages in the Nordic countries and the right to speak one’s mother tongue. Like Kristin Danielsen, Anna Kolbrún Árnadóttir also emphasized the importance of becoming better at documenting, monitoring and evaluating the effects of cultural policy in order to be able to draw better solutions about culture, and show why support for culture is important.

Olof Laveson, Chair of the Cultural Committee of the Swedish Parliament concluded by highlighting the importance of culture in a world full of conflicts. He determined that we, today, more than ever need cultural narratives in order to be able to reflect over our history and our times. Olof Laveson also characterized Nordic diversity as a key factor. Our breadth is our strength, and by increased diversity and curiosity, we need to animate and spread our Nordic diversity.
Jesper Kiel, Danish Local Government Association (KL), Denmark observed that there are very few functions that municipalities are obligated to do from a cultural policy perspective. On the other hand, many municipalities need to focus on creating an attractive local community, and culture plays an important role in this function. He also said that many municipalities in Denmark are working intensively to develop their own ways to share resources and create joint cultural activities in order to be able to offer a broader and higher-quality local culture.

Jónína Erna Arnardóttir, Association of Icelandic local authorities reported on Iceland’s attempts to create more structured and long-term cooperation between the national and local levels, through longer agreements between the state and local cultural institutions. She stated that persons who receive an artist’s salary live mostly in Reykjavik. It would be preferable but difficult to have culture workers spread over the entirety of Iceland.

The importance of adding support to local art schools and to libraries was raised by several of the participants in the panel discussion. All the representatives agreed that meetings like this are a good way to learn from each other’s successes, failures and challenges. They experienced that there are many areas in the Nordic Region in which more cooperation can contribute to greater benefits. This cooperation can take the form of political structures and initiatives, cooperation between artists and entities dealing with art, or more joint projects.

Catrin Hulmarker, Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR), Sweden began by emphasizing both the importance of having a broad, high-quality and accessible cultural life, and the difficulties associated with this. She found that in order to achieve equal access and quality, we must use a variety of methods, as regional and local conditions differ so greatly. Catrin Hulmarker also stated that it is difficult to get a good dialogue going between the various levels, but noted that the cultural cooperation model in Sweden has contributed to improved cooperation, while, at the same time, there is plenty of work to do.

Gunn Marit Helgesen, Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS), Norway underscored that a state policy is not the same as a national cultural policy, as the national cultural policy is more the sum of all local initiatives. This is the reason why it is so important that the local level makes its best efforts to promote and facilitate an offering of good cultural activities. She also stated that the coming “kulturmeldingen” is worrisome. It is still unclear how the goals and division of responsibility for cultural issues will end up. Gunn Marit Helgesen felt it was important to focus on the opportunities that this can open, and hope for more formal cooperation between local, regional and national levels.

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Jónína Erna Arnardóttir, Association of Icelandic local authorities reported on Iceland’s attempts to create more structured and long-term cooperation between the national and local levels, through longer agreements between the state and local cultural institutions. She stated that persons who receive an artist’s salary live mostly in Reykjavik. It would be preferable but difficult to have culture workers spread over the entirety of Iceland.

The importance of adding support to local art schools and to libraries was raised by several of the participants in the panel discussion. All the representatives agreed that meetings like this are a good way to learn from each other’s successes, failures and challenges. They experienced that there are many areas in the Nordic Region in which more cooperation can contribute to greater benefits. This cooperation can take the form of political structures and initiatives, cooperation between artists and entities dealing with art, or more joint projects.

1. In what is known as “kulturmeldingen”, the Norwegian government lists future culture policy opportunities and challenges, as well as proposals for the content of the national cultural policy, and proposed guidelines for division of responsibility among the various administrative levels in the area of cultural policy. Read more about this at: https://www.regjeringen.no/no/tema/kultur-idrett-og-friellighet/innsiktsartikler/arbeidet-med-ny-kulturmelding/id2554334/
The Ministers of Culture regarding Nordic cultural cooperation

Alice Bah Kuhnke, Minister of Culture and Democracy of Sweden, began with a summary of the meeting of the Nordic Ministers of Culture previously that day. During that meeting, the matters of budgetary texts, public service and the #Me Too Movement were discussed. The ministers had also heard an evaluation of the Nordic Matters project.

This was followed by a panel discussion where the ministers were asked to reflect on the issues where they see that cultural cooperation on the Nordic level would be valuable. Tony Asumaa, Minister of Education and Culture of Åland began by emphasizing the importance of allowing all countries and regions to participate in Nordic cooperation on equal terms, and that includes even the smaller ones. Rigmor Dam, Minister of Education, Research and Culture of the Faroe Islands focused on areas such as public libraries. She asserted that everyone comes away wiser by sharing experiences with each other. Lilja Dögð Alfroðsdóttir, Minister of Education and Culture of Iceland, noted the importance of the shared Nordic vision of equal access to culture, and the right to speak one’s own language in the context of Nordic cooperation. She also underscored the importance of joint statistics and research in the area of cultural policy. Trine Skei Grande, Minister of Culture of Norway emphasized the importance of Nordic cooperation for the preservation of diversity and artistic and cultural freedom of expression. She also underscored the importance of cooperation for the preservation of languages spoken by small populations, for example, by promoting the use of the Nordic Region languages in the academic world. Alice Bah Kuhnke, Minister of Culture and Democracy of Sweden underscored the importance of focusing Nordic cooperation on all the cultural policy areas of commonality we can find.

She also mentioned the specific importance of cooperating to preserve very small languages, including the various Sami languages.

As to the issue of how they view the role and ability of local regional elected officials that deal with cultural matters, and how they best can be supported, all the ministers emphasized the importance of Nordic cooperation on pressing issues of shared concern, such as digitalization, copyright, broadened access to culture in sparsely populated areas, mobility for artists, tax-financed subsidies, and matters related to languages. These are issues for which good examples and initiatives can be disseminated, and new joint projects can be carried out.

In response to the question of what was the single most important political prioritization that needs to be made in order to ensure broad-based access to culture, Åland’s Minister of Education and Culture named the struggle to preserve one’s language and the importance of making culture available in several languages. He also stressed the importance of promoting and facilitating a more gender-equal consumption of culture and the right to a school library. Iceland’s Minister of Education and Culture underscored accessibility and the importance of ensuring the cultural expression of children and young people in order to provide them with a rich cultural life in the future. The Minister for Research and Culture of the Faroe Islands emphasized children’s language development and the ongoing project in this area as the most important issue at this time. The Minister for Culture of Norway answered that it was artistic and cultural freedom of expression, which was an observation that was echoed by all ministers affected. The Minister for Art and Culture emphasized the importance of prioritizing culture and increasing appropriations for cultural matters.
The panel discussion concluded with a question and answer session during which the ministers were asked for their views on the establishment of additional cultural policy forums like this one. Alice Bah Kuhnke replied that while she viewed the prospect of additional meetings as something positive, she stressed that these conferences should be based on the specific interests of, and forces that drive, the participants, and that more overarching policy dialogue-based meetings, such as this one, are also needed.

Why culture is an important aspect of Nordic cooperation

Dagfinn Høybråten, Secretary-General of the Nordic Council of Ministers began his speech by asserting that the Nordic Region, as a cultural region, is in great demand globally. As an example, he mentioned Seattle, a city he recently visited, which collected 30 million USD for a museum that focused on showing the past and present of the Nordic Region.

Dagfinn Høybråten asserted that culture is important because it speaks to all aspects of a person and creates a coherent force in society. He continued by saying that as long as we give art and culture wide berth, we will see positive effects that far exceed what we invest.

He also noted the importance of having more Nordic cooperation and asserted that cultural matters are high on the list of the areas in which Nordic countries want to increase cooperation. The essence of Nordic cultural cooperation is that we can always find potential partners that have situations similar to our own, and that, at the same time, we are different enough so that exciting dynamics of cooperation result. A great deal of cooperation results from the initiative of cultural actors, and Dagfinn Høybråten asserted that we have a great deal to learn from cooperation with cultural workers from across borders.

He concluded by asserting that the Nordic Council of Ministers accord Nordic cultural cooperation a high priority, and that this choice is both correct and wise.

Summing up

In summing up her impressions of the summit meeting, Karin Thomasson, Vice Chair of SALAR concluded that this type of conference must not be a one-time phenomenon, but should rather be something we must join forces to ensure that it becomes a recurrent event. Karin Thomasson emphasized the similarities we have such as a small population, languages spoken by comparatively few speakers, long distances and gaps between urban and rural areas. As a result, the issue of accessibility is therefore a key shared factor.

Alice Bah Kuhnke, the Minister of Culture and Democracy of Sweden also agreed that meetings like this one need to be prioritized going forward. She stressed the importance of promoting and facilitating local and cultural cooperation and how vital it was to continually protect cultural freedom.

Maria Ward, Chair of the Culture Committee of Region Skåne concurred as to the importance of the meeting, and asserted that we have an opportunity, at additional meetings, to come closer to a realization of the ideas we have now discussed, perhaps through more thematic discussions. Maria Ward also emphasized the importance of strengthening our self-confidence regarding cultural policy, and standing up for the important role it has in building a democratic society.
GROUP DISCUSSIONS

The group discussions were carried on in three rounds, focusing on two issues in every round. A summary of the results of the discussions is set out below, question by question.

1. In which areas can you see that cultural policy is playing an important role in social progress?

There was a great deal of consensus amongst meeting attendees that cultural policy can play an important role in social progress in practically every area of policy to the extent that a drop of culture can contribute value in most of the societal sectors. A few asserted that it is not only the task of culture to enter the other policy areas, but it is also important that other policy areas understand the value of including culture, and also do so.

The discussions emphasize social welfare areas, such as education, healthcare, social care, as well as the social sector. Policy areas such as community development and planning were highlighted. In the economic policy area, the discussions brought up the creative business sector and the importance of improving the conditions of working as an artist or culture worker in the Nordic countries.

Many also emphasized the role that culture can play in promoting integration and inclusion. Some participants highlighted the increased diversity amongst culture workers and cultural expression that those who are new in a country can contribute.

Some groups emphasized the ability of art and culture to contribute to attractive places to live in. The important role that music and art schools pay in the range of cultural activities in municipalities was also mentioned.

2. What can cultural policy contribute in these areas?

The group discussions provided many different examples of the value that culture can contribute to many policy areas, and to society as a whole. As was the case in the previous discussion, there were many who gave examples of the contributions of culture to other societal sectors rather than discussing the concrete role of cultural policy.

Many group discussions included the topic of protecting the intrinsic value of art and culture and a more instrumental use of culture.

The group discussions provided a wide range of perspectives and examples of how culture can contribute ways of thinking and working, basic and fundamental values and language, and creating greater value and a holistic and contextual context in many sectors of society.

The power of culture to create and reinforce identity was raised by several participants; as was the case regarding the ability of culture to contribute a creative way of working, as well as tools and forms of expression that can be used to develop methods of working in other sectors. The power of culture to strengthen democracy was also brought up, as was the ability of culture to utilize the willingness and need for self-expression, as well as the ability of culture to protect democratic principles, such as freedom to have and express opinions and freedom of speech, in general. The unique ability of culture to reflect and give voice to society’s diversity was also brought up in several discussions, as was the ability of art and culture to offer platforms for mutual meetings – meetings that can create understanding and community, and can communicate messages in many different languages.

Finally, several groups brought up the importance of having reasonable expectations on culture, and the importance of communicating a message that the conditions we provide for culture affect what culture can contribute.

3. Which is the most important cultural policy prioritization and/or challenge for you?

In most of the group discussions, participants experienced a lack of cultural policy visions and goals as a major challenge. This was framed as a challenge that appears to apply to all cultural policy levels, but where the national level is expected to show a good example. The groups also called for the development of clearer cultural policy goals that show the short-term and long-term additional value that results from culture. These goals should create a basis for prioritization and informed choices. The importance of formulating goals at various levels that relate to each other in a logical manner was also stressed. One group brought up positive experiences from a project that connected cultural policy goals to the Agenda 2030 sustainability goals.

Participants also called for formulations that clearly explain why culture is important, and show actors other than those already involved the potential benefits of culture. Others called for more cultural policy research, as well as analysis and evaluations of cultural policy and culture financed by the public sector. The evaluations should be able to contribute more well-defined arguments on the value of culture, based on research and tried and tested experience.

In addition to clear goals, participants brought up the issue of division of responsibility. Several asserted that cultural policy needs to include a clear division of responsibility. In many countries, it is especially the role of the regional level that is diffuse and in need of clarification.

Participants also brought up the matter of resources, both as a necessary future prioritization and a current challenge.
One perspective on the issue of resources was the need for more resources for culture and the importance of politically prioritizing cultural policy in order for culture to shoulder the roles participants discussed under Questions 1 and 2. The second perspective dealt with financing models. Here the emphasis was on finding creative and sustainable ways to distribute limited resources in a manner that relates well to the cultural policy goals. In this context, discussions touched on everything from state subsidies and check system for participating in cultural activities to sponsorship, co-financing and crowdfunding. There were also discussion groups that viewed as a challenge the fact that many cultural activities are conducted as projects and that it is often difficult, even for successful projects, to find long-term and sustainable operating models.

Creating accessible, broad and high-quality culture for everyone was viewed by many in the group discussions both as a priority and a challenge. The issue of accessibility was discussed from many different perspectives. One of these dealt with the financial challenges that many small communities face. How can a cultural infrastructure including, for example, libraries and art and music schools, be supported in rural communities and sparsely populated areas? How can cultural activities be supported in municipalities or regions that involve long distances between communities, when artists and cultural activities generally have a tendency to concentrate in the main town of each of these municipalities and regions? From the perspective of accessibility, many participants spoke about the reach of cultural activities and about those groups who are least reached by these activities. How can cultural policy on various levels ensure that we have culture that includes and represents everyone? The question of how we should view the distribution of financial resources earmarked for culture was also discussed. More specifically, why should democratic principles be applied? Should everyone receive the same amount or should the grants be more governed by need? In other words, should more resources be earmarked for those who have less of a chance to create or enjoy cultural matters? Accessibility was also discussed from the perspective of functional variation. The participants discussed the possibilities digital aids can provide to make culture accessible to a greater number of people. One participant gave an example of how cultural heritage that is difficult to access through conventional means can be made available to more people through virtual reality technology. Two discussions emphasized the importance of using cultural policy to preserve and protect the rights and opportunities of national minorities and indigenous populations to engage in cultural activities and to contribute to spreading and highlighting Sami culture, for example.

Some group discussions touched upon the importance of creating cultural meeting places and infrastructure for culture. Several emphasized the importance of creating multifunctional cultural facilities where various types of artistic and cultural expressions could be accommodated. There were examples from those who observed that the willingness to invest in establishing cultural centres of various types often tends to be greater than the willingness to pay for operating and maintaining them. There were also those who wanted to invest and co-finance larger, regional cultural centres, to a greater extent.

Access of children and young people to cultural activities was considered to be an area of priority. One group discussed this issue from an accessibility perspective, posing the question of how culture can best be made accessible to children and young people. One answer was to make it free and with a connection to school. Another answer was to bring in aesthetic subjects into school, which is an area where participants from several countries were experiencing cutbacks. Several groups also noted the importance of having well-functioning music and art schools. The El Sistema music programme was discussed as a successful example of how many children can be reached by cultural activities—perhaps the very children that are difficult for cultural activities to reach. One group also discussed the importance of, in addition to digital culture, placing more focus on analogue culture. One group, while discussing children and young people, stressed the important role that parents played in the cultural involvement of these groups. Is there something to learn from the way sport clubs stimulate and utilize parental involvement?

The discussions showed that there were certain prioritizations that were especially emphasized by actors on a certain level. On the regional level, the importance of having a clear cultural policy mission and responsibility were emphasized, as well as ensuring that adequate resources were made available for the realization of that mission. Several actors from the local and regional levels stressed the importance of establishing close and sustainable cooperation between the levels, and finding ways to better communicate needs and priorities to the national level. For many local representatives at the meeting, accessibility to a broad and high-quality range of cultural activities was a make or break issue.

4. How can we work between the local, regional and national levels in order to improve our chances of meeting cultural policy prioritizations and challenges?

There was a good consensus in the group discussions regarding the meaning of closer cooperation and dialogue between the local, regional and national levels. Many participants agreed that cooperation between the various levels needs to be more frequent and more systematic. That said, however, the group discussions gave no practical or clear answers as to how this cooperation can be developed. Several good examples of well-functioning structures for cooperation between regional and local levels were mentioned, however. These were working methods that we could learn from and should be expanded and disseminated. Several regional actors also discussed successful cooperation with other nearby regions. These are examples of needs-driven inter-regional cooperation that transcends political regional boundaries. Similar examples of cooperation were mentioned regarding Sami culture.
We should note that the regional level plays an important role in various countries and regions in the Nordic area. Where no politically established regional level exists, the discussions focused on better contacts between national and local policies and on the importance of needs-driven cooperation between municipalities.

An important area for improvement mentioned was how the knowledge that regional and local actors possess can be utilized in a more systematic fashion on the national cultural policy level. This relates to knowledge about current challenges, success factors, good examples, financial models and cooperation, which many participants felt would make national policy more firmly grounded and effective. In those countries and regions where there is a clear formal regional level, there was a consensus that the regional level has the potential of playing a more important role than what it currently does. There appears to be a consensus that the regional level is needed to effectively and fairly channel challenges and reflect an entire country’s cultural policy needs and challenges.

One problem that came up in the group discussions was that the national policy sometimes tends to be selective when choosing the issues in which the regional level would be given influence. In the case of certain state subsidies for cultural activities in municipalities, for example, prioritizations take place without extensive regional involvement, with the subsidy going directly from the national to the local level. In these cases, there is a risk that the national level does not receive the knowledge and regional familiarity that can contribute to directing the measures and resources so that they result in the greatest possible benefit. Two of the participants asserted that it is important to involve the local and regional levels early on in the political process, and not ask them to only get involved when much of the decisions have already been made.

In addition to emphasizing the importance of well-functioning cooperation between actors in the public sector, the group discussions highlighted the role of civil society in culture. Associations and actors in general education play an important role in creating culture and preserving our cultural heritage (an example of this is the local cultural and historical centres), and it is important to find efficient ways to support the important role that civil society plays in our cultural life.

Possible improvements in the functioning of the regional level was discussed in some groups. An example of this was the need for the regional level to adapt its cultural policy efforts to the needs of the municipalities. It was pointed out on many occasions that the need for support varies greatly between different municipalities, as to aspects such as political visions, supply of qualified personnel and financial resources. Finally, there was also a consensus regarding the important function of the regions in facilitating and stimulating cooperation between the municipalities in their respective territories.

5. What issues would cooperation on a Nordic level provide added value to?

The overarching answer to this question was that cooperation is necessary where the challenges and priorities are shared, and this is reflected in the previous question. Some of the specific questions that were repeatedly raised in the discussions are as follows:

- **Cultural heritage**: One example that was raised was the possibility to create a form of culture pass that would include the Seven Wonders of the Nordic World. Another example of these suggestions was to organize exhibitions that reflect shared events in the history of our countries as presented from the perspective of different countries and regions. This could show the complexity of writing about history, as well as reflect common events in our history from the perspectives of various countries and regions, as well as the diversity of experiences in the Nordic countries.

- **Languages**: The importance of protecting and preserving the languages spoken in the Nordic countries was highlighted by several groups. This included sharing experiences of methods that are useful in facilitating the production of films or literature, for example, in those languages spoken in the Nordic countries. In addition, there was a strong focus on the translations of Nordic literature.

- **Mobility**: Several discussions raised the issue of promoting and facilitating the mobility of artists and cultural workers. It is important to facilitate exchanges, such as those inspired by the **Interreg model**, which is financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) program for transborder interregional cooperation. The artists-in-residence programme in Norway was mentioned as a phenomenon that we could develop together (mobility and residence support is already available from the Nordic Culture Point). The Puls Project, which supports festivals and attracts musicians from all over the Nordic region was presented as a good example with many teachable lessons. One participant also raised the question of whether the sister cities model could be modernized and adapted to today’s needs and conditions.

- **Minorities and indigenous peoples**: Participants asserted the importance of removing administrative obstacles to cultural cooperation for national minorities and indigenous peoples. Sami cultural cooperation has made progress, and there may be a great deal of benefit for activities like sister cities and theatres, but there are still administrative obstacles to cooperation.

- **Conditions for cultural activities in sparsely populated areas and small municipalities**: The shared challenge that small municipalities and municipalities in sparsely populated areas face of ensuring that their population will enjoy an accessible, broad and high-quality range of cultural activities was repeatedly raised as an urgent issue for cooperation on the Nordic level. One suggestion that was advanced was the launching of a project that would involve setting up meeting places during a given period between elected
officials responsible for culture and civil servants in small municipalities and/or municipalities in sparsely populated areas in the Nordic region. The goal would be to jointly come up with solutions that would meet these challenges.

6. How can Nordic cooperation utilize municipal and regional cultural programmes?

The discussions, in part, were about how Nordic cooperation can better utilize municipal and regional cultural projects, but perhaps even more about how the Nordic Council of Ministers can support and provide reinforcement for the situation in municipalities and regions. During the discussions, the participants called for, for instance, better information and communication about the opportunities, such as support programmes and events, that can be arranged. The discussions indicated that there is a need on the part of the Nordic level to find channels of communication that could reach municipalities and regional actors to a greater extent. Several participants also called for better support in enabling information from successful projects and activities to be disseminated so other Nordic countries can benefit from these.

Programmes such as Nordic Matters and Nordic Cool were mentioned in many groups as positive examples of cooperative events in which Nordic common fundamental values and cultural diversity have been marketed internationally.

An additional way would be to continue to create arenas for cooperation of various types as part of Nordic cultural cooperation. In order to go forward from the overarching conclusions that the meeting came up with, participants advocated thematic meetings that would be based on more delineated issues, and would lead to concrete results. Examples of themes that were suggested include financing, support and stimulus programmes for the creative sector and art and music school issues. Arenas for cooperation could also be created based on function. An example of this could be having civil servants on the regional level gather to discuss a shared urgent issues, such as forms of cooperation with the local level. Another suggestion raised was support for establishing digital communities and/or wikis about various themes. In these, requests for examples could be made, as well as the sharing of experiences and the dissemination of good examples.

Certain discussions also approached the issue of better cooperation regarding the exposure of Nordic cultural production in its various forms. One participant made a proposal to establish a Nordic channel in the near future that would gather high-quality public service productions.

A very concrete proposal that was presented was that the Nordic Council of Ministers, when it sets the course of future Nordic cultural cooperation, should have a clear strategy for how needs and suggestions from the local and regional levels should be handled.
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Organisers

Partners