Volume 1—Learning from the Globus Experiment

Funding Culture for a Changing World

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Funding Culture for a Changing World

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Foreword

by the Nordic Culture Fund

Art and culture are fundamental to our ability to understand, develop and imagine the world. They open up spaces for experimentation and dialogue, and connect us with each other and the world around us. The power of art and culture lies in their ability to create meaning, think beyond the established, and find a language for what has not yet been articulated

At the Nordic Culture Fund, this understanding lies at the heart of our work. Since the establishment in 1966, our core objective has been to advance cultural cooperation both within and beyond the Nordic Region. This mission is guided by the conviction that cultural cooperation is essential to addressing shared challenges and to building cohesion and trust across borders.

A global perspective is therefore not an addition to the Fund's mandate, but an integral part of it. Yet it had not previously been explored as systematically as through Globus, the Fund's thematic initiative from 2020 to 2025, dedicated to expanding Nordic cultural cooperation and rethinking its relevance in a changing global context.

What began as an open exploration of internationalisation in the arts developed into a laboratory for new methods, relationships and funding practices. Globus invited us to think beyond the transnational and towards the translocal: towards collaborations that connect specific places, communities and realities across borders. It also challenged us to rethink the position of the Nordics in the world—not as a fixed identity be promoted, but as a region continuously developed through dialogue, honest exchanges, and a shared sense of global interdependence.

Funding Culture for a Changing World is a two-volume series that unfolds and builds on this learning journey—one that has been crucial for the Fund's own development and that we hope will contribute to wider conversations among cultural funders, policymakers, artists and cultural organisations.

To support this reflection, Elena Polivtseva, an independent researcher and policy expert, was commissioned to lead the work. Bringing a broad European perspective on cultural policy and funding practices, she has examined the Globus journey with critical distance, situating its learning beyond the Fund itself and identifying insights with relevance to the wider cultural funding community.

Together, the two volumes point to a central insight: funding culture today requires open-ended, trust-based and long-term approaches that allow collaborations to evolve in response to changing realities. It means recognising uncertainty not as an obstacle, but as a condition of cultural practice and meaningful cooperation. It also calls on funders to engage not only as distributors of resources, but as partners, learners, conveners and catalysts for constant structural development.

The Nordic Culture Fund's strategy for 2026–2030 underlines the need to rethink funding models and structures, strengthen cooperation and coordination, and develop a more holistic approach to the cultural ecosystem. The experience of Globus has helped give practical substance to these ambitions.

We share these two publications as an invitation to join us on our journey to explore the future of cultural funding. Not to arrive at a perfect model, but to remain curious, to share both best practices and difficult lessons, and to strengthen collaboration across funding landscapes. In times of uncertainty, we need new alliances and a willingness to experiment with new ways of working. In doing so, we can help ensure that cross-border collaboration remains one of the ways we continue to imagine and build a shared future.

Copenhagen, May 2026

Kristin Danielsen,
CEO of the Nordic Culture Fund

Introduction

'*With Globus, we are writing a new chapter in our history*', one could read in large letters on the website of the Nordic Culture Fund. A new chapter—even if time-limited—implies, in some way, a point of no return: that what follows does not simply revert to what came before.

Globus was the Nordic Culture Fund's multi-year thematic initiative, running from 2020 to 2025. It introduced several important novelties in the Fund's approach to cultural funding. The programme experimented with more trust-based and open-ended models of support and shifted away from a project-based logic towards relationship-building. It also proactively learned from its own trajectory and challenged conventional notions of international cultural relations. Finally, Globus aimed to rethink the position of the Nordic region in the world, extending Nordic cultural collaborations globally.

Although Globus was never announced as a permanent programme, the ambitions behind it clearly signalled aspirations for lasting change—a recognition of outdated funding modalities and a desire to create space for cross-border cultural practices that had long been under-supported but were steadily growing. Many people involved in Globus—as experts and beneficiaries—described it as a 'unique' programme. So, what kind of chapter has Globus been in the Fund's history? And more importantly, what will its lasting legacy be—and what might the next chapter look like?

But first, let us look at the current realities of cross-border cultural funding. Today, we have an acute sense that resources are shrinking—not only economically, but also environmentally and spatially, in terms of spaces for cross-border encounter, dialogue, and imagination. Yet, despite closing borders, economic

pressures, and security risks, artists continue to foster human-to-human connections, shifting perspectives, and creating bonds where only division seemed possible. They imagine what does not yet exist and build bridges between contexts, contributing to what may be one of the few remaining shared goods: a global conversation—woven from diverse cultural practices, languages, expressions, histories, and identities. Autonomy and experimentation are essential for this conversation, yet increasingly at risk. In this context, public funders for culture have an essential role to play: to support these processes with vision—to amplify vital narratives, uplift underrepresented voices, and safeguard spaces for human creativity where hope is fragile.

In this regard, the story of Globus is particularly significant—as a learning journey, as an experiment, and as an example of a funder translating values such as trust and reciprocity into practice. The Nordic Culture Fund has decided to turn the entire journey into a collective learning parcours—not only through internal evaluations, but also through a process open to everyone in the field interested in the continuous improvement of cultural funding practices. This learning journey has resulted in the series of publications *Funding Culture for a Changing World*, consisting of two volumes: the present one—*Learning from the Globus Experiment*, and the second one—*Trends, Contexts, Pathways*.

This series aims to reflect on the current context for global cultural collaborations, collect and reflect upon the learning points of the Globus journey and other innovative funding practices, and imagine pathways for the further development of future-proof funding strategies for culture.

Volume 1 (the present document) provides a summary and assessment of Globus (2020—2025)—examining how the Fund's ambition to experiment with funding for cross-border cultural collaboration has played out in practice, and what results and insights have emerged from the supported projects. It is intended for those in the cultural funding community and the arts field who ask questions such as: What happens when a funder applies radical trust toward its beneficiaries? If 'cultural diplomacy' is not the most future-proof concept for international cultural collaboration, what might replace it? What happens when art professionals are free to shape their own understanding of global collaboration? And when a funding scheme removes thematic priorities, what do beneficiaries choose to focus on?

The report opens with key learning points from the research journey, followed by a brief overview of Globus and an explanation of its core ambitions: rethinking global cultural collaboration and 'Nordic relevance', shifting from project-based funding to relationship-building, providing trust-based and open-ended support, and developing knowledge- and learning-centred approaches.

It then presents the achievements of supported projects and offers an in-depth analysis of how these ambitions have been implemented in practice, including challenges, limitations, and key insights. The final section outlines recommendations for future cultural funding, focusing on diversification, innovation, trust-based processes, community-building, and collaboration among funders.

Conceived as a coherent journey from reflection to practice and forward-looking proposals, the report is best read in sequence, as each section builds on the previous one.

Volume 2, *Trends, Contexts, Pathways*, reflects on current policy trends in Europe affecting cross-border cultural work and, drawing on insights from other funders, explores innovative practices and initiatives in the field.

The series aims to contribute to the Nordic Culture Fund's reflections about the next chapters of its history. At the same time, it serves as a source of inspiration and knowledge for the wider funding community seeking more effective ways to support, sustain, and celebrate cross-border cultural practices in the world as it stands today. We invite you to explore both volumes, which are autonomous publications but are best read together—as their conclusions and insights are informed through the shared methodology applied to the entire research journey.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology of the publication series *'Funding Culture for a Changing World'* includes several steps:

1. Understand the programme: its original ambitions, innovations, and evolution: content analysis of the key documentation of the programme; focus group with programme partners (6) (Volume 1)
2. Examine the trends in the field related to the programme's ambitions: content analysis of the application texts (120 selected projects, and 60 unsuccessful applications); semi-structured interviews with Globus experts (3) (Volume 1)
3. Evaluate the programme's results and how its specific ambitions were realised in the short and long term: content analysis of project's reports (60) and communication; quantitative-qualitative beneficiary survey (37 responses); semi-structured beneficiary Interviews (24) (Volume 1)
4. Map the needs of the field related to cross-border cultural collaborations in the current global context: beneficiary survey, semi-structured beneficiary Interviews (Volume 2)
5. Identify how sector needs are currently addressed through policy and funding and propose recommendations for a more supportive landscape: desk research on policy trends and developments in Europe; case studies, involving desk research and interviews (6) (Volume 2)
6. Consolidate and synthesise the knowledge collected into two analytical report (Volumes 1&2)

An important limitation of this methodology is that it does not include the perspectives of unsuccessful applicants of Globus. As a result, the findings presented in the reports are predominantly based on the experiences of those who have benefited from the Globus initiative. To partly mitigate this bias, the research also includes participants who were successful in at least one application but unsuccessful in another, allowing for some reflection on both sides of the process.

In order to address potential power imbalances between funder and beneficiary, the research was conducted by an independent researcher. All interviews were carried out anonymously, and interviewees were explicitly informed of the researcher's neutral and impartial position. In addition, external experts were consulted to provide more critical perspectives and to counterbalance the potentially overly positive views of programme beneficiaries.

While the publications draw broader conclusions about the arts field in the Nordic region and Europe, these should be interpreted with caution. The insights are based on a relatively specific group of practitioners—primarily based in the Nordic region, engaged in international work, and already experienced in securing public funding. All participants have benefited from at least one grant and have undertaken, or are in the process of undertaking, cross-border projects. This context inevitably shapes the perspectives reflected in the analysis.

Key Learning Points

This volume articulates the key ambitions of the Globus initiative and examines how they have been realised in practice through supported projects. It also explores the evolving needs of beneficiaries engaged in cross-border collaboration and formulates recommendations for the Nordic Culture Fund on how these needs can be addressed through its funding structures. Through this process, we have gleaned the following insights:

1. Cross-border cultural collaboration holds open space that is closing

As borders harden and resources shrink, cross-border cultural collaboration creates rare spaces for dialogue, imagination, and shared understanding. When supported through trust and allowed to define their own terms, these collaborations do not merely circulate finished works. They ask globally relevant questions, test ideas, and develop knowledge across contexts. They build human connections across fragmented realities. They are urgent and unique endeavours to address global challenges from the bottom up—climate crisis, inequality, polarisation, and conflict. They deeply care about local realities: translocal partnerships connect specific places facing shared imbalances. These collaborations are also vocal about unequal resources, risks, and power structures. Crucially, they build infrastructures—networks, methods, and relationships—that outlast individual projects, strengthening resilience, solidarity, and imaginative capacity beyond borders. With funders' trust, cross-border collaboration does not just dwell on cultural differences—it creates unique spaces where shared futures become possible.

2. Regional relevance emerges through global engagement, not fixed identity

We learned from Globus that *Nordic relevance* is not a stable identity but a concept in motion. The programme itself functioned as a provocation against fixed understandings of regionality, enabling Nordic actors to work globally thereby testing what the region's relevance might mean in practice. This approach did not produce a single definition of Nordic relevance. Instead, it framed it as an ongoing exploration emerging through collaboration, critical reflection, readiness to continuous transformation, and global interdependence. Across projects, the Nordics are framed less as a model to export and more as one context among many, characterised by responsibility and structural implication in global developments, situating the region as both supporter and learner within an evolving global field. This lens shows how cultural policy can shift away from using culture to preserve a fixed regional identity toward actively redefining the region's role, responsibilities, and relevance in a rapidly changing world—an approach from which Europe as a whole could learn.

3. The problem is project-centred systems —not projects themselves

Linear, short-term funding cycles focused on end outputs create transactional relationships and ultimately weaken trust. In cross-border collaboration, this mode of operation often clashes with evolving partnerships and unpredictable contexts. Short-term deliverables can overshadow what matters most: relationships, knowledge, and shared learning. When projects end, this relational capital can dissipate, and collaborations risk losing momentum. At the same time, Globus shows that projects can be valuable frameworks—as long as they are not treated as the only form of artistic work. Artistic work unfolds as constellations of three crucial elements: relationships, research, and interventions. When the funder embraces a balanced lens on what art is all about, outputs, such as exhibitions, publications, or performances, become milestones—not the sole purpose. Projects should function as flexible containers for experimentation, trust-building, and long-term collaboration. Value should thus be evaluated not only through deliverables, but through strengthened partnerships, shared knowledge, and sustained trajectories beyond a single grant.

4. Best practice falls short when it remains an exception

Globus exposes the tension between the need for long-term and open-ended collaboration and a funding landscape dominated by short, output-driven projects. Within this context, Globus created a temporary space for experimentation,

relationship-building, and open-ended trajectories. Beneficiaries used it for reflection, capacity-building, and pilot collaborations that could evolve into sustained partnerships. However, this departure from output-centred modalities largely existed only within the protected timeframe of the grant. Once projects returned to the broader funding system, short timelines and output-driven expectations reappeared. Precisely because Globus was exceptional in scope and design, many initiatives it enabled struggled to secure continuation. This reveals a structural paradox: funding schemes that pilot experimental, open-ended, relational work often operate within systems built around short-term, output-centred cycles. Sustainable impact of these innovations often depends less on structural support of the wider funding system than on the continued commitment of the collaborators themselves.

5. Without uncertainty, there is no art —and no cross-border collaboration

Unpredictability is intrinsic to art and should not be treated as failure. This is even more true for cross-border cultural collaboration, which involves high levels of uncertainty that must be embraced as part of the methodology. Within Globus, unpredictability was not seen only as a risk requiring adaptation, but as a condition shaping methodological, ethical, and organisational choices. Projects became processes of navigation rather than linear implementation. This also underpins the role of trust in funding programmes. Funders can help beneficiaries embrace uncertainty by allowing deviation from predefined outcomes. Flexible applications and adaptive timelines enable iteration, testing, and context-driven decisions. Trust-based funding signals that deviation, learning, and partial failure are valid outcomes, not flaws. Allowing changes in format, scale, or participation helps turn fragilities into methodological innovation. Treating adaptation and even failure as moments of reflection makes experimentation viable. This requires funders to acknowledge evolving trajectories rather than fixed plans, and give beneficiaries the space to learn creatively through adaptation.

6. Relevance grows from thematic liberty, not thematic priorities

The Globus experience suggests that setting thematic priorities in cross-border funding schemes is neither necessary nor productive. Predefined themes can create a filtering effect: applicants adapt their language and ideas to match funding categories, which risks narrowing artistic inquiry and instrumentalising culture. By contrast, Globus application processes focused on how collaboration happens—formats, relationships, and methods—rather than what it should be about. Most supported projects still addressed global issues, shaped by shared concerns, solidarity, and an increasingly turbulent world. When beneficiaries are free to define the content of collaboration, they naturally gravitate toward issues that matter in their contexts, often addressing pressing global challenges without being instructed to do so. In this sense, relevance emerges organically from practice rather than being imposed from above. This suggests that funders do not need to prescribe topics; when collaboration is genuinely open, practitioners themselves bring forward the most relevant questions.

7. Cross-border cultural collaborations lead the way in rethinking cultural impact

The Globus story suggests that impact in cross-border cultural collaboration lies not only in tangible results, but in shifts in perspectives, strengthened relationships, and the creation of conditions and examples that allow change to unfold over time. Rather than producing immediate, measurable outcomes, Globus collaborations aimed to shift conditions: whose voices are heard; how knowledge is produced; and how institutions and partnerships function. Impact therefore unfolded at a structural level, through changes in governance, working methods, and access to cultural infrastructures. Building trust, sustaining relationships, and developing shared methodologies has created infrastructures that can enable future work. Equally important, Globus collaborations functioned as demonstrations of possibility. They staged alternative ways of working across contexts, tested new models of collaboration, and imagined different futures. When faced with inequities and constraints, they highlighted gaps and injustices, generating reference points and knowledge that can influence wider practices.

Globus Aspirations: Writing A New Chapter

The communication around Globus quickly conveys a strong ambition to do things differently. This commitment to innovation can be understood both as a response to shifting global realities—'Globus is created for a changing world' was one of the programme's mottos—and as an expression of the Fund's aspiration to act as an agent of change within those realities, 'writing a new chapter' in its own history. The launch of Globus was aligned with the Nordic Culture Fund's Strategy 2019–2025, through which the foundation sought to rethink its approach to cultural support.

This section captures the holistic ambitions and aspirations of Globus as conceived by its founders. To grasp them, we conducted an analysis of programme communications—from open calls and press releases to internal discussion papers and board reports. To further clarify and unpack these ambitions, we also held a series of conversations with people involved in the programme's inception and implementation—as part of the focus group and individual interviews.

Through these efforts, we established the following key ambitions:

1. Renew approaches to supporting international cultural collaboration, shifting from a national focus to local–global (translocal) connections.

2. Rethink the notion of 'Nordic relevance' within a changing global context.

3. Transit from a predominantly project-oriented to a network-building approach in supporting cultural collaborations.

4. Build a programme grounded in trust, reciprocity, and an embrace of the uncertainties of global realities.

5. Test and develop a long-term, knowledge-based approach to supporting culture that ensures flexibility and the iterative evolution of both supported projects and the funding programme itself.

6. Advocate for strengthening the position of culture within international agendas and progress in the field of supporting transnational cultural collaborations.

Let us dive deeper into each of these ambitions, exploring what exactly was meant by each and how the Fund envisaged realising them.

What is Globus?

Globus was the Nordic Culture Fund's multi-year thematic initiative running from 2020 to 2025. It aimed to expand Nordic cultural collaboration beyond the region and connect it with global contexts, marking a shift from primarily intra-Nordic cooperation to supporting partnerships involving artists and cultural practitioners worldwide, with a Nordic anchoring. The programme emphasised trust-based, flexible funding, long-term relationship-building, and learning-oriented support, while testing new approaches to cross-border cultural collaboration.

Globus developed through several phases and funding instruments. The first strand, Globus Opstart (2020–2023), supported the early stages of global collaboration, focusing on research, network-building, and exploratory partnership development. Grants of up to DKK 50,000 were available to individuals, groups, and organisations. These early projects were designed to test ideas and establish relationships that could develop into longer-term collaborations. In 2024, this strand was relaunched as Globus Opstart+, with a stronger emphasis on long-term potential and sustainability, and with the maximum grant increased to DKK 75,000.

In 2022, the Fund introduced Globus Call, a larger funding scheme supporting transnational collaborations grounded in long-term exchange and mutual learning. The programme remained open to applicants worldwide while requiring a Nordic anchoring. Grants of up to DKK 700,000 were available for projects lasting up to two years. The first Globus Call in 2022 awarded DKK 4.8 million to 14 projects out of 227 applications. A second call in 2023 awarded DKK 4.95 million to 13 projects out of 128 applications. These projects explored diverse forms of cross-border cultural collaboration and emphasised reciprocity, local relevance, and shared development across regions.

In 2024, Globus shifted towards strengthening existing partnerships through Globus FORWARD, which replaced Globus Call. This funding stream focused on consolidating long-term collaboration structures, organisational development, and strategic capacity-building. Grants of up to DKK 500,000 for up to two years were available. In the first round (2024), DKK 4.25 million was awarded to nine initiatives out of 73 applications. A second and final round in 2025 allocated DKK 4.19 million to nine initiatives.

Alongside grant funding, Globus developed a knowledge- and learning-oriented framework. In 2023, the Fund initiated a structured knowledge-sharing process with supported projects, combining self-documentation, interviews, and peer exchange. This work resulted in the Globus Knowledge Sharing platform and report (2024), identifying key dimensions of transnational cultural collaboration. In June 2024, the Fund also organised the Globus Hackathon, bringing together practitioners from funded projects to collectively explore future scenarios for cross-border cultural collaboration.

Globus further included partnerships with international organisations aimed at strengthening the role of culture in global policy conversations. These included collaboration with WHO/Europe on arts and health, cooperation with UNESCO on freedom of expression, and partnership with IFACCA, including participation in the 2023 World Summit on Arts and Culture and the launch of the IFACCA Globus Fellowship (2024–2026), a learning and exchange programme for cultural policy representatives from the Global South[1].

Across its six-year duration, Globus supported a total of 247 projects and evolved from exploratory collaboration grants to structural support for long-term partnerships. The initiative functioned both as a funding programme and as a learning framework, testing new approaches to trust-based, open-ended support and generating insights into how cultural funding can better respond to global, cross-border collaboration.

1 While institutional partnerships are important elements of the Globus framework, this report focuses on its funding streams that directly finance global cultural collaborations and does not examine the results and impact of these partnerships in depth.

1. The New Global

One of the most pronounced ambitions of Globus has been to bring Nordic arts and culture to global arenas and create opportunities for the Nordic field to collaborate with partners not only beyond the Nordic region, but well beyond the European continent. At its core, Globus sought to promote deeper, fairer, and more open international collaboration in the cultural sector. The development of Globus has stemmed from the realisation that a new way of working across borders has already begun to emerge within the cultural field itself. This new way embodies a connection between global and local agendas, consciously moving beyond the national lens.

In earlier Nordic Culture Fund programmes, national anchoring was an important eligibility criterion, but under Globus, it became clear that this approach could limit the scope and spirit of transnational collaboration. It was understood that in today's interconnected world—even and especially amid growing nationalist tendencies—national anchoring in cross-border projects may no longer hold the same relevance. Globus challenges the dominance of the *national* through its own definition of the *global*: '*We view the global as borderless – the world as a united whole*'. Borders as such appeared alien to the nature of arts and culture: '*We believe that art and culture are without borders*', as was stated in several documents. Therefore, the national lens in funding structures has emerged in this picture as rather an imposed construct.

In this spirit, the programme encouraged partners to move away from representing a specific country, nationality, or set of national values within their projects. The focus has shifted from *which countries are represented* to *what the project is about*. The programme also sought to enable beneficiaries to invest in what truly matters to them locally, respond to their immediate realities, and ultimately pursue more sustainable, long-term impact.

The Globus conceptualisation also stemmed from the recognition that transnational cultural collaboration requires time, trust, and openness. Globus approached such collaborations as a long-term investment in relationships and shared learning, and not as rushed or neatly contained activities within short project cycles.

These ambitions were reflected in the structure, vocabulary and operational modalities of Globus in several ways:

— Outward-looking perspective: Unlike the Fund's other programmes, such as Project Funding and Opstart, Globus did not include a criterion requiring trans-Nordic cooperation. On the contrary, it supported projects that could not be carried out within the Nordic region alone. While each project needed a 'Nordic anchor', there was no requirement for the project leader to be based in a Nordic country. Projects operating exclusively within the Nordic region were not eligible. Moreover, evaluators were asked to assess the 'global dimension' and 'global ambition' of collaborations—in the choice of partners, the project structure, and the extent to which the work was embedded in specific local or regional contexts. To assess projects, the Fund engaged both Nordic and international experts—based in Africa, the Americas and Asia—in the evaluation of projects, further reinforcing the initiative's outward-looking orientation and commitment to multiple perspectives.

— Focus on relationship-building: The recognition that cross-border collaboration requires time and space was reflected in the evolving structure of the Globus initiative, which embraced different stages of cross-border relationship-building. Through its instruments, Globus supported both preliminary research and exploratory processes, as well as further development of existing partnerships. Under Globus Opstart and Globus Call, support was awarded to initiatives seeking to explore and establish collaborations that could lead to mutual global networks characterised by depth and longevity. Later, under Globus FORWARD, the modality shifted towards strengthening the capacities of existing partnerships and building infrastructures for long-term, sustainable collaboration.

— Awareness of uncertainties: The investigative, 'phased' and 'multi-track' nature of Globus—which continuously learned from its own processes, experimented with different forms of support in parallel, gathered feedback from the field, and adjusted accordingly—reflected an awareness of the complex, unpredictable and volatile nature of translocal collaboration. The criteria of Globus funding streams explicitly valued projects' awareness of local dynamics, including changes and fragilities.

— Embracing local relevance: The focus on local relevance was grounded in encouraging applicants to identify, explore, articulate, and consolidate local needs in their own terms. Across all calls, the central expectation was that applicants demonstrate a deep understanding of their local realities and explain how the proposed projects or actions would allow them to respond to and thrive within those contexts. Unlike many other funding programmes, the emphasis was not on how closely applicants aligned with the Fund's priorities, but on how convincingly they developed their own context-driven rationale.

— Inclusive view of the world: 'Curiosity toward the unknown' was another assessment principle, encouraging projects that 'possess an ambition to observe from alternative positions and points of view.' This anchored a commitment to inclusivity of perspectives and signalled openness to approaches that might be different from the long-standing grammars and philosophies of the Fund's traditional support context.

2. Rethinking the Nordic relevance

The goal of Globus, as stated in the Fund's Strategy 2019–2025, was to broaden the perspective on Nordic art and culture. It was observed that regional and national identities at large were changing rapidly as a result of globalisation and geopolitical shifts, and it has become increasingly difficult to take any identity for granted. The Nordic identity—or '*Nordic relevance*', the term consistently used in communication about Globus—was therefore understood as one of these shifting identities, deserving deeper exploration amid accelerating global change.

At the outset of Globus, its initiators observed that while the Nordic cultural field had already embraced new, transnational ways of working, political structures were still catching up. As one of them noted during our conversation, the Globus

initiative challenged established views within its own governance and acted as a 'provocation' against traditional understandings of Nordic relevance. As the first regional fund operating on a global scale, Globus questioned outdated notions of regionality.

With Globus, the goal was to move beyond viewing the Nordic region through national lenses. *Nordic* was understood in terms of shared values, politics, and culture, rather than geography. From the perspective of an external observer, this inquiry into a new Nordic relevance appears to have been genuinely open. The Fund did not present ready-made hypotheses about what such relevance should or must entail—at least not explicitly in its public discourse.

The Globus open calls did not require applicants to address specific themes or provide predefined answers to questions about the Nordic region's place in the world. Simply by enabling the field to build or activate partnerships beyond the Nordic region, to situate their focus anywhere globally while maintaining a Nordic anchor, the programme created a practical exercise in exploring how the region might be relevant in a broader global context. The guiding principle was that each project needed a Nordic anchor, and evaluators of the Globus call were instructed that the link to the Nordic region should be robust and clearly justified in relation to the project's content and structure.

This quest for a 'new relevance' was not merely rhetorical; it carried a sense of urgency. Globus was built on the belief that the Nordic region is meaningful only in connection with the wider world—shaped by global agendas while also contributing to them. The intentions for this exploration, as follows from the focus group with people involved in the initiation and implementation of Globus, included:

— Reframing the region as 'part of the world'—collaborating globally rather than existing as an island.

— Recognising that international collaboration can transform the Nordic scene, bringing new methods and perspectives. This also means the acknowledgement that cultures are not static, and should not be bound to any top-down, nationalist articulations.

— Understanding that 'going global' strengthens Nordic unity, broadening the concept of the Nordic beyond geography and revealing shared values with other regions.

— Sharing Nordic values and practices globally, such as civic engagement, democracy, and egalitarianism.

As will become clear later, ultimately, no single new definition of *the Nordic* has emerged—nor should it. The concept is dynamic and evolving. Globus has served as a continuous space for reflection, discussion, and redefinition of what Nordic relevance means today. Therefore, Globus served as a *method*—a living process through which the Nordic idea is explored and developed.

3. From projects to relationships

From its outset, Globus carried an ambition that went beyond supporting international cultural projects. It sought to question the dominant funding paradigm itself, particularly the project-based model that has shaped cultural policy and practice for decades. Instead of primarily stimulating the production of outputs within fixed timeframes, Globus aspired to foster networks, long-term relationships and community-building across borders.

An analysis of the discussion material around Globus at its outset suggests that the ambition to move beyond a strictly project-centric model was grounded in two interrelated concerns:

First, the trust gap. It was observed that traditional funding systems operate in linear cycles—funds are allocated, a project unfolds, a report is submitted, and the relationship resets—can create transactional dynamics between funder and grantee, and between partners themselves. The emphasis on short-term, pre-planned deliverables may lead to disconnection with changing dynamics of collaboration, rather than trust and openness to the unknown. Particularly in transnational settings—where collaboration depends on often fragile, cross-cultural relationships—short cycles focused on predetermined results can undermine deeper engagement.

Second, it was understood that the project model tends to overlook what is most valuable yet least visible: knowledge, networks and relationships. Once a project ends, much of the relational and experiential capital generated through the collaboration risks dissipating: learning remains undocumented, partnerships lose momentum, and informal infrastructures collapse.

The ambition to stimulate networks and communities—instead of solely focusing on project deliverables—was embedded in Globus through several concrete steps and evolving modalities:

3.1. Supporting different phases of collaboration

Globus introduced a phased structure that acknowledged that networks evolve over time:

— Globus Opstart was conceived as an exploratory entry point. It supported initiatives seeking to examine how global collaboration could be developed and structured. The aim was to explore possibilities and establish foundations for mutual networks characterised by depth and longevity. Globus Opstart did not expect mature outputs, instead encouraging exploration and development of agile collaborative formats. However, the focus was still on a 'project', and applicants were assessed whether their specific partnership would contribute to the aims of a project-based trajectory.

— Globus Opstart+ continued this approach, emphasising development potential and long-term focus. Evaluators were instructed to assess whether projects built mutual commitment, generated new exchange, and anchored themselves meaningfully in local contexts. Relational accountability was prioritised through the focus in evaluation on how the cooperation between partners was reflected in budgets and governance structures.

— Globus Call marked a new form of support for larger and longer-term projects, with explicit focus on process, reciprocity, and 'genuine exchange'. It encouraged collaborations that transcended geographical, cultural and disciplinary boundaries and sought dialogue between local and global contexts.

— Finally, Globus FORWARD targeted existing collaborations that had progressed beyond their initial phases and demonstrated readiness for further development. The emphasis shifted toward strengthening long-term capacities of networks and platforms, and the grant was meant to act as a catalyst for existing partnerships to grow and consolidate.

3.2. Focus on collaboration methods rather than outputs

Overall, the focus of Globus was not merely on *what* would be produced, but on *why* partners wished to collaborate and *how* the collaboration would function, within and beyond the timeline of the funded initiative. For instance, the Globus Call explicitly shifted emphasis from the 'project' as an isolated unit to the content, purpose and structure of the collaboration. Assessment criteria prioritised mutual commitment and engagement among partners; clarity of roles within the collaboration; development of sustainable structures and project organisations; and the articulation of long-term effects beyond the grant period.

Reviewers were asked to assess the authenticity and depth of partnerships, the extent to which collaborations were genuinely mutual, and whether they demonstrated awareness of local contexts and dynamics. Inclusivity, reciprocity and equitable collaboration were explicitly emphasised in evaluators' briefings.

3.3. Emphasising long-term vision and organisational development

Globus FORWARD expanded application requirements to foreground long-term thinking when it comes to relationships, with a vision for the future. As was anchored in its assessment criteria, this funding instrument sought for '*a shared ambition that goes beyond a one-time purpose and activities*'. Precisely, applicants were asked to: describe the origins and evolution of the collaboration; articulate a long-term vision beyond the grant period; explain how proposed activities contributed to structural strengthening; outline future

financing strategies; and demonstrate awareness of contextual opportunities and challenges.

The grant could cover targeted development activities (consultations, expert sessions, strategic planning), focusing on supporting improvement of governance, knowledge development and structural resilience, with a view of sustaining the network on a long-term basis. Notably, there was no requirement for formal organisational status: networks, collectives and informal constellations were eligible, provided they demonstrated emerging organisational capacity. This opened space for supporting non-institutional actors and informal infrastructures—often overlooked in conventional funding schemes. Moreover, the absence of a co-financing requirement lowered immediate financial pressure, at the same time encouraging applicants to aim for increased economic sustainability after the grant period.

3.4. Prioritising reciprocity and mutual learning

Globus did not only stimulate network-development, but also conveyed values and principles upon which these networks were supposed to be built: reciprocity, equality and local relevance. The application process explicitly explored the purpose and substance of proposed networks—why they were formed and what shared ambition drove them.

Beyond individual grants, another Globus aspiration has become clear in its later stages: to invest in gathering knowledge from supported projects, while also fostering a community and mutual learning among them. Bridge-building between projects was meant to contribute to creating connections across funded collaborations—generating relevance not only within projects, but between them. These efforts sought to generate, collect and retain knowledge beyond individual grant cycles.

4. Trust-based and open-ended support

Trust and open-endedness were central features of Globus' innovative approach to cross-border cultural funding. They are closely linked to the already discussed shift from project-based support toward network-building and the development of long-term relational infrastructures, but there are other features worthy of our analysis.

4.1. Definitions of trust, risk, and openness

For Globus, a trust-based funding approach implied moving away from prescribing themes, agendas, and fixed models, and instead supporting the ideas and directions that applicants themselves wish to pursue. Globus funding streams encouraged experimental approaches and methods and sought initiatives that see beyond established categories and create and maintain connections across diverse contexts, openly acknowledging that global upheavals have rendered many previously supported models, structures, and strategies in the cross-border cultural field outdated. The programme focused on recognising and enabling the creativity, expertise, and agency of cultural actors, instead of steering projects toward predefined topics, models or activities.

In addition, the Fund promoted methodologies of collaboration that challenges traditional categories defined by sectors, disciplines, and geographies. As stated in the Globus Call, the programme supports collaborations that 'transcend cultural, social, historical, geographical and disciplinary boundaries', encouraging cross-cutting networks that seek new perspectives through transcultural and translocal exchange.

Crucially, trust-based funding also entails risk-taking. The Fund recognised that without a degree of risk, genuine innovation is difficult to achieve. While the Fund did not always specify in detail what kinds of risks it was prepared to take, its communication clearly signalled an openness to stepping beyond conventional boundaries.

In practice, application and assessment processes focused less on formal compliance with thematic priorities and more on the integrity and quality of collaboration, examining how budgets were structured, how decisions were

shared, and how resources were distributed among partners. Application processes were meant to encourage reflection rather than force applicants to fit pre-existing ideas into rigid frameworks. There was a clear ambition to lower the threshold for funding and to adjust criteria in response to learning and experience, reflecting an adaptive and evolving understanding of trust-based support.

4.2. The evolution of the 'trust' practice within Globus

The development of Globus funding streams reflects an evolution of how the Fund approached trust, openness, experimentation, and long-term impact in cross-border cultural collaboration. While all its instruments share a commitment to exploratory and relational practices, their approaches reveal a shift from supporting early-stage experimentation toward consolidating transnational networks.

Globus Opstart, launched in 2020, functioned as an open exploratory instrument. It sought to examine how global collaboration between Nordic artists and practitioners and partners worldwide could emerge and develop. The emphasis was placed on building deep, long-term relationships and testing new themes and conceptual approaches within a global framework. Trust at this stage was embedded in the Fund's willingness to support exploratory collaboration without requiring co-financing. Globus Opstart and Opstart+ thus represented trust in exploration: creating space for experimentation and network-building before final results were fixed.

Globus Call, launched in 2022, positioned itself as a counterbalance to traditional funding schemes that require predefined final outputs. Supporting larger initiatives than those funded within Globus Opstart, Globus Call still operated with short applications. Allowing project plans to be specified and adjusted in stages through dialogue with the Fund, Globus Call shifted trust into the implementation phase. Projects were assessed on feasibility, partnership capacity, long-term structural effects, and their potential to act as amplifiers within the field. Evaluators were asked to reflect on whether the Fund should adopt a risk-taking or risk-averse stance toward specific proposals. Trust, therefore, did not necessarily operate at the entry point, but rather in the relationship

that followed approval. Along the implementation, the focus was on dialogue and mutual development, rather than top-down monitoring.

Globus FORWARD, launched in 2024, represents a shift of focus toward predictability and sustainability. It targets networks, collectives, and collaborative constellations that have already progressed beyond initial phases. The discourse of the open calls was no longer framed in terms of risk-taking or innovation as such, but in strengthening operations, governance, and long-term resilience. Exploration remains important, yet it is integrated into the maturity and capacity of networks and organisations. Explorative nature of collaborations was lumped together with predictability of a potential impact, even beyond the project cycle. Trust here takes a structural form: no co-financing is required, activities can be integrated into core operations; at the same time, collaborations must demonstrate sufficient grounding, long-term vision, and relevance beyond immediate partners.

A central tension runs through this evolution: the balance between trust-based, open-ended experimentation and increasing demands for sustainability, maturity, and impact. Globus recognised at the outset that exploratory collaborations, especially in transnational contexts, often require uncertainty, flexibility, and space for failure. Yet as funding instruments evolve, expectations of structural change, long-term anchoring, and focus on impact have become more pronounced. This transition in how trust was practiced is about testing support mechanisms for different stages of cross-border partnerships, while recognising the diverse needs that emerge throughout their lifespan.

4.3. Thematic autonomy

At the outset, Globus was not framed around specific themes or global agendas. As one of our interviewees among Globus originators noted, the intention was to avoid pushing applicants to instrumentalise their projects in service of predetermined priorities or to label their work before it even took shape.

Indeed, even if the communication around Globus reflected the awareness about global dynamics, referring to uncertainty, instability, and changing role of the Nordic region in the world, the calls did not specify any thematic priorities, such as environmental sustainability, decolonisation, social inclusion, art and

health, or similar. One of the most explicit references to content of projects might have been the criteria in the Globus Call centred on 'themes/approaches which require long-term development'. Evaluators of this scheme were tasked to assess the 'topicality of the theme and the relevance of the artistic/cultural take for the global content of the project'. A less explicit reference to themes was within the rhetoric of the Globus Opstart+ call: 'we look at how the project thinks new in terms of theme and concept', yet no specific guidance related to this was given to evaluators.

It seems that, with Globus, the Fund sought to resist the growing discourse that culture must justify its existence by solving external problems. Cultural collaboration was to be supported in a more open way—as a space of meaning, reflection, and connection, not primarily as a tool for policy objectives. Focus group participants reflected on a relevance in this approach: when applicants are forced to fit into predefined categories, they tend to adapt their language and ideas to match top-down expectations, and this 'filtering effect' can undermine genuine artistic and cultural expression.

5. Knowledge- and learning-centered trajectory

Globus was described not only as a funding programme but also a learning framework. One of its core objectives was to develop a more long-term, knowledge-based approach to funding—one that embeds continuous learning, reflection, and adjustment into the Fund's practice. This was done, inter alia, through facilitated spaces for exchange among grantees, and through bringing insights generated by projects back to the Fund in order to identify 'blind spots' and respond to emerging needs. The ambition was also outward-looking: to build knowledge resources that can inform and inspire other funders.

Globus itself emerged from prior learning. Observations by the Fund Secretariat showed a growing number of projects oriented towards global collaboration, prompting the Fund to 'study and challenge what it means to work globally in the Nordic region'. From the outset, Globus was developed through a phased model, with pilot projects and the Globus Opstart strand learning points that shaped subsequent programme design. Ongoing documentation, network-building,

and structured knowledge gathering were integral components of the initiative, informing the development of the Globus Call and Globus FORWARD.

Learning within Globus has unfolded on several interconnected levels. First, there was learning from beneficiaries to the Fund. Continuous documentation, peer exchange, and reflective formats enabled the programme itself to remain adaptive and 'open-ended'. Optional peer-networking and capacity-building activities were designed to learn from the beneficiary community, reinforcing the aim to turn Globus into a reciprocal learning process.

Second, learning was embedded in the projects themselves. Applicants were encouraged to adopt exploratory, research-based approaches to artistic development and collaboration. Criteria focused on 'curiosity towards the unknown,' investigative methodologies, and the pursuit of new knowledge to expand practices within a global framework. Research was understood not only as a means of acquiring knowledge but also as an artistic strategy for building relationships and entering new contexts.

Third, learning occurred horizontally among beneficiaries. A central focus of the Fund's efforts in this field has been to facilitate knowledge exchange across Globus projects. In 2023, a systematic knowledge-sharing process was carried out with the first Globus Call cohort. Using diary-style 'scan cards' shared via the Horizon digital platform, online exchange sessions, semi-structured interviews, and a physical network meeting in Copenhagen, the Fund gathered first-hand insights into transnational cultural practice. The methodology prioritised 'experience over opinion', encouraging reflection rooted in lived realities. This process culminated in the Globus Knowledge Sharing Report (2023), which identified four key dimensions of transnational collaboration: challenging unequal structures; fostering the human foundation of equal partnerships; shifting toward sustainable values and practices; and enabling change through transnational art. The findings were published on a dedicated digital platform to inform future initiatives.

This knowledge-building trajectory continued with the Globus Hackathon in June 2024, the first in-person gathering of Globus grantees. Bringing together practitioners from across the Nordic region and the Global South, the event focused on collectively imagining future scenarios for transnational art and

cultural collaboration. The resulting 'vision landscapes' were integrated into the Knowledge Sharing Platform, further consolidating Globus as a living learning ecosystem.

6. Advocacy for strengthening the position of culture within international agendas

In a time of shrinking resources and mounting global challenges, arts funders are compelled to imagine a more strategic approach not only to how they support the sector but also to how they can influence and shape the context within which the sector operates. In this sense, the Globus initiative was, in many ways, intended to serve both as a space and as a tool to shape global cultural policy and advocate for a better context for transborder cultural collaborations. This ambition operated on several levels:

— promoting the role of the arts within policy agendas;

— strengthening the international dimension of cultural policy;

— fostering change by helping the sector collaborate in new ways.

These ambitions were pursued through strategic global partnerships with other international organisations (IFACCA, UNESCO, and WHO), as well as through Globus's unconventional approach to supporting cultural collaborations.

6.1. Promoting the value of the arts

In the discourse surrounding the Globus initiative, one can discern the ambition of the Fund to advocate for a stronger recognition of the role of arts and culture within broader policy agendas. The Fund recognised that rising inequalities, geopolitical conflicts and an escalating climate crisis profoundly shape global interactions. These developments directly affect the arts and the cultural sector, but they also create opportunities for culture to assume a more transformative role—enabling actors to move beyond established categories and to create and sustain connections across diverse contexts.

Within this perspective, art is understood as a space capable of building communities across frictions. It was also acknowledged that the role of culture in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) remains insufficiently defined, and that the Nordic region has the potential to help demonstrate the tangible impact that art and culture have on social wellbeing, democratic life and sustainable development.

One concrete example of how this approach was brought to life in the framework of Globus was the collaboration between the Nordic Culture Fund and the World Health Organisation (WHO) on arts and health. The initiative, called *Arts & Health Collective*, was launched in 2021 and brought together academics, artists, cultural institutions, health professionals and policymakers from different countries to explore effective and sustainable strategies for integrating arts and culture into the health sector. The project aimed both to evaluate the impact of selected arts-based health interventions on local populations and to support the development of guidance for policymakers on how arts and culture can be integrated more broadly into health systems across Europe.

In 2024, building on this experience, the Fund entered into dialogue with WHO's Regional Office for Europe regarding further collaboration focused on art and mental health among young people in the circumpolar region. Drawing on a pilot initiative in Greenland, this work seeks to generate new knowledge and best practices for realising the health-promoting potential of art and culture, grounded in local ownership and culturally embedded practices.

As representatives of the Fund reflected in a conversation, the choice of partnership and theme within the framework of Globus was partly driven by the contemporary realities of the COVID-19 pandemic and a renewed focus on culture's role in wellbeing. However, it was not necessarily strategically aligned with the broader set of Globus core interventions.

6.2. Strengthening the international dimension of cultural policy

Another intention of Globus's policy and advocacy component was to strengthen the international dimension of cultural policy – closely related to the first objective, but more focused on the realities of the sector rather than on promoting

its external values. As repeatedly outlined in the programme's communication, Globus aimed to stimulate stronger international engagement, recognising that in an unstable global environment issues such as artistic mobility, freedom of expression and cultural rights '*can no longer be resolved within national frameworks alone*'.

To support this objective, the Nordic Culture Fund sought to connect the initiative more closely with both Nordic and international policy processes. During the programme period, the Fund worked to embed the themes of Globus within national and Nordic cultural policy discussions through dialogue with cultural ministries, the Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers. At the international level, the Fund pursued partnerships with organisations such as UNESCO (report Critical Voices on the state of the freedom and safety of artists, scientists, and journalists), and IFACCA (IFACCA–Globus Fellowship).

6.3. Globus—as a political statement

Finally, in many ways, Globus itself has functioned as a statement—or even a manifesto—within the landscape of cultural policy and funding, representing a shift from cultural export and project-centred structures toward cross-border solidarity and open-ended relationship-building.

Some beneficiaries reflected that what Globus sought to achieve—particularly at a time when funding is increasingly moving away from human rights and civic values—is both exceptional and significant. Globus was conceived as a laboratory for rethinking arts funding and reframing approaches to international collaboration. It aimed to capture and amplify emerging practices within the cultural sector. In this sense, the initiative also carried an advocacy ambition: to encourage the sector to think differently, design projects that challenge conventions, and expand understanding of what international collaboration can mean today.

Globus Realities: Creative Responses and Lived Experiences

How have these ambitions played out in practice once the arts community became involved? Were they achieved, and—most intriguingly—in what form? What trends do the responses from the field reveal?

This chapter shifts the focus from the Fund's aspirations to the actual realities in which Globus has unfolded over its six-year journey. It is shaped by the voices of the beneficiaries of the Fund and by the stories of the projects supported as part of Globus. The purpose of this chapter is therefore twofold. On the one hand, it seeks to explore and synthesise the essence of the supported activities, examining how concepts such as trust, Nordic relevance, or trans-local collaborations, were translated into concrete projects. On the other hand, it aims to investigate how these initiatives functioned in practice: what successes were achieved during implementation, what challenges and deviations emerged, and what lessons were learned.

Summary: Globus experience at a glance

Before we delve into the realities of each specific Globus ambition, let us sketch the snapshot of Globus experiences—their successes, challenges, and main results, as defined by beneficiaries through the survey, interviews, and project reports.

1. Success points

During interviews with beneficiaries, we explored whether there was anything distinctive or unique about Globus, and how these features of the programme influenced the nature and trajectory of their projects. The responses are presented below, starting with the most common.

1.1. Global outlook

One of the most positive features of Globus, according to beneficiaries, was its support to global collaborations without imposing geographic quotas or representational requirements beyond the Nordic anchor. This approach had a markedly liberating effect on the field. Artists and cultural organisations were able to prioritise the partnerships most relevant to their practice—wherever in the world they were based—rather than aligning with top-down geopolitical priorities. For many beneficiaries, the global outreach of Globus was symbolic in the sense that it signalled a shift in how Nordic cultural funding positions itself in the world. In this sense, Globus filled what one beneficiary called 'a huge void in global funding', as the wider landscape clearly lacks funding tools enabling global network formation, knowledge exchange and the development of long-term partnerships.

Testimonials from the field:

'During a time of renewed borders and nationalism, opportunities to support genuine international engagement are dwindling around the world. The focus of this programme is unique and important for the cultural sector.'

'The Globus initiative enabled me to move beyond traditional forms of cross-border artistic collaboration—which often remain transactional, time-bound, or based on touring—toward a new dramaturgy of international cultural co-creation. Rather than "bringing Nordic work abroad," Globus allowed me to design a model where artistic development, research, pedagogy, and diplomacy are interwoven across geographies.'

1.2. Anchoring in local realities

Equally central was the programme's emphasis on local embeddedness. For practitioners operating in fragile or politically complex contexts, the ability to work according to the tempo and logic of their own realities was essential. Globus did not require them to temporarily 'step out' of their local conditions to participate in an international project, only to return to unresolved structural challenges afterward. Instead, it encouraged integration between global collaboration and local practice. However, this approach also underscored a structural truth: meaningful local anchoring requires stability and continuity. Without longer-term predictability, even the most context-sensitive international collaboration risks remaining episodic.

1.3. Beyond the project logic—towards relationship-building

Beneficiaries have also noted that Globus has partially departed from project-based logic, focusing instead on what is essential for cross-border collaboration—the relationship itself. The programme helped to build capacity and strengthen the ability of organisations and networks to engage internationally, positioning funding as a catalyst for transformation and consolidation of relationships. The programme enabled experimentation without fear of immediate failure, collaboration grounded in reciprocity rather than extraction, and continuity beyond a single production cycle. At the same time, Globus did not operate outside structural constraints. It remained embedded within accountability systems, short-term funding ecologies and the broader 'project disease' of arts funding.

Testimonials from the field:

'This phase turned previously loose international contacts into an interconnected US network with shared goals, aligned values, and a collective investment in multi-year collaboration'.

'It allowed me to move from project-to-project cooperation toward a network-based cultural architecture—outside the Nordic region—in which collaboration is not episodic but infrastructural. Instead of inviting institutions into one artistic process, the Globus phase enabled me to articulate a multi-year, multi-site framework'.

1.4. Journey of a structural transformation

Many beneficiaries highlighted that their practices had never comfortably fit within traditional funding schemes. Activities such as research, informal knowledge exchange, network-building or exploratory collaboration often existed at the margins of their core operations. Globus allowed them to centre these activities rather than treat them as secondary. In several cases, what was typically approached as 'fringe' activities, under Globus—became structurally transformative. Beneficiaries reported shifts in organisational strategy, communication practices, and governance models. The programme enabled them to invest in elements that are foundational but typically difficult to fund—such as network building, strategic development, internal reflection processes and capacity-building. By legitimising these dimensions, Globus broadened the definition of what constitutes valuable cultural work.

1.5. Long-term thinking

Crucially, the programme created space not only for the production of work that beneficiaries might not otherwise have been able to realise, but also for imagination: long-term thinking and relationship-building, future-oriented visions, or as some put it 'dreaming big'. Some Globus funding streams specifically encouraged applicants to focus on their visions rather than solely on the concrete outputs of their projects or how these would play out in practice. Projects were often described not as self-contained achievements, but as the

beginnings of longer trajectories. According to interviewees, many of these initiatives have indeed grown into something larger and ongoing.

Testimonial from the field:

'Globus helped me articulate and operationalise a long-term vision: cross-border collaboration not as movement across maps, but as movement across worldviews.'

1.6. Institutional trust and openness to uncertainty

Another defining characteristic was the high degree of institutional trust embedded in the programme design. Simplified application procedures, proportionate reporting requirements and an overall reduction of bureaucratic control distinguished Globus from many other funding mechanisms. Beneficiaries contrasted this with systems in which detailed applications effectively predetermine project trajectories, limiting adaptability. This flexibility reflected what interviewees described as Globus' 'commitment to experimentation'. The absence of rigid thematic prescriptions allowed projects to respond to evolving contexts and to accept uncertainty as an inherent part of artistic and transnational collaboration. Experimentation was not treated as a risk to be mitigated but as a necessary condition for meaningful cultural exchange.

Testimonial from the field:

'The network was already there. But Globus Opstart gave us the means to experiment on a difficult, and more artistic high level with our networking partner.'

Beneficiary Globus Experience —Survey-based Statistics

Survey findings show strong overall satisfaction and impact among beneficiaries:

90% of respondents (37 in total) reported that the objectives of their Globus projects were fully achieved

Globus has been highly instrumental in enhancing networks:

94% of respondents established new networks

95% strengthened their existing networks

Globus has been effective in creating long-term impact on participating partners, and to a lesser extent, on wider structures:

75% of respondents believe their projects had a lasting impact on the partners involved

54% consider that their projects influenced organisations and structures beyond the project itself

Globus has proven to be an effective tool for strengthening—and to a lesser extent, innovating—collaboration models:

100% of respondents strengthened their existing collaboration models

81% developed new collaboration models

Globus also succeeded in stimulating reflection on the notion of Nordic relevance:

87% of respondents reported having developed or practiced a more open and global understanding of Nordic relevance

Moreover, the Globus initiative:

— helped 100% of respondents achieve a local anchoring of their collaborations

— helped 95% of respondents deepen their focus on topics they were already working on

— was based on a trust-based and reciprocal relationship with the Nordic Culture Fund for 90% of respondents

— provided 90% of respondents with the space, time, and tools to exchange and share knowledge with other partners and projects

— was seen by 86% of respondents as an innovative scheme, distinct from other funding instruments they had worked with before

— enabled 75% of respondents to engage in forms of collaboration that move beyond project-based and outcome-driven models

— provided 76% of respondents with an approach to engage with uncertainty

— inspired 70% of respondents to explore new themes and perspectives

— enabled 68% of respondents to adopt an explorative and open-ended approach to designing and implementing projects

— supported 67% of respondents in taking risks and being open to experimentation

2. Achievements and Impact

The main impact of Globus-supported projects, according to beneficiaries themselves, lay in creating conditions for cultural work to continue evolving, expanding, and generating further effects beyond the funding period. Rather than producing isolated outputs, many initiatives focused on building long-term structures for collaboration, knowledge exchange, and experimentation. The full range of achievements, as defined by Globus beneficiaries, is presented on the graph '*Key results of Globus supported projects*'[2].

While the projects differed widely in focus and geography, several consistent result areas can be identified across the programme aggregated across all Globus streams and extracted through a sample of analysed project reports and complemented with interview insights.

a. Network building as sustainable cross-border infrastructures

One of the most widely cited results across the programme is the creation of long-term collaborative networks connecting actors across continents. Many projects evolved from pilot collaborations into more structured international partnerships involving cultural organisations, universities, grassroots initiatives, NGOs, and collectives. Some of these networks continue to generate new collaborations beyond the original funding period.

b. Knowledge production and methodological innovation

The second central result of many Globus projects is the generation of new knowledge frameworks at the intersection of artistic inquiry, research, and experimentation. Projects produced a wide range of research outputs, including peer-reviewed publications, databases documenting artistic censorship, interdisciplinary publications, podcasts, and books. These outputs aimed to contribute to broader debates on key global issues such as human rights,

2 The graph is based on a content analysis of 60 project reports (specifically the sections on main achievements and results) and on interviews, each of which included a question about up to three key achievements and outcomes of the projects. Each project was coded under one or more result categories.

colonial legacies, accessibility, environmental transformation, and cultural policy. Alongside these outputs, projects developed new working methodologies.

c. Cultural production and infrastructure

The projects generated a substantial body of artistic and cultural outputs. These include installations, exhibitions, performances, touring productions, film screenings, documentaries, multimedia archives, and contributions to international festivals and biennales. Projects also organised public programmes such as workshops, conferences, symposia, and educational activities, often complemented by digital platforms, and podcasts that reached broad audiences. Other initiatives contributed to longer-term ecosystem development, for instance, supporting the building of a more sustainable dance infrastructure.

d. Social and community impact

Many projects saw their main results in the space of social change. Initiatives engaged with a wide range of communities and stakeholders, including disabled performers, Indigenous communities, artists working under censorship or conflict conditions, women facing gender-based violence, and migrant or diasporic groups. Many of these projects undertook activities with an ambition to have direct implications for local communities. As the projects did not include methodologies to measure the actual social shifts they triggered and it would have anyway been difficult to capture these shifts within a short period of time, these results are framed by beneficiaries not as accomplished tangible change but as interventions and processes aimed at achieving such change.

e. Institutional transformation and legitimacy

Another recurring result is related to strengthening and transformation of organisations involved in projects, as well as their increased legitimacy and reputation. Many projects reported that Globus funding enabled trust-building among partners, the formalisation of previously informal collectives, and the expansion of collaborations with other institutions not involved in the project, such as universities or museums. In several cases, projects also contributed to intellectual or ideological shifts within established institutions. Globus funding often functioned as a way to strengthen organisations' reputation

with other funders and get support for the continuation of their practice. It has also enabled experimental or emerging initiatives to gain recognition, build organisational capacity, acquire skills, and in some cases engage more effectively with policy systems.

f. Sustainability and ecological transformation

A number of projects identified their impact in the ways they addressed questions of environmental sustainability and spatial transformation, linking artistic research with environmental topics and practices. In many cases, Globus projects functioned as experimental laboratories for sustainability innovation. Yet, once again, there was no requirement to measure the actual social or ecological changes resulting from these trajectories; beneficiaries therefore referred to the activities themselves as results, rather than to the effects these activities might have produced.

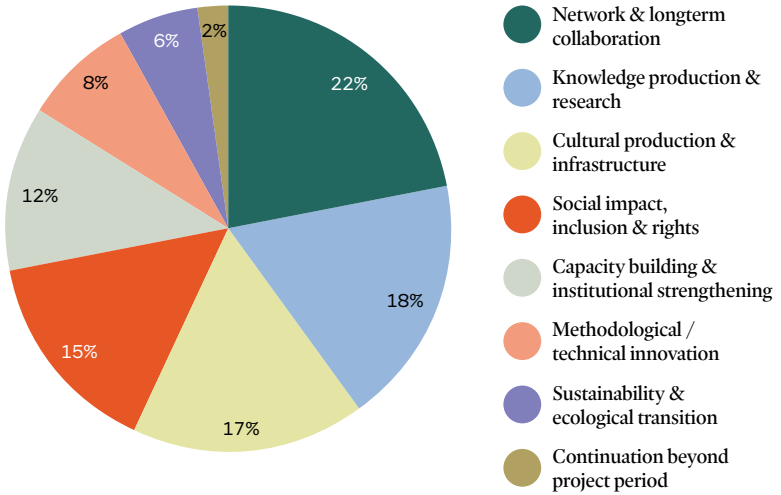
g. Continuity beyond the funding period

Finally, some projects consider their most important achievements as the continuation of activities beyond the formal project period. Many initiatives reported ongoing collaborations, new residencies and productions, expanded research platforms, and continued development of digital archives, networks, and community partnerships. In these cases, continuity as such is seen as an achievement, as it is in fact rare when it comes to challenging topics addressed within an experimental format involving fragile contexts and the overall precarity of the wider funding system.

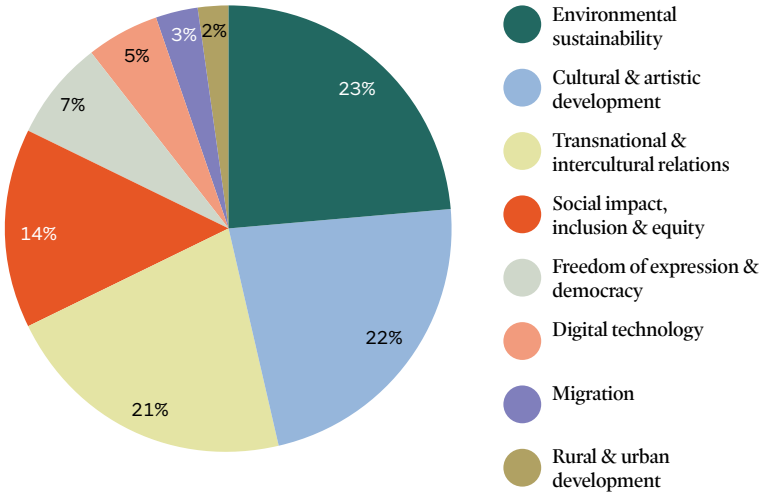
3. Thematic focus

The Fund deliberately avoided promoting specific topics within the Globus funding streams, freeing applicants from the need to frame their practice within predefined thematic boxes. The evaluation focused on the purpose and modalities of collaboration, and less on their content. Interestingly, however, engagement with social issues and global themes surfaced naturally in the

KEY RESULTS OF GLOBUS-SUPPORTED PROJECTS



THEMES ADDRESSED BY GLOBUS PROJECTS



majority of the supported projects, even if no thematic priorities were imposed on them (see the graph '*Themes addressed by Globus projects*'[3]).

Several factors might have contributed to this. Firstly, global projects are often rooted in solidarity and shaped by shared concerns around pressing global challenges. Furthermore, the world has grown increasingly turbulent in recent years, and this turbulence has naturally found expression in artistic and cultural projects (remarkably, only 22% of analysed projects focus on cultural and artistic development as primary objectives). Finally, The Fund's focus on 'culture' rather than narrowly on 'art' has attracted projects that extend beyond artistic production—engaging with social realities and seeking broader impact.

4. Limitations and challenges

While Globus introduced important innovations, several limitations became visible in practice, particularly in relation to stability, continuity and systemic impact.

4.1. Tension between long-term vision and short-term funding

Beneficiaries were encouraged to articulate future visions and 'dream' about sustained collaborations and their long-term plans. However, the funding period itself remained time-bound, and continuity beyond the grant was not guaranteed. For organisations operating in fragile contexts or working with vulnerable communities, this mismatch created a structural tension. The expectation to design long-term trajectories without assurance of continued support could undermine trust. As one beneficiary reflected: *'Funders should not ask beneficiaries to describe a future that they cannot support'.*

3 This graph was produced based on a content analysis of 120 selected project applications. Each application was coded according to a theme explicitly featured in its stated goals, and each project could be assigned one or more themes. "Cultural & artistic development" refers here to projects specifically aimed at building cultural infrastructures—such as dance schools, residency programmes, or touring partnerships—and organising artistic exchanges. While all projects inherently relate to cultural and artistic development, this category includes those for which strengthening cultural infrastructures and facilitating artistic exchanges were primary objectives. Importantly, the analysis of 60 non-selected applications has revealed a very similar picture.

While some beneficiaries found this development common and normal for funding structures, others insisted that in fragile contexts, encouraging long-term ambition is not neutral; it becomes a shared responsibility. Even the funding that stimulates long-term trajectories typically lacks mechanisms that reduce vulnerability when funding cycles end. Without this, projects risk interruption precisely at the moment they begin to consolidate. This was an experience of some of the Globus beneficiaries.

4.2. Lack of evaluation clarity and feedback

Another challenge raised by some beneficiaries concerned clarity around selection decisions. Some applicants who applied multiple times reported difficulty understanding why a proposal was funded in one round but rejected in another. While short application forms were praised by the overwhelming majority of beneficiaries, some, particularly those who had been rejected at least once, felt there was insufficient space to fully describe their vision, ideas, and plans. Because the questions were quite open, they were often unsure what to emphasise within limited fields.

Several respondents expressed a need for stronger feedback mechanisms and clearer communication about decision-making logics. Feedback helps applicants understand how their initiatives relate to the Fund's priorities and whether a rejection reflects the quality of the project itself or simply its mismatch with the Fund's specific expectations. It can also support applicants in refining or growing their projects into something meaningful rather than abandoning the idea entirely.

As we did not receive perspectives from applicants who were rejected at every attempt, we cannot determine how widespread these confusions are. Nevertheless, they may indicate broader trends in how Globus has been perceived by applicants whose proposals were unsuccessful.

4.3. Lack of articulation of trust

While the programme enabled experimentation and accepted uncertainty, it was not equally clear to all applicants what would be considered a failure, how much deviation from the original plan was acceptable in case of difficulties,

and where the boundaries of flexibility lay within the predefined structures. Some beneficiaries reflected that it would have been beneficial to understand from the outset how uncertainty could be managed, and in which situations a change of course would be fully justified—and in which not. Several noted that moments of failure or deviation often became the most 'precarious situations', but also potentially meaningful parts of their projects, generating significant learning and long-term value. Had they known from the beginning that embracing setbacks and learning from them was not only permitted but welcomed, they might have approached periods of fragility and uncertainty differently.

Importantly, this was not framed as a criticism of the programme. On the contrary, those who raised this point expressed strong appreciation for the flexibility demonstrated by the Fund. What they wished for was clearer articulation of that flexibility in advance—not to legitimise failure indiscriminately, but to provide greater confidence in navigating complex and fragile contexts, and to reinforce a learning-oriented approach that remains responsive to change.

4.4. Experimentation without sustained transformative change

Experimentation—that Globus has clearly fostered—generates learning, and learning requires time, translation and structured exchange. Several beneficiaries felt that while they were given space to test new methods, they had limited opportunities to systematically consolidate, articulate, share their insights, further develop them, or learn in a structured way from other funded initiatives. In this sense, experimentation was supported at the project level, but some beneficiaries lacked tools and resources to sustain these experimentations at the ecosystem level. Mechanisms for collective reflection, peer exchange and long-term knowledge accumulation remained underdeveloped—many beneficiaries were not part of the knowledge sharing activities, and a few of those who joined them. As a result, some of the most valuable intangible outcomes—learning points, methodological innovations, ethical reflections—risked remaining dispersed. Globus therefore functions as an *enabling* space—but less a *system-changing* one. It operated as a transformative niche within a predominantly projectified wider funding ecology.

Globus Story: Where Ambition Meets Practice

This chapter explores how the ambitions of Globus were received and brought to life by its beneficiaries. It analyses how concepts such as *'the new global'*, Nordic relevance, trust-based funding, and a shift from project-based approaches towards network-building were embraced and realised through concrete cross-border initiatives.

1. The New Global: what does it look like?

We analysed the projects supported and spoke to the leading partners of some of them, to understand what kind of models emerged in response to the Globus invitation to explore and amplify the new ways of cross-border collaborations. In a nutshell, rather than focusing primarily on mobility, promotion, visibility, or symbolic exchange, these initiatives articulate a model of collaboration grounded in collective inquiry, translocal connections, and the building of long-term collaborative infrastructures and relationships across unequal contexts. These projects see the world as shaped by ecological crisis, political polarisation, extractive economies, and global injustices. Within this landscape, culture is positioned as a site for sustained learning, bold imagination, critical research, the negotiation of ethics and values, and the consolidation of collective resilience.

1.1. Art as a collective inquiry

Driven by shared curiosity about issues that resonate globally, many projects functioned as *collective inquiries*—exploratory trajectories, unfolding through experimental artistic and research practices. In this model, artistic practice functions as a method for collectively asking global questions across contexts.

This inquiry-based approach is visible in many Globus projects that investigate complex themes: looking at imbalances in ecological responsibility and exposure to environmental threats; exploring censorship, displacement, and labour precarity; or reframing historical narratives and craft traditions through Indigenous methodologies. Others examine migration narratives, or digital governance through forms of situated artistic research, while some undertake direct and challenging inquiries into topics such as colonialism and the extraction of natural resources. Several projects also critically reflect on the contemporary role of cultural institutions themselves.

Rather than transferring expertise from one context to another, collaborators jointly develop questions shaped by local urgencies and global entanglements. Knowledge emerges through experimentation, dialogue, embodied practice, and lived experience. This model challenges more extractive forms of collaboration in which one partner benefits disproportionately from visibility,

knowledge, or funding. Instead, the projects foreground co-creation, reciprocity, and accountability, ensuring that inquiry remains meaningful to all participants. For instance, the *Climates of North-South Performance*, a Globus Opstart project, brought together practitioners from the Asia Pacific Artistic Research Network in Indonesia to Norway to develop the curatorial platform for a residency addressing the global dimensions of the climate emergency. The essence of this intention was summarised as such: '*Exchanges with the Global South typically take the form of knowledge diffusion, where the European or North American partner shares their technical understanding of an issue to support development in the lesser developed country. Following many calls to decolonise climate activism, this residency will invert this paradigm, and bring the expertise of Indonesian artists and scholars to share their unique perspective on the cultural dimensions of environmental transformation*'.

Artistic practice is valued not only for its outputs but for its process and its ability to produce shared understanding, often under conditions of uncertainty. At the same time, while processes remain open-ended many of these collective inquiries are action- and result-oriented. They seek tangible solutions, embodied in outcomes such as exhibitions, performances, publications, workshops, and other public formats. In many cases, inquiry is oriented toward change—through action, practical tools, or awareness-raising. This is evident, for instance, in projects such as *Rotulama* by Super Eclectic, revitalising the visual identity of small and independent shops in towns across Finland, Mexico, Portugal, and Taiwan. Addressing a global issue at a local scale, the project builds relationships with shop owners and works collaboratively to help them withstand processes of gentrification. It both raises awareness about gentrification and creates practical benefits for participating shops.

Many of these inquiry-driven initiatives involved an expanded and inclusive approach to understanding knowledge as such. Across disciplines, knowledge was treated as embodied, place-based, historically situated, and emancipated from dominant Eurocentric paradigms. There is a recognition that more multi-vocal knowledge systems are urgently needed, particularly in light of the current global polycrisis.

For instance, *Arctic Routes, Southern Ways* is a joint initiative that brings together experiences from Norway and Portugal to compare different colonial legacies and explore alternative narratives and methods of knowledge production

within art institutions and academia. The project examines how the persistent '*fantasy of cultural homogeneity*' in both contexts obscures the presence and contributions of marginalised communities and their knowledge systems, such as the Sámi in Norway and Afropean communities in Portugal.

1.2. Translocality in a nation-based world

Another significant feature evident across the projects is the move from a traditional notion of the 'international' toward a translocal approach. Instead of facilitating exchange between nation-states or flagship institutions, these initiatives link specific places, communities, natural systems, or practices situated in different places across the world. Translocal collaboration prioritises long-term relationships between particular sites, such as Arctic villages and tropical communities, rural Japan and Norway, Indigenous territories across continents, and diasporic communities. This perspective recognises that global challenges, such as climate change, extractivism, migration, censorship or technological transformation, are always experienced locally, but never in isolation. Connecting localities that face similar pressures, translocal collaboration enables comparative learning without flattening differences between contexts.

In several cases, translocal collaboration becomes more than an exchange between localities—it evolves into a pathway for a new, shared way of global engagement. Projects such as *Where Oceans Meet* explored connections between Sámi and Gaelic cultural contexts. This collaboration between director Rachael Macintyre and choreographer Camilla Therese Karlsen aimed to develop a performative piece examining Gaelic and Sámi cultural connections in both historical and contemporary contexts. The project application noted that '*both cultures have stories about surviving in harsh coastal landscapes*', seeking to '*delve into these narratives and perhaps create new ones based on the crossing points we find*'. One of the partners within this project described the collaboration not as a representation of cultural difference but as the creation of a shared relational space: '*It was about finding these common spaces where our cultures could communicate together*'. In this sense, the collaboration moved beyond presenting distinct traditions—'showing the yoik' or 'showing the harmonica playing'—toward processes of testing how art can function as a space and a language for communication.

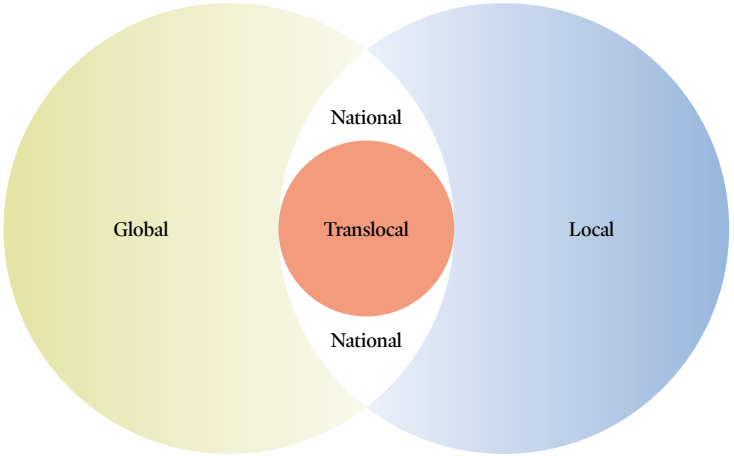
Translocal collaboration often operates through shared formats and concepts that travel across localities and are adapted to local contexts while maintaining collective ownership. Such models often contribute to the decolonisation of knowledge systems. Translocal collaboration, therefore, also implies decentralisation of authorship, ownership, and control. Works are not fixed products presented to local communities, but evolving processes shaped collectively, in tune with local dynamics. This approach is practiced by *The OVEN*, bringing together collectives from Norway, Thailand and Indonesia. Their exhibition *Three-Nons*, supported by Globus, '*offers flexibility to be put in various artistic practices*', inviting '*a multicultural understanding of art-making and art-critique*', and practicing '*a humbling way of seeing, by letting go of prejudice and hegemonic knowledge in arts*'.

Letting go of centralised control is explicit in the *Decentralised Biennale*, which connects independent, not-for-profit art spaces in Nordic and Southeast Asian cities. Debuting in spring 2026, the biennale aims to foster global collaboration, share knowledge, and showcase diverse artistic practices through a common platform. The project links art spaces across regions while distributing curatorial responsibility among participating organisations.

Translocality is not merely a relationship between localities—many Globus projects frame collaboration as the mutual entanglement of local and global realities. This relational dimension is particularly significant in a context of geopolitical fragmentation and rising nationalism. One participant noted that Globus allowed for a sustained commitment '*to genuine exchange across borders that is rare and important for the idea of the global to be there in the future rather than just us all in our little nation state bunkers not being able to exchange with each other*'.

At the same time, the national dimension has not disappeared in practice: it did matter what passports partners held and where they were based in the world. Visa issues remained a significant challenge for many projects. Partners encountered different levels of risk depending on political contexts, and when travelling to fragile environments, individuals faced different risks depending on their nationality. Administrative barriers have complicated inter-country cooperation—when it comes to bank transfers, copyright regulations, travel arrangements, insurance, and more.

TRANSLOCALITY IN COLLABORATIONS



1.3. Negotiated equity in an asymmetrical world

Across the projects, beneficiaries articulate a clear understanding that while conditions differ significantly across contexts, the reality of polycrisis is shared. Ecological collapse, economic instability, nationalistic politics, and the instrumentalisation of culture affect many regions, though unevenly. Collaborations therefore often emerge from a recognition that partners are confronting interconnected challenges from different positions. One of the pressures facing the entire globe is the climate crisis—no surprise, it appeared to be number one theme within Globus-supported projects.

However, the awareness about inequities is reflected in the structures many projects adopt: reciprocal governance arrangements, flexible participation models, attention to labour conditions and fair compensation, and an emphasis on local agency. Collaborations often became spaces where questions of fairness, responsibility, and value were explicitly *negotiated*. This sometimes involved discussions around salary parity, redistribution of resources, or recognition of non-financial contributions such as knowledge, networks, or local legitimacy.

As articulated particularly clearly by *The OVEN—Three-Nons* and echoed elsewhere—cross-border collaboration also entails collaboration across different temporalities. Projects repeatedly encounter different rhythms of urgency and delay: contexts where speed is necessary for survival and others where slowness is essential for building trust; bureaucratic, post-conflict, or hierarchical temporalities; and asynchronous political, ecological, and cultural moments. Many initiatives develop methods that allow different temporal rhythms to coexist—combining 'radical patience', acceleration, pauses, and continuity within collaborative processes.

Beneficiaries also acknowledged the limits of what asymmetrical collaborations could achieve. Structural inequalities often persisted despite efforts to work equitably. The overall instability of cross-border projects—often forced to pause or cease once funding ends—also raises questions about their longer-term structural impact, particularly in fragile contexts. Yet, even if not delivering lasting structural change, many projects functioned as awareness-raising interventions revealing inequities, linked to visa barriers, resource gaps, and political or academic ignorance.

1.4. From running international projects to building global infrastructures

Another pattern across the Globus projects is a strong emphasis on infrastructure-building rather than one-off artistic outputs. Infrastructure here is understood in a broad sense, encompassing platforms, networks, pedagogical models, material workspaces, publishing tools, and shared resources that enable sustained collaboration beyond individual funding cycles. As beneficiaries reflected, the shift in focus from producing visible outputs toward strengthening the foundations of collaboration responds to a growing need for solidarity amid increasing political and economic barriers to international cooperation. This orientation toward infrastructures also reflects a broader recognition that meaningful transnational collaboration depends on continuity, trust, shared tools and languages, and organisational capacity.

In this sense, Globus has created a valuable framework, because, as beneficiaries testify, building long-term infrastructures between localities is not always fully understood or encouraged by funders. In some cases, funders assume that

such relationships are primarily symbolic—closer to cultural exchange—without recognising the intention to develop lasting collaborative structures. In other situations, the opposite occurs: there is a strong expectation for tangible outputs, while the value of the encounter itself is overlooked. Interestingly, this difference often becomes particularly visible depending on which parts of the world are involved in the collaboration. One beneficiary noted that in partnerships between organisations from the Global North, simple exchanges or experiential encounters are often considered insufficient; projects are expected to produce clear and concrete outcomes. Yet when collaborations involve partners from culturally distant or 'exoticised' contexts, the opposite assumption can arise. Funders may perceive such exchanges primarily as experiences of bringing two different cultures together, rather than as efforts to build durable infrastructures for collaboration, such as joint programmes, networks, schools, or shared methodologies. The Globus approach has been particularly valuable in this regard, as it was largely emancipated from these assumptions and allowed collaborations to pursue their own paths.

1.5. From cultural diplomacy to systemic critique and solidarity

Globus projects have clearly shifted the lens on cross-border cultural collaboration from one of diplomacy toward building spaces for solidarity, mutual support, and critical engagement with global power structures. Across the projects, artists and organisations address issues such as colonial legacies and extractivism, censorship and artistic repression, war and displacement, geopolitical crisis, and the global decline of cultural freedoms. In this context, networks allow artists to sustain their practices under conditions of repression, recover from censorship, and maintain dialogue across politically fractured environments.

Questions of artistic freedom surfaced repeatedly across interviews and analysed material. Several participants referred to a broader trend of political polarisation and shrinking spaces for cultural expression, including concerns that declining democratic freedoms in parts of the Global North may embolden authoritarian regimes elsewhere to further erode rule of law and democratic institutions. Others highlighted the continued influence of historical colonial relationships on artistic freedom in former colonies, particularly through funding dependencies that shape cultural agendas and stifle critical voices.

At the same time, collaborators pointed out that artists working under more restrictive political systems often develop strong traditions of cultural resistance. As one participant from the Global North observed, '*We have much to learn from countries under dictatorships: artists there become more as human rights defenders and sometimes they are more outspoken there than artists in our much safer communities*'. In response, several projects emphasised the importance of building cross-border infrastructures of resilience for artistic freedom. One beneficiary described this challenge clearly: '*Our role is too small to stop censorship... but how do you build resilience so that if an artist is censored, they can recover*?' Within this context, international collaboration becomes a means of creating supportive networks—spaces where artists can share resources, amplify each other's voices, and maintain resilience when local conditions become hostile.

2. Nordic relevance: a concept in motion

Within the Globus framework, beneficiaries felt free from national or regional labels and thematic priorities, which allowed Nordic relevance to be rediscovered in more open and multifaceted ways. Overall, across the mapped projects, Nordic relevance is rarely framed as an inherent value or a stable identity. It is rarely asserted, but is frequently questioned, unsettled, or decentered. Many projects reject the idea of the Nordic region as a normative model, be it in relation to sustainability, democracy, inclusion, or artistic freedom. Instead, the Nordics tend to be positioned as one region among many, where collaboration often involves reinterpreting ideas, concepts, and formats across different local contexts. In this framing, Nordic relevance emerges not through claims of excellence or best practice, but through accountability, historical implication, and structural integration within a complex global system. The region is therefore understood less as a source of leadership and more as a site of responsibility and critical self-examination.

2.1. Nordic narrative: from self-positioning to self-transformation

Many beneficiaries questioned the notion that Nordic partners should disseminate their expertise outward. Instead, collaborations were framed as processes of mutual learning, in which Nordic actors encounter perspectives from elsewhere and situate themselves within shared global realities. Nordic partners frequently described their role not as knowledge holders but as bridges between contexts.

At the same time, many of them recognised the need to more actively and carefully contextualise global perspectives within Nordic publics. Partners of projects addressing colonial histories or the suppression of Indigenous voices shared how perspectives from other parts of the world sometimes provoked tensions with local audiences. In some projects, dialogue and collaboration did not always unfold smoothly, demonstrating that global topics do not automatically produce shared understandings, even when mediators are present. Time and space to observe and tackle these tensions, as well as to deviate from pre-planned trajectories was crucial for these projects.

Nordic partners also approached these projects as opportunities to learn from other contexts, especially those connecting with challenging contexts, such as conflict zones. Some initiatives also sought to challenge dominant Nordic narratives about other world regions. The project *Building Frames*, for instance, aimed to amplify artistic narratives from the MENA region that go beyond dominant European media discourses about the region. To achieve this, the project strengthened analogue photography and film communities across the MENA region itself by addressing gaps in equipment, processing facilities, and technical knowledge.

The project *Nordic Insights: Addressing Cancel Culture in Public Spaces through Artistic Dialogue and Cultural Innovation* initially aimed to transfer Nordic expertise on cultural memory and debates around public monuments to partners in Romania and the Republic of Moldova. In practice, the collaboration evolved into a reciprocal exchange. As the partner from Romania reflected: '*The idea was to bring experts, practitioners and artists together and learn from each other. Actually this approach came from the Nordic partners themselves—they never positioned themselves as the ones bringing knowledge to us*'.

Finally, several beneficiaries emphasised that international collaboration itself helped challenge Nordic cultural isolation. Engaging with partners beyond the region was seen as essential for connecting Nordic societies to broader political, ecological, and social questions. As one participant noted, Globus made it possible to recognise that issues occurring far beyond the region, be it environmental transformations in the Atacama Desert or gender injustice in Latin America, are directly relevant to the Nordic context. In this sense, Nordic relevance becomes visible precisely when the region is understood not as a self-contained cultural space, but as part of a shared global system of interdependence and responsibility.

2.2. Nordic relevance as shared responsibility and vulnerability

Across several projects, ecological sustainability became a key lens through which Nordic relevance was reconsidered. Many initiatives actively questioned the dominant narrative of the Nordic countries as global frontrunners in sustainability. Projects frequently emphasised approaches that challenge Westernised perspectives on sustainability and promote the decolonisation of sustainability thinking.

In some cases, projects explicitly suggested that meaningful sustainability solutions may lie outside the Nordic region. The project *Seeds for Solidarity*, for example, positions itself as demonstrating to the Nordic cultural field *'how to overcome the feeling of not knowing what to do when it comes to climate and environmental crises*', thus aiming to challenge Westernised ways of knowing and doing. The Finland-based organisation Punos Arts & Research developed the programme together with partners including the Indigenous Climate Futures Embassy (Sápmi, the Arctic and Aotearoa), the collective S.U.R. (Latin America and Finland), and curator Hung-Fei Wu (Taiwan).

Similarly, the project *Circuit for Material Experience* (2026–2027) brings together artists and researchers from Finland, Spain, and Peru to explore material legacies through biowaste, biofabrication, and community knowledge. As the project description notes, although the Nordic region is often recognised for

ecological awareness, its sustainability frameworks remain largely Eurocentric. Connecting Nordic and Latin American contexts therefore becomes a way of confronting these limitations and cultivating forms of 'radical localism' rooted in specific traditions while placing them in dialogue across borders.

Other initiatives directly addressed the responsibility of the Global North in contributing to environmental degradation. These projects highlighted the externalisation of environmental harm, including the export of textile waste, e-waste, and the environmental impacts of resource extraction. As one project reflection states: '*While we in Scandinavia appear forerunners in sustainable living, we still ship our unwanted tons out of sight with the narrative of a far-away world gratefully welcoming our sad leftovers*'. Another project, *REMAINS – visions of Korle Lagoon*, points to the global circulation of toxic waste, noting that Norway exports large quantities to countries where people, animals, and landscapes are exposed to its toxins.

Nordic relevance also emerges through shared vulnerabilities related to ecological crises. For example, collaborations between villages such as Kitaushima in Japan and Nyksund in Norway *(Nyksund/Kitaushima Project)* bring artists and local residents together to develop alternative artistic and ecological learning environments. Other initiatives address shared environmental threats such as rising sea levels. The project *A Puppet from a Sea*, for instance, brings together perspectives from two coastal locations—in Finland and Indonesia— to explore marine imbalance through artistic experimentation with seaweed as a material, encouraging empathy with non-human ecological actors.

2.3. Nordic relevance as a border-free relationship

Rather than being grounded in geography alone, Nordic relevance in many projects is articulated as relational—emerging through shared histories, experiences, and challenges that connect the Nordic region with other parts of the world. One important dimension is the recognition of shared or entangled colonial histories. For instance, *Reparative Encounters* explores historical connections between Denmark, Greenland (Kalaallit Nunaat), Ghana, and the US Virgin Islands. The project brings together a network of artists and curators from these regions to foster artistic collaboration across contexts that have been differently shaped by Danish colonialism.

Some projects imagined Nordic relevance beyond geographies—looking at ecological systems, natural features, local traditions. For instance, *Thawing of the Frozen Rivers* expanded the idea of 'the North' beyond the Nordic nation-states to include Arctic, Siberian, and East Asian ecological zones. The representative of the project challenged the assumption that the Nordic region uniquely represents northernness: '*If you take the huge distance from Finland to northern China—it's about 80 days of walking—it's still all taiga forest. When you look at images of that landscape, you can't really tell whether you're in Finland or in China. You're just looking at the forest. So I'm thinking about the region in a geocultural way. Culture is also very much shaped by climate*.'

Several projects move away from the conventional North–South binary, exploring alternative axes of collaboration. The project *Constellations*, for example, builds solidarity between Arctic and tropical communities through shared learning about water systems. Other projects explore historical and political connections between the Nordic region and Central and Eastern Europe, such as *Tentative Transmits: The Radio as G/Host in the "Former East"*, which addresses gaps in knowledge production around post-socialist, post-colonial, and post-imperial relationships between these regions.

2.4. Nordic relevance as a space of complexity and plurality

A number of projects address migration, minority representation, diasporas, Indigenous practices, and intercultural education. While these initiatives are not always explicitly framed as investigations of 'Nordic relevance', they reveal an important feature of Globus projects: the Nordic region is not treated as culturally homogeneous, and appears as a site shaped by multiple histories, identities, and transnational influences.

Several projects examine cultural relationships within the Nordic region and connect them to broader global contexts. For example, within the project *Connecting Greenland, Faroe Islands and Denmark in a Global Perspective* moves beyond geopolitical relations between these territories to focus on how individual artists and cultural producers position themselves within global networks. Within this project, the emphasis shifts from the political relationship between the regions to the role artists and producers choose to play in a wider international context and the collaborations that enable such positioning.

Other initiatives foreground Indigenous cultural practices and their place within global cultural dialogue. The project *Where Oceans Meet*, which explores historical and contemporary connections between Sámi and Gaelic cultures, aims to develop artistic expressions rooted in these traditions while making them accessible across cultural contexts. As the project describes it, the ambition is to create work that remains Sámi and Gaelic in origin but can be understood by audiences without prior knowledge of these languages or cultural backgrounds. Several projects also emphasise the historical interconnectedness of Nordic and global cultures. One example is the project *Acts of Art(e)Facts*, exploring Islamic influences during the Viking Age, by disseminating knowledge about the Islamic origins of elements of Nordic visual culture. Projects also highlighted divergent urgencies, resources, and developmental stages within the Nordic region itself, demonstrating that Nordic relevance must account for internal asymmetries as much as for differences between the Nordics and other regions.

2.5. Between leadership, soft power and mutual solidarity

While many projects address global issues that call for collective approaches to knowledge and shared responsibility, it is the acknowledged reality that Nordic institutions continue to support human rights, activism and advocacy by providing refuge, legal assistance, financial resources, and institutional infrastructure to artists, researchers, and cultural workers confronted with war, censorship, or violence.

Projects addressing artistic freedom, exile, and protection of artists and eco-defenders illustrate this role. One example is *Ecologists at Risk (ER)*, a residency programme in Mexico designed to support environmental defenders and ecologists whose work places them at risk. The project is led by the Finnish NGO Perpetuum Mobile and builds on the experience of its Artists at Risk programme.

Beyond providing refuge or protection, some projects also focus on strengthening professional practices and cultural infrastructures in regions where such systems remain fragile. For instance, *Cultivating Curating: Program for Cultural Reciprocity* seeks to strengthen curatorial education and professional recognition in North Africa and the Middle East.

The dimensions of the Nordic 'soft power' were not overlooked during conversations with beneficiaries either. Some participants recognised that international collaboration inevitably involves the projection of values outward, whether intentionally or not. For some, the normative characteristics of the *Nordic* include accessibility, strong public support for culture, flattened organisational hierarchies, and a sense of social responsibility in cultural work. The Nordic commitment to equal opportunities, such as publicly supported education and cultural access, was also seen as a value that could be extended through international collaboration. Beneficiaries also referred to a certain 'Nordic simplicity'—a clarity, openness, and transparency in organisational processes. In this regard, Globus as such, embodying these features, can be positioned as an element of a 'Nordic brand'.

At the same time, structural inequalities were also visible in the broader global partnerships supported by the programme. Because funding originated in the Nordic region, Nordic partners often occupied a structurally stronger position within some collaborations. The continuation of projects also carried different meanings across contexts. Nordic organisations were more likely to pause and reconsider how a project might develop further, drawing on a wider range of potential funding sources. For many partners in the Global South, by contrast, projects often ended abruptly once the funding period concluded, despite having generated important local momentum and legacies. Nordic partners could also be more selective about future opportunities than their peers from other regions. However, some participants observed that changing political and funding conditions within the Nordic countries may require new forms of solidarity in reverse: Nordic actors may also need to learn strategies of resilience from partners working in more precarious environments.

Therefore, across the projects analysed, 'Nordic relevance' does not emerge as a fixed definition or stable set of characteristics. Instead, it appears as a moving and relational concept, shaped by the perspectives of those engaging with it and by the contexts in which collaborations unfold. Projects reveal Nordic relevance as something negotiated in practice—constantly reinterpreted through encounters with different places, histories, and knowledge systems. In this sense, Nordic relevance may be best understood not as a clearly defined category, but as an evolving concept that emerges through collaboration.

3. Beyond project logic: where next?

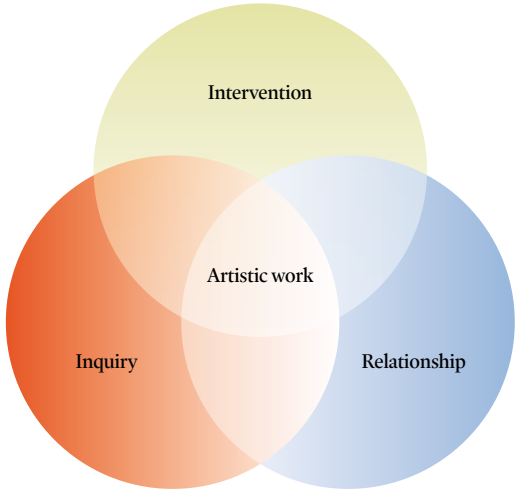
Across the portfolio, Globus-supported activities demonstrate a plurality of implementation models, but also a shift in how 'projects' as such are understood. In practice, both network-building and project-type trajectories tend to coexist within the same initiatives. What differs is their central focus: in some cases, the relationship itself forms the core, with outputs, such as productions, reports, or events, serving as connecting nodes. In others, these specific interventions constitute the main objective, while the collaboration functions as the supporting infrastructure enabling these actions.

To envisage a balanced funding programme, we need to ask the question: how do we understand artistic work as such? Artistic work unfolds through a constellation of three elements: relationships (networks, partnerships, collaborations), inquiry (process, exploration, experimentation), and intervention (outputs such as performances, exhibitions, films, etc.). These dimensions are mutually reinforcing. While art often begins as inquiry, it gains wider relevance when it materialises through concrete interventions, which are only possible within a robust ecosystem composed of relationships, networks, capacities, and resources.

This perspective suggests the need to rebalance what funders recognise and support within artistic practice. Products, research processes, and relationship-building all constitute essential nodes of cultural work and should be valued accordingly. However, the relative importance of these elements varies across contexts and depends on the moment: what requires support depends largely on what is most urgently missing. In contexts characterised by scarcity, both artistic production and infrastructural development may be needed simultaneously. In conflict zones, for instance, the ability to stage performances can itself become a precious opportunity. At the same time, in cultural environments characterised by over-production, the priority may shift toward reflection—to examine the sustainability, inclusivity, and meaning of this abundance.

In this sense, the balance between outputs and valuation of processes, infrastructures and relationship-building, is always context-dependent. Globus, in this regard, allowed for these specific and diverse needs to resurface through the open framework of its calls, which supported both output-oriented and relationship-focused elements, often within the same initiatives.

DIMENSIONS OF ARTISTIC WORK



3.1. Project-oriented formats: bounded scope, concrete outputs

A portion of Globus-supported activities are implemented through clearly delimited, project-based formats. Typical examples include co-productions resulting in a single performance or touring work, exhibitions anchored to a specific venue and period, research trips culminating in a publication, and artistic productions where collaboration functions primarily as a means of realising a concrete outcome. Networks may exist around the project, but they are not the primary object of investment; rather, they are activated temporarily in order to realise a specific intervention or production.

Concrete outputs serve several functions within these initiatives. They can act as experimental nodes within a broader process, creating moments that strengthen commitments and seed further collaborations. They also function as moments of sharing knowledge and results, raising awareness around particular issues, and connecting the work to audiences and contexts. In some cases, projects explicitly frame interventions as catalysts for broader change and acts of resilience. For example, Globus Call 2022 supported a theatre

co-production between Blaagaard Teater in Copenhagen and the Theater of the Women of the Camp, based in the Borj el Barajneh Palestinian refugee camp in Beirut. The collaboration resulted in *The Wedding*, the company's first full-scale production outside the camp. Bringing together artists from two cities and communities, the project was grounded on the belief that '*through play and art we can reach freedom, even in places where we did not know freedom existed*'. So, intervention as such can be a way to exercise freedom in a context where it is constrained.

A defining feature of project-oriented formats is therefore the presence of a recognisable endpoint, even if relationships and ideas continue to evolve informally afterwards. At the same time, these projects often aim to generate ripple effects beyond the immediate intervention. The ideas and concepts they generated were rarely meant to be confined to a single location or moment. Some projects focused on developing tools intended for use beyond the project itself.

3.2. Network-building approaches: collaboration as the core outcome

In contrast to project-oriented formats, a considerable number of Globus initiatives were implemented as network-building approaches. In these cases, relationship-building became the primary objective, while artistic and discursive activities functioned as connective tissue rather than as final endpoints. Rather than moving linearly from point A to point B, these initiatives sought to establish the conditions for continued movement, iteration, and relationship. Many network-oriented initiatives explicitly articulate long-term ambitions, beyond the Globus funding period.

Building relationships across borders within Globus initiatives is often framed as a way to strengthen collective resilience, particularly in contexts marked by shrinking freedoms and limited resources. In this context, communities function not only as professional networks but also as protective and empowering structures, enabling artists and cultural actors to share experiences, develop strategies, and support one another. Creating trusted spaces for dialogue is especially important when dealing with less visible pressures such as self-censorship, which, as one interviewee observed, often remains hidden

because 'nobody is proud of censoring themselves'. Through safe spaces for exchange and reflection, networks allow practitioners to articulate challenges, learn about their rights, and build support systems.

At times, however, the role of creating a permanent network within projects appears ambiguous. In some cases, establishing a network is clearly justified by the thematic scope or the long-term ambitions of the collaboration. In others, however, the emphasis on creating a network seems driven more by call criteria than by the project's actual needs. The key question is what the central need of the initiative is: a network, a process, or a concrete output. In some cases, the priority is to build relationships that may lead to future interventions. In others, the focus is on concrete actions that are urgent in specific contexts, and relationships can be both enabling and resulting from these actions.

3.3 Hybrid models: projects as nodes of longer trajectories

Most Globus activities do not sit neatly at either extreme of project-based or network-based approaches. Instead, they adopt hybrid implementation models in which time-bound projects are embedded within longer-term trajectories. In these cases, artistic outputs coexist with explicit ambitions to build durable relationships, and evaluation focuses not only on tangible results but also on what has been learned, tested, or made possible through the process.

Several strategies applied in Globus-supported initiatives illustrate this hybrid logic. Residencies often function simultaneously as artistic laboratories and trust-building mechanisms. Productions, publications, or platforms may serve as anchors that hold a network together and help it advance to the next stage. Other initiatives build networks explicitly in order to sustain ongoing research. Exhibitions, symposia, or performances may be framed as intermediary milestones and moments to connect with wider societies rather than conclusions. Some projects explicitly frame their activities as part of broader research trajectories.

In several cases, tangible deliverables—such as publications, podcasts, or toolkits—emerged over time, even when they had not been predetermined at the outset. This suggests that an orientation toward concrete outputs may be inherent to cultural practice itself, serving as moments of reflection, dialogue,

public engagement, and embodiment of the process. It seems that when the creative process is trusted to unfold organically, such outputs often emerge naturally.

Therefore, within hybrid models, the project format is instrumental but not definitive. It provides a shared frame through which collaborators can test methods, clarify shared values, identify asymmetries, and assess whether and how collaboration should continue. The central value lay not in producing a predefined output but in exploring appropriate forms of collaboration for the future—beneficiaries of such initiatives described their activities as '*pre-projects*'.

HYBRID PROJECT-NETWORK FUNDING MODEL

	CONVENTIONAL PROJECT FUNDING	GLOBUS MODEL
RESULTS	Fixed outputs	Emergent outcomes
PROCESS	Linear timelines	Iterative development
FOCUS	Short-term impact	Long-term relationship
APPLICATION	Prescriptive criteria	Open and adaptive criteria
RELATION WITH THE FUNDER	Control-based implementation	Trust-based relationship
VALUE	Production-centred value	Process- and capacity-centred value

3.4. No linear trajectory: learning as the primary outcome

An essential pattern across the portfolio is the deviation from a linear narrative from problem to solution. Many Globus-supported projects explicitly resist predefined outcomes, allowing processes to evolve in response to context. In such cases, success is measured less through the delivery of predetermined results and more through reflection, documentation, and evaluation. This orientation is particularly visible in initiatives structured around artistic research, experimental platforms, or collaborations operating in contexts marked by instability, precarity, or risk. In these settings, evaluation is not merely a retrospective justification of activities but an integral phase of the work itself.

At the same time, the portfolio reveals a tension inherent in process-oriented work. When projects are framed as exploratory research trajectories, it is not always clear how the research dimension is articulated beyond the production of project outputs. Beneficiaries of several projects testify that they have learned a great deal and that this knowledge will inform future work. However, the post-project processes through which these learnings could be shared more widely are often underdeveloped.

3.5. Persistent limits of the 'non-project' model

However, our research reveals complex realities within the cultural sector around the so-called 'projectification' of artistic work. Several testimonies referred to the well-known cycle of short-term, innovation-driven initiatives—sometimes described by participants as a '*project disease*' within the broader cultural funding landscape. In such conditions, cultural actors are often required to constantly invent new ideas rather than deepen existing ones. As one participant noted, the pressure to produce outputs often pushes initiatives back into project logic, even if they might be described as relationship-building or process-focused trajectories: once a concrete output is planned, the process effectively becomes a project again. When outputs are not required, funders may instead ask for wider impact in more general terms, which is difficult to predict in processes centred on relationships, research, or network-building.

Against this backdrop, many beneficiaries valued Globus precisely for creating space within this system. One participant explained: '*We tried to challenge*

Reframing the project through ‘non-project’ elements

1.
Non-project temporality: continuity, incompletion, and reuse

Cultural work rarely concludes neatly within a funding cycle. Instead, it evolves through reuse, reinterpretation, and the gradual accumulation of relational and methodological knowledge. Beneficiaries highlighted the importance of being able to continue developing existing ideas and collaborations, countering a tendency within the sector toward constant reinvention. In this sense, in non-project temporalities, value unfolds over time rather than at the moment of delivery.

2.
Process, relation, and capacity as outcomes

Within this framework, many of the most meaningful outcomes were intangible and process-oriented. Beneficiaries pointed to strengthened collaborations and trust between partners, organisational learning and mentorship, expanded ethical awareness in cross-cultural work, and the development of more inclusive practices and community engagement. These effects align closely with what participants referred to as the ‘non-project’ dimensions of their work—outcomes that cannot be easily captured or calculated. In this sense, Globus recognises relational infrastructure as a legitimate cultural outcome.

3.
Flexibility and trust as enabling conditions

The emergence of non-project elements depended largely on two structural features of the programme: flexibility and trust. Flexibility allowed projects to adapt methods, outputs, and timelines as collaborations evolved. Trust reduced pressure for rigid predictability and legitimised uncertainty, experimentation, and even failure as part of the process. Non-project elements are not accidental by-products but are enabled by the programme’s governance design. Globus thus operationalises a funding logic in which openness becomes productive rather than risky.

4.
Ethical duration in translocal collaboration

For beneficiaries working across unequal geopolitical contexts, long-term relationality was also framed as an ethical responsibility. Short-term projects encounter risk producing extractive or symbolic exchanges, whereas sustained collaboration enables mutual capacity building, durable community relationships, and shared authorship of cultural processes.

ourselves not to think about production all the time, which we usually do. Normally we ask: how do we turn this into an exhibition or a cultural project? But in this case the focus was capacity building. That allowed people to share knowledge and ideas more freely'. Others noted that even though the project did not produce exhibitions or finished artworks, it created a foundation for future productions: '*We haven't really produced art in this project yet, although some artistic results will come out of it. What we want next is to make exhibitions on these topics in different contexts*'. Another participant linked this approach directly to the need for longer-term thinking in the cultural sector: '*The sustainability of ideas and results is very important, because in culture we often have a 'project disease': one project after another. It used to be that every time you had to invent something new instead of developing the ideas further*'.

Despite these achievements, many beneficiaries felt that the 'non-project' elements enabled by Globus often exist only within the space of the grant itself. Once projects re-enter the wider funding landscape, they again encounter systems dominated by short-term timelines, output-oriented evaluation, and administrative closure. In this sense, Globus did not replace the project-based model but rather created a temporary suspension or mitigation of its pressures.

The broader reality of project-driven work affects the everyday conditions of Globus collaborations even before the grant ends. Participants described how they are often involved in multiple initiatives simultaneously, leaving little time for the reflective spaces that programmes like Globus attempt to create. One beneficiary recalled a project meeting where participants struggled to remain present because they were managing other commitments: '*Everybody was on their computers arranging meetings for the next day. I remember saying, can we just be here for a moment? But this is the reality we live in today—everyone is doing so many things at the same time that it's difficult to stop*'.

However, some beneficiaries described Globus as enabling a shift toward longer-term thinking within their teams. One participant explained that their programme had moved away from constantly changing themes and formats toward a more sustained trajectory that connects research, network-building, and artistic production as complementary dimensions of practice.

These reflections suggest that Globus functions as a transformative niche within a projectified system, rather than a complete systemic alternative. Its long-term impact therefore depends not only on the programme itself but also on how its principles interact with the broader funding environment in which cultural organisations continue to operate.

4. Navigating uncertainty & practicing trust

A defining characteristic across many Globus-supported activities is an embrace of uncertainty. Overall, uncertainty took multiple forms within Globus trajectories. It may stem from the broader risks of operating in volatile contexts, but also from the experimental nature of artistic and social processes and from the complexities of building relationships across distance and difference. Uncertainty was embedded in the very environments in which many of these projects operated, characterised by instability or heightened risk: regions affected by armed conflict, refugee camps, or places marked by political repression, climate crisis, or infrastructural fragility. Travel restrictions, visa regimes, and shifting political conditions could abruptly affect the feasibility of planned activities. Agreements or partnerships that initially seemed secure could become impossible to realise due to changing circumstances.

Risk exposure was often unevenly distributed among participants. Questions of nationality, citizenship status, and political context shaped who could travel, who faced security risks, and who bore the greatest vulnerability in collaborative processes. In these conditions, rather than presenting projects as solutions with predetermined outcomes, many initiatives begin from a position of inquiry: what might be possible here, with these partners, under these conditions?

Often, unpredictability was not treated solely as a threat that requires adaptation but as a condition that shaped methodological, ethical, and organisational choices. Projects became processes of navigation rather than linear implementation. This orientation toward uncertainty also forms an important backdrop to understanding how trust operates within the Globus programme.

4.1. Embracing uncertainty as methodology

a. Reinterpretation, experimentation, iteration

Many initiatives entering a space of uncertainty do not seek to create something entirely new, but instead work with what already exists: established relationships, local practices, existing infrastructures, and forms of situated knowledge. Instead of inventing totally new approaches, formats such as biennials, residencies, networks, and educational programmes were treated both as well-known tools and as catalysts of change—being repurposed, stretched, or adapted to be relevant in particular contexts.

Many Globus-supported initiatives also embraced uncertainty through experimentation and iteration: developing new musical instruments from e-waste, co-designing eco-pedagogical exhibition methods, or testing unfamiliar educational formats across different cultural traditions. Self-reflixivity within these projects was ongoing, with learning feeding back into the project itself as it unfolded.

Importantly, beneficiaries do not see experimentation with uncertainty as a feature limited to fragile contexts. Instead, they recognise it as an integral element of artistic work itself, regardless of where it takes place. At the same time, complexities of global collaborations add further layers to the improvisational and exploratory nature of these partnerships. Socially engaged work is also inherently unpredictable, as one participant noted: '*We know generally what we're going to do, but there might be details of what happens in week three or week five that we haven't yet specified. There's an improvisational character, particularly when you're working in a socially engaged context where you have to work with communities where they are and with what's happening in particular moments*'.

b. Mitigating relational risks

Globus-supported projects highlighted an important tension between trust-based collaboration and the practical realities of cross-border partnerships. While many initiatives were built on goodwill, shared values, and care-driven collaboration, beneficiaries also emphasised the need for clearer agreements

to ensure balanced and respectful working relationships. Key lessons included the importance of defining roles, budgets, timelines, and ethical expectations, and aligning values from the outset.

Several beneficiaries reflected that collaborations had been uneven, requiring disproportionate effort from one partner. One participant described how their organisation invested significant energy partially because expectations had not been clearly articulated: '*We realised that our previous way of collaborating was just giving and giving and giving, being very excited and going overboard with what we wanted to do*'. Later on, the team adjusted their approach by outlining mutual responsibilities.

The need for explicit agreements was especially significant when projects involved partners from different cultural backgrounds or historically marginalised communities. For Indigenous collaborators in particular, such ethical clarity was essential to prevent exploitative dynamics. One Indigenous participant described how historical experiences of assimilation and marginalisation can shape perceptions of collaboration: '*Sometimes we feel that people are just seeing us as an easy way of getting money for their own project. There has to be a very high level of respect and understanding for the history of the people*'.

Some beneficiaries described relational tensions—misunderstandings, unequal workloads, or diverging interpretations of key concepts—as unavoidable elements of transnational collaboration. Some even framed these challenges as valuable learning experiences or the 'beauty' of international projects. Others, however, emphasised that the burden of such experimentation can be unevenly distributed. As one interviewee observed, while some may view conflict as a productive learning process, *'not everyone can afford it with already so much oppression going on'*. Another participant added that '*sometimes another moment of disrespect is not a learning point; it is just another moment of disrespect*'. Thus, while experimentation with trust can be productive, it also carries risks—particularly for collaborators operating under conditions of structural inequality and precarity.

To mitigate these risks, beneficiaries recommended several practical measures. Early-stage meetings, facilitated by mediators appointed by the Fund, were suggested as one way to establish shared understanding before formalising

collaboration contracts. Agreements clarifying responsibilities, authorship, financial arrangements, and ethical principles were also seen as important tools for creating transparency. Some interviewees suggested that funders could encourage or require such agreements as part of project preparation, suggesting a template or advising the partnership on how they can approach it.

Yet, as beneficiaries shared, even when agreements existed, enforcing them could be uncomfortable. This reinforces the need for a more active role of the funder in supporting partners to formalise their relationships. When ethical guidelines or partnership agreements are required by the funding body, they can help initiate necessary but sometimes difficult conversations and frame expectations as shared responsibilities rather than individual demands.

c. Constraints as catalysts for innovation; failures as learning points

Unexpected barriers frequently became catalysts for methodological innovation rather than causes of collapse. When planned encounters became impossible, project teams shifted formats, experimented with new techniques, or expanded their methodologies to incorporate other sensory, spatial, or performative dimensions. Some initiatives reconfigured timeframes through extended residencies or alternative sites of production. Others realised they were not able to involve dozens of local people in their project, as was planned, but were able to engage deeper with those few they did involve. Constraint thus demonstrated how uncertainty could expand rather than limit artistic inquiry.

Such experiences generated knowledge that could inform future work, revealing complexity of cultural ecosystems. In one case, a local cultural institution withdrew from the project as a hosting venue due to the challenging content of the exhibition. For the partners, the very act of this withdrawal became an important moment of learning, prompting reflection on both the local context and the dynamics of the project itself. In another case, an interviewee described a failure as '*the most important long-term impact*' of the project, precisely because it generated lessons about what they would never do again. In this sense, the programme legitimised what might be described as '*productive failure*', challenging conventional funding logics centred on full delivery and measurable success.

Many interviewees stressed that cultural ecosystems require space for experimentation, and the *possibility of non-success*, in order to develop new forms of practice. In this sense, Globus recognised that deviations in the arts, as in any other activity, can contribute positively to a project and should not necessarily be seen as something a funder needs to prevent by any means.

4.2. Making sense of uncertainty through trust-based funding

The ability of projects to embrace uncertainty depends not only on the creativity of project teams but also on a funding framework—whether it recognises uncertainty as an inherent part of cultural collaboration rather than as a failure of planning. The Globus *modus operandi* was oriented towards helping beneficiaries navigate the uncertainties inherent in global collaborations by remaining flexible and experimental throughout the process. This trust-based approach manifested itself in several ways:

a. Procedural and relational trust

The openness of the Globus application processes and the adaptive character of project itineraries proved particularly crucial in artist-led and socially engaged contexts, where creative processes evolve in tune with unpredictable dynamics. This flexibility was equally important in situations where future timelines, or formats could not be fully predicted at the application stage, and in collaborative environments requiring responsiveness to host organisations, communities, and unfolding events.

Several beneficiaries appreciated that the Fund was generally open to accepting changes, which were most often non-fundamental to the overall project. Several interviewees interpreted the funder's reactions as a signal that their intentions, ethics, and professional credibility were recognised. Such recognition created an environment in which precarious situations could be communicated openly. Beneficiaries recalled moments when projects encountered difficulties—such as cancelled exhibitions or changes in the scale of research—yet the funding relationship nevertheless continued without sanctions.

However, in some cases beneficiaries were not aware that deviations were possible and said they would have appreciated clearer guidance on how much projects could be adjusted in response to unforeseen circumstances. One interviewee suggested that crisis situations could even become part of the project's learning process: '*Maybe there is something lost there when something goes wrong. Can't that also be part of the project—how the artist then decides to solve it? Artists should know that they are allowed by the Fund to solve a precarious situation without destroying the trust moment*'. Making 'trust moments' more explicit within funding structures would be a structural recognition that uncertainty and adaptation are integral parts of cultural projects.

b. Limits of beneficiary-funder trust

As reflected in previous chapters, trust-based funding frameworks ultimately encounter constraints when implemented within a system dominated by scarce, short-term, and project-based funding modalities. One beneficiary reflected on what many identified as a crucial issue—the lack for long-term stability for projects: '*I understand that there is no funder that would support a project forever, but pushing us to think long-term and engage in deep relationships with challenging realities, without any sense of what might happen to those relationships next, can create confusion. Beneficiaries also need to trust the funder—that there is a future for their practice*'. Therefore, trust is bidirectional: funders trust beneficiaries to navigate uncertainty responsibly, while beneficiaries trust funders to provide continuity and support for the relationships they are encouraged to build.

An aspect that some beneficiaries felt undermined the trust-based nature of the programme was the possibility for the Fund to award only a partial grant. A few beneficiaries reported uncertainty about whether the Fund still expected the full implementation of the original project within a smaller budget, or only a scaled-down version of it. In practice, both scenarios—attempting to realise the original plan with reduced resources or redesigning the project to fit a smaller financial framework—were described as moments in which beneficiaries felt less able to follow their initial vision and creative ambitions. While this evaluation did not yield definitive answers regarding the consequences of partial funding, it raises the question of whether projects receiving a significantly reduced grant were able to realise their intended outcomes to the same extent as originally planned.

5. Globus projects as learning trajectories

Many projects embedded elements of knowledge generation. Four main forms of learning can be identified within Globus projects: 1) artistic or academic research; 2) exchange of knowledge between partners and/or communities; 3) learning from project trajectories through evaluation; 4) capacity-building and skills-development.

5.1. Research through artistic practice

Within the Globus portfolio, artistic practice frequently functioned as a method of research in its own right, and artistic processes were used as primary modes of inquiry through which knowledge was generated. Performance, sound, material experimentation, architecture, radio, installation, and co-creation become investigative frameworks that allow artists and collaborators to test ideas, explore questions, and surface forms of knowledge that are difficult to articulate through conventional analytical tools. Such practices produce insights into social, environmental, and technological dynamics that would be difficult to access through textual or theoretical analysis alone.

Research was often conducted in the early stages of collaboration. Many initiatives begin with exploratory processes designed to scope, map, and better understand the contexts in which the projects operate: the specific challenges faced in local realities, needs and conditions for collaboration, risks, histories, traditions. Preliminary research often combines multiple knowledge-generation methods, including consultations with experts and scholars, conversations with local communities, artist residencies, and other place-based and situational forms of inquiry. These approaches acknowledge that meaningful artistic and cultural projects require contextual understanding built through presence and long-term engagement with specific contexts. For example, before the project *Expanding Theatre Landscapes (ETL)* began, partners visited refugee camps in Bosnia, to understand the realities faced by displaced communities. As explained in the application: '*During early spring 2023, they familiarised themselves with the camps' structure, daily life, and got close to individuals. This work was led by the directors and dramaturges in collaboration with the camp management, with ongoing reflections on their own roles and positions in relation to the refugees. This material will form the basis for the theater performances*'.

Evaluators' perspectives: clarity, trust, objectivity—and their limits

We spoke with three experts that assessed Globus projects to glean their perspective on the process. Evaluators appreciated the Fund's intention to support meaningful collaborations, not simply as a matter of mobility or exchange, but as a way of strengthening global collaborations and building capacities. As one evaluator put it, this programme radiated the aspiration to help *'humanity to understand one another better'*.

At the same time, they underlined how difficult it was to assess the quality and depth of a collaboration from an application alone. This is especially true in programmes built around multiple partners based in different parts of the world and having a long-term ambition. One evaluator noted that, when funding opportunities appear, applicants can put together a consortium, but that doesn't necessarily mean that everyone shares the same ideals and the same intent. In other words, a well-assembled partnership on paper is not the same thing as a genuinely committed collaboration. Evaluators can search online, review links, and look for evidence of prior activity, but these indicators remain partial, particularly when trying to judge commitment to sustained cooperation.

A recurring theme is the need to balance openness and due diligence. The lighter application format was seen as important and, in many ways, justified. Evaluators were acutely aware that for many applicants, especially in the Global South, complex and prolonged application systems are exclusionary, taking into account the very basic barriers of unstable internet access, limited staff capacity, and data poverty. Complex application systems are too costly for artists, and in some parts of the world more than in others.

This leads to one of the central tensions identified by evaluators: how to keep access open without turning selection into either a lottery or a reward for those best able to write polished proposals. Moreover, in the age of AI, there is a risk that application quality reflects access to digital tools rather than the actual artistic or collaborative potential of a project. It is important to be able to assess the contextual urgency of the project without relying solely on how applicants (are able to) describe it. For instance, for artists working under conditions of war, repression, or extreme deprivation, the formal strength of the application might not adequately reflect the urgency or value of the work. Here the evaluators recognised a genuine dilemma: a weaker application may still represent a stronger human and cultural need. This concern strengthens the case for looking toward individuals, organisations, prior work, and contextual relevance, rather than relying too heavily on how well a proposal 'ticks all the boxes'. But this kind of approach requires a complete rethinking of the evaluation model (this is discussed in Volume 2 *'Trends, Contexts, Pathways'*).

The interviews also show that the evaluation process is shaped by a persistent tension between transparency and subjectivity. On the one hand, there is pressure to make criteria explicit, fair, and legible. On the other hand, over-specifying what the fund wants can encourage applicants to reproduce strategic keywords without much meaning behind. For instance, if a fund announces too clearly that it seeks underrepresented voices, digital expertise, or climate activism, there is a risk these perspectives will be included in some of the projects in a tokenistic way. Leaving some openness in the call may therefore be less a lack of clarity than a way of protecting the integrity of the field and testing whether applicants can articulate real relevance on their own terms.

Overall, most of the conversations we held with evaluators and beneficiaries point to the conclusions that there is no perfect way to conduct evaluation, and one model will ultimately correct some imbalances but will create others. That is why some experts suggested that some of the programme's challenges can only be managed over time, not solved within a single round. If the fund runs in cycles, it can gradually correct imbalances, reach overlooked geographies and voices, and test whether and how openness over the long term produces a healthier spread of support. In that sense, it is essential that the Fund remains committed over time to learn from its own patterns.

Applicants often design projects that include dedicated phases of exploration and collective reflection, because they explicitly acknowledge that they do not yet know all the possible outcomes or trajectories of their work. In practice, this means that projects often adapt their formats during implementation—shifting locations, timelines, or methods as new insights emerge. One project, *Connecting Local Ecologies*, based on the work of two artists—Shuruq Harb and Cecilia Vicuña—whose work engages with specific local ecosystems in Jericho and Tierra del Fuego, proposes the creation of a global artistic network. The application acknowledged that '*the project is consciously based on the fact that it will be developed along the way – based on clear goals and input from the participants, both individuals and institutions*'.

5.2. How knowledge is produced

Globus-supported projects generate knowledge through exploratory research, embodied artistic inquiry, peer-to-peer exchange, and collective reflection.

a. Research as an experiment-driven process

A defining feature of many Globus projects is the framing of research as an open-ended process driven by questions rather than predetermined answers. Applicants frequently describe their projects as investigative, exploratory, or 'works in progress'. Research unfolds through residencies, workshops, fieldwork, listening processes, and iterative development phases that allow questions and methods to evolve in response to participants, local contexts, and changing conditions. This exploratory logic is visible across different types of initiatives, from artistic research to community-based or policy-oriented projects. Some projects investigate how audiences themselves can become active participants in artistic experimentation.

b. Horizontal, peer-to-peer, and translocal exchange

Knowledge production within Globus projects is also characterised by horizontal and reciprocal forms of exchange: peer-to-peer learning between artists, communities, researchers, activists, technologists, and cultural organisations. Learning flows in multiple directions, often challenging traditional centre–periphery or North–South hierarchies. This orientation is reflected in co-creation processes, reciprocal residencies, festival-to-festival collaborations, and shared governance structures. Listening, consultation, and mutual learning frequently form the starting point for collaboration, particularly in projects engaging with postcolonial, Indigenous, or conflict-affected contexts.

c. Developing methodologies and learning tools

Several Globus projects also generate reusable formats, methodological frameworks, educational resources, workshop methods, documentation strategies, and pedagogical tools intended for use beyond the immediate collaboration. In some cases, workshops conducted during the project are later translated into educational material that can be used by schools, universities, or cultural groups in different contexts. Project partners described testing workshops with artists in one location and then adapting them in other contexts, eventually transforming the experience into downloadable resources that allow others to replicate or adapt the methods. At the same time, some beneficiaries note that disseminating and consolidating knowledge requires significant time and resources. Communicating project insights and transforming them into widely usable resources can itself become a 'project'. Not all partnerships had the capacity to develop extensive dissemination strategies, and the knowledge generated through artistic and collaborative processes sometimes resisted standardised formats.

d. Reflexivity, evaluation, and ethical learning

Many Globus projects incorporate reflexive and evaluative practices into their methodologies. Monitoring systems, feedback sessions, and collective reflection processes are used to reassess goals, power relations, and verify assumptions throughout the project cycle. Evaluation processes also play a role in consolidating learning across projects. Several projects emphasise the importance of reviewing the substantial data and insights gathered through its programmes in order to refine measurement frameworks and share lessons with partners and future collaborators. Other initiatives introduce tools to track artistic progress and collaborative outcomes, and publish research studies based on their own evaluations and needs assessment aiming to inform future initiatives. In some projects, the design of activities itself creates space for reflection and collective learning. As one project partner noted, traditional

project timelines often leave little room for reflection, but opportunities for participants to share ideas, test materials, and collectively think through the implications of their work are vital for the entire trajectory.

5.3. Facilitating learning across the Globus community

Alongside supporting individual projects, the Globus programme also sought to learn from beneficiaries and to facilitate knowledge exchange across the funded network. A structured knowledge-sharing process was initiated: through a combination of digital 'scan cards', online exchange sessions, semi-structured interviews, and an in-person network meeting in Copenhagen, the Fund gathered reflections from beneficiaries on their experiences. The process culminated in the *Globus Knowledge Sharing Report* (2023). This learning trajectory continued with the *Globus Hackathon* in June 2024 that invited participants to collectively imagine future scenarios for transnational artistic collaboration.

Reflections from these initiatives (based on the beneficiary interviews, survey and the conversation with the knowledge process facilitator) highlight several lessons. First, knowledge gathering requires dedicated resources and time. Moving beyond purely bureaucratic forms of accountability toward reflective learning is an investment, both for the funder and for participants.

Second, learning within funding programmes needs to be multidirectional. Beneficiaries emphasised that knowledge transfer should not be limited to reporting back to the fund but should also create opportunities for peer learning and mutual support among grantees themselves. When projects are able to share experiences, challenges, and practical solutions with one another, the learning potential of the programme expands significantly.

Third, reflective processes can complement—or replace—conventional reporting formats. Workshops, dialogues, and reflection sessions often provide deeper insights into project trajectories, partnerships, and contextual challenges than standard reports. When funding frameworks overemphasise predefined outcomes, applicants may focus more on reporting than on learning from the process itself. Framing these continuous learning spaces as part of reporting can therefore both reduce administrative burden and foster process-oriented reflections.

6. What's next: the future of Globus projects

Some beneficiaries described Globus as a critical stepping stone that increased visibility, credibility, and confidence of partnerships and organisations, providing a track record that could be leveraged when applying for other funding opportunities: '*It's been great that this initial support gives you the potential to think of other ways forward and leverage the access that international partners have to different funds. It also gives you a history that helps you take things further*'. Many Globus projects have already secured follow-up funding from national or international bodies, expanded from pilot activities into multi-year programmes, or have been replicated in other geographical contexts and communities. In some cases, projects became embedded within institutional strategies or educational frameworks, reshaping programming priorities or curricula. For instance, one beneficiary described how a project led a partner organisation to rethink their approach to disability and accessibility, introducing a 'semester course on ability'. There are also new residency programmes, exhibition formats, and knowledge platforms that have been integrated into the work of partner organisations.

Future visions articulated by beneficiaries are often shaped by broader political developments. The wish for continuity is often framed as a response to historical and political urgency: many projects see their own value in responding to rising nationalism, shrinking civic space, threats to artistic freedom, and growing geopolitical polarisation. Several projects seek to continue strengthening Indigenous and translocal exchange frameworks, while others aim to defend artistic autonomy or sustain spaces for dialogue in fragile environments.

Despite these aspirations, beneficiaries repeatedly highlighted structural barriers to sustaining their work. Many initiatives struggle with the lack of resources and financial sustainability, and the need to repeatedly apply for new grants within highly competitive funding environments. These challenges are reinforced by the widely discussed funding ecosystems that favour short-term projects rather than long-term collaboration. Many beneficiaries noted that Globus offered a unique opportunity for their projects. However, precisely because the programme was exceptional in scope and design, it has often been difficult to secure sustainable continuation for the initiatives it helped to establish.

In many cases, beneficiaries continue their work even when follow up funding has not been secured. Participants maintain networks informally, develop new collaborations without immediate funding, and pursue their artistic and research agendas. This suggests that the deepest form of sustainability lies not only in institutional structures or financial continuity, but also in shared commitment and belief in the value of the work. For some participants, the project represented a transformative experience that clarified their vision even without immediate continuation of funding. As one beneficiary reflected: '*It is very difficult when you are driven to create something long term and you receive seed funding but not long-term support. But the fact that we were pushed to think long term within Globus also gives us inspiration. Long-term thinking continues to mature, like wine or cheese, and may eventually lead to better concepts, sharper ideas and new opportunities*'.

However, maintaining networks and collaborations without support is a privilege not every context and organisation can afford. In some cases, the discontinuation of a Globus grant has already led to the discontinuation of projects themselves, particularly for organisations operating in fragile contexts or pursuing initiatives that fall outside conventional funding priorities.

This creates a structural paradox for innovative funding schemes that address gaps in the funding landscape and support long-term, relational, and process-based visions and collaborations. While such projects frequently generate long-term intellectual, social, and institutional value, the wider funding systems remain organised around short project cycles.

Cultural Funding Fit for Today's World: Recommendations

The various research steps (See also Volume 2, *Funding Culture for a Changing World: Pathways Forward*, which includes a trends and context analysis, as well as a mapping of needs in the field) undertaken as part of this study reveal today's cross-border cultural collaborations need the following:

— Continuous agility and adaptability of funding programmes in tune with changing global realities;

— stability, continuity, and a long-term perspective in support;

— a trust-based and reciprocal relationship between funder and beneficiaries, reflected in non-prescriptive application processes and an embrace of uncertainty throughout a project's lifespan;

— a twofold focus: on developing relationships and partnerships, and on creating projects together, which may be both deliverable- and process-oriented.

These four elements are widely recognised as essential, but they are not necessarily easy to reconcile within a single funding instrument. Potential solutions can be explored through the following pathways:

1. A multi-stage portfolio for global collaboration

Funding frameworks should combine stability with innovation, as well as inclusivity towards new voices with sustainability of established initiatives. A balanced portfolio can include various instruments rolled-out in parallel, allowing different stages of development and levels of risk to coexist.

Recognising that many artists and organisations—both from the Nordic region and beyond—struggle to find partners or lack the resources to develop a fully-formed project idea, even for a very light application process, there may be a need to introduce a two-stage application system. This system would (a) allow the Fund to support a larger number of artists and organisations in building relationships and partnerships without the immediate pressure to develop a project, and (b) at the same time support longer-term practices through potentially more elaborate application processes, thereby fostering greater stability in the field. The structure of such a scheme could look as such:

1. Two-stage support for long-term collaborations

a. Entry-Level Call (low threshold)

A first call could invite individual artists or organisations to enter the programme with a low administrative threshold. Selected participants would join an international cohort designed to facilitate networking, partnership-building and early-stage project or network development, within an extended period of time. The focus at this stage would be on exploration, exchange and relationship-building rather than immediate project conception and production. The goal is that participants find collaborators and use this time to develop an application for the next step (b), but they also may decide not to apply or pursue other funding opportunities.

b. Development and multi-year collaboration call

Participants from the entry stage could then apply for a second-tier call supporting long-term, multi-year and multi-partner collaborations. They would be granted up to one year for project development, including compensated time for proposal preparation. This strand could include, for instance, two sub-strands:

— long-term collaborative projects with a defined duration;

— structural support for operational / development costs of created networks and partnerships.

2. Direct support for existing partnerships or experimental practices

In parallel, a separate call could support shorter-term collaborations for already existing partnerships that do not require an entry stage. Similar to the Globus Call, this strand would focus on the collaboration itself rather than solely on a conventional project output. The emphasis would remain on methods of collaboration, reciprocity and shared development rather than predefined deliverables or themes. It is important to preserve a funding space that allows organisations to apply with their existing project idea, which would combine diverse activities (not solely focusing on residencies, production, mobility, etc., but potentially combining all of them).

3. Targeted and thematic calls

Additional targeted calls could address specific themes, pilot initiatives, experimental formats or clearly defined activities. These strands would allow the fund to respond to emerging priorities and identified gaps, as well as experiment with new support models, without constraining and overhauling the broader portfolio.

5. Amplifier organisations, cascading grants, decentralised structures

It could be interesting to explore the possibility of financing key 'amplifier' organisations in different parts of the world, which are both connected to the Nordic region and have potential to create transformative change locally. Through partnerships with such organisations across different regions, decentralised or cascading grant models could be introduced: local partners would distribute smaller grants directly on the ground, relying on contextual knowledge, reducing administrative barriers and enhancing local ownership and relevance. This model has been practiced by several foundations; yet it can also be energy-consuming and does not necessarily reduce workload for the fund's team. It is, however, worth exploring how such decentralisation can be done through a resource-efficient and optimised model. It is also crucial to consider that selection of 'amplifiers' must be more rigorous than usual project beneficiaries.

2. 'Funding Laboratory': innovation of support as an ongoing exercise

In times of exponential change, it is essential to recognise that funding structures must be continuously attuned to shifting realities and emerging needs in the field. Innovation of funding structures is never fully accomplished; it cannot be achieved through a single pilot or by adopting static, one-time changes to funding programmes. At the same time, operating in a regime of constant pilots and experiments can undermine stability in the field and divert focus from the Fund's core objectives and support streams. Frequent piloting creates a dynamic of perpetual change, which can be disorienting for beneficiaries.

The response to this challenge can be twofold. On one hand, there should be relatively stable funding programmes that provide continuity and predictability for beneficiaries while reinforcing the Fund's identity and 'brand'. On the other hand, there could be an ongoing stream of exploration and experimentation conducted through a dedicated 'Funding Laboratory', which would help innovate the existing programmes without making them pilots and turning them upside down. This laboratory could operate through five structured elements:

1. Ongoing analysis of the Fund's ongoing programmes and streams, combined with proactive learning from broader funding trends and policy developments. This requires a structured methodology that can include surveys, conversations, observations, and application and project discourse analysis.

2. Community: Continuous dialogue with the field, convening a rotating advisory group of artists, experts, policy-makers, and researchers from around the world to foster ownership and generate bottom-up ideas.

3. Targeted experiments and prototyping through one-time calls to test specific ideas, modalities, and collaborations (for example, with other funders or sectors). These would be smaller in scale than for instance Globus has been, but closely observed and analysed in real-life.

4. Integration of findings from these experiments to innovate the Fund's core funding structures.

5. A regular public event on innovation in the field of arts funding, serving to collect best practices, engage communities, and advocate for structured, ongoing rethinking of funding programmes.

Such a laboratory would serve multiple purposes: analysis and learning from current activities; consolidation of staff expertise; practical experimentation and prototyping; engagement with communities; and establishing discourse beyond the Fund itself. This strand of activity represents an investment in the Fund's relevance, providing independent intelligence to understand risks, detect emerging trends, and shape cultural policy environments for global art collaborations. The difference with the Fund's current work lies in the structurality and continuity of the model, as well as the intention to embed it within the wider knowledge exchange, collective learning and debate about funding models in Europe and beyond.

3. Practicing trust through assessment and selection procedures

Therefore, allocating money in the arts field is a process that generates pressure and requires effort. The essential question is: how should this burden be distributed between the funder and the art field? The answer depends on the political and legal context of each fund. However, in times of multiple challenges for the field, particularly for those engaging in cross-border collaboration, it is fair if the burden, at least partially, shifts away from artists. This allows them to focus on their practice and preserve the freedom to imagine, create, build genuine relationships—the freedom that is already increasingly under pressure. Furthermore, overly demanding application processes often generate distorted practices meant to fit within funders' narratives rather than communities and artists: as one beneficiary reflected on the prescriptiveness of the broader funding landscape, '*We just make Frankenstein's to please funders*'. Finally, in times of AI, the number of applications rises, and some of the non-essential questions of application processes lose their relevance even more generating similar responses across the field.

Proposed solutions:

— Focus on ideas and visions rather than impacts and KPIs: Allow applicants to describe what they intend to do, assessing the idea itself rather than its conformity to predefined boxes. Shorter application forms reduce the need to overdescribe plans, steps, and impacts, while still requiring a clear articulation of a project's purpose and value. At the stage of application, intention and vision are more important than predictions about outcomes or performance indicators. Evaluators should be experienced enough to assess the intention, the idea, the passion and the vision behind. Some contextual understanding, either within the evaluator group or through local experts (see below) is crucial to assess the relevance and feasibility of the idea.

— Set clear but non-prescriptive criteria: Application processes that focus on collaboration and partnerships, rather than strictly on topics or specific activities, have proven to be more relevant for cross-border cultural practices. For example, emphasising 'mutual commitment' and 'fair relations' in calls or projects is often more meaningful than requiring applicants to explicitly address themes such as greening, social inclusion, or decolonialism. Thematic calls risk steering the field toward topics that practitioners are not genuinely engaged with. At the same time, the Fund should clearly communicate its core principles for supporting cross-border collaboration (such as 'reciprocity', 'translocal relevance', or 'sustainability') while allowing applicants to define what these principles mean within their own contexts.

— Diversify the pool of experts: Experts should be selected in line with the key principles (criteria) of the funding programme. For example, the guiding value is inclusivity or justice, the panel should represent a broad range of voices, including those who advocate for specific identities (indigenous, regional, LGBTI, etc.). The Fund should be aware that evaluators appointed because of their specific identity or experience are likely to feel compelled to promote specific agendas as part of the evaluation process. If this is not the goal and neutrality is sought, this should be clearly articulated as part of the evaluation briefing. Multiple rounds of facilitated evaluator discussions should ensure balanced selection and serve as opportunities to seek peer advice on specific contexts or topics. Cross-reading of applications should be part of the process, given that not every expert is knowledgeable about specific topics and contexts.

— Invest in local research communities: Gathering information about applicants as part of the assessment process can reduce the need for them to provide extensive background data. Research on applicants can be conducted by staff or evaluators, while a broad and well-established network of local experts can offer guidance and contextual insight into specific organisations, practices, projects, and ideas. This can help assess both the relevance of the proposed work and the track record of the applying organisations and individuals.

— Prioritise applicant feedback strategically: While feedback is important, energy spent by evaluators and staff generating individual reports may be better invested in research, expert engagement, or additional review rounds, enabling lighter application processes for applicants. Interviews indicate that even if applicants prefer to get individualised feedback

to their applicants, they generally prefer simpler applications without feedback over complex processes that demand significant effort coupled but ensure receiving individualised comments.

— Articulate trust in implementation: Certain types of projects—such as translocal network building, methodological experimentation, cross-border community building, and learning spaces—can only be effectively supported in contexts of trust and openness. These activities are vital for artistic practice, yet they often fall between the cracks of conventional funding systems. Funders should therefore explicitly communicate that beneficiaries will not be penalised for unpredictability or challenges arising in precarious situations, allow artists independent decision-making without excessive bureaucratic oversight or rigid reporting requirements, and develop 'trust moments' within funding agreements through verbal or flexible arrangements that clarify how support will be provided during difficult circumstances.

4. Fostering communities and exchange

It is important for beneficiaries to be part of a community around their practices, as many face similar challenges, are eager to learn from each other, and want to connect with like-minded peers from their region or around the world. In funding programmes aimed at innovation or experimentation, bringing multiple innovators together can create cross-pollination of ideas, producing ripple effects that strengthen their own practices.

The purpose of community-building activities should be explicitly clear to beneficiaries. These activities might aim to:

— facilitate networking and potential future collaborations,

— enable learning from each other's challenges and successes, or/and

— collect insights for the Fund to inform future programmes.

Each type of activity requires different formats, sets different expectations, and varies in relevance to participants. Mixed and poorly explained intentions create frustrations. Participation should always be explicitly optional. Interviews have shown that while beneficiaries generally value these activities, some have concerns about timing, format, and energy required. Given the inherent power dynamics between funder and beneficiaries, it is essential to make it clear that non-participation will not affect relationships or future opportunities.

Facilitation should be handled by knowledgeable and sensitive individuals—both about the arts and global inequities. When collecting feedback about Fund activities, it is important to include an intermediary (not a Fund representative) to ensure participants feel comfortable to be honest about their experiences.

For effective community-building, it is useful to engage beneficiaries before and after their projects:

— ask about the types of activities they want to participate in, topics of interest, and potential partners they wish to meet,

— match participants with relevant peers and curate smaller groups for both online and in-person engagement, while still allowing for open, informal networking.

Community-building sessions should not be overly prescriptive or highly orchestrated. While methodologies matter especially in an online environment and time gaps, allowing creative and passionate participants to choose their own approach toward clearly defined goals often yields the best results. For example, a session's objective might be to formulate three recommendations on specific topics, but participants should determine for their group how they reach these outcomes. Just as in application and project-conception stages, artists and cultural professionals thrive with fewer constraints and more ownership over their process.

5. Exploring new ways to support artistic freedom

1. Build freedom infrastructures

While measuring the state of freedom and collecting cases of pressures remain to be essential, communities of support are equally crucial for safeguarding artistic freedom. In today's context, self-censorship has become a significant trend worldwide, and effectively assessing and addressing it requires new approaches. These approaches involve creating safe spaces and relational infrastructures where people from around the world can collectively explore what self-censorship means, identify its forms, and discuss strategies to measure and counteract it. The Fund can engage experts to provide guidance on freedom of expression, navigating local regulations, and building robust institutions.

On a practical level, artists must be empowered to exercise their freedoms safely. Single projects or organisations cannot prevent government censorship in oppressive regimes or prevent public violence. But supporting 'freedom infrastructures' is crucial—such as safety nets, legal aid, PR support, networks of solidarity, or financial assistance in cases of reputational damage or loss of work due to external pressures. Addressing these needs requires structured, ongoing efforts, cross-border dialogue, and strong awareness across the field—about artists' rights, the value of mutual support and what is at stake when freedom is given up. Artistic freedom requires not only infrastructures but also an established cross-border 'freedom discourse' (citing Freemuse Director Sverre Peterson)—shared awareness within the sector of emerging red lines, challenges, constraints, and pressures, and of the points at which self-censorship becomes a lived reality.

2. Rethink and deepen social engagement

One striking observation from the evaluation process was that when beneficiaries were asked about their biggest achievements as part of Globus, they overwhelmingly focused on learnings, shifts, relationships, insights, and growth—primarily in relation to their own practices, careers, partnerships, networks, organisations, or, in some cases, their local cultural field. Very few reflected on the broader changes their work might generate in local communities outside the art field.

This focus is understandable. Globus projects were designed to allow participants to concentrate on internal dynamics of collaboration and practice, often offering once-in-a-lifetime opportunities to develop trust and structures for long-term partnerships. Moreover, the impact of these partnerships and their activities on wider societies is inherently difficult to measure, especially over the short term.

However, at a time when social polarisation and intolerance are rising and placing increasing pressure on artistic freedom, it is essential to address the relationship between the arts and wider society. Research shows that while cultural policy and the arts field have long emphasised social engagement, widening access, and participatory initiatives—especially in Western contexts—this growing interaction with increasingly polarised societies can generate clashes and frictions that, in turn, encourage self-censorship. The arts field must not only engage with diverse and new audiences, but also learn how to remain free, experimental, and, when necessary, critical and provocative in these interactions.

There is an urgent need to equip the arts sector to remain a space for complexity, dialogue, plurality, and even friction when necessary. Funders must understand these dynamics and provide the tools, support, and resources necessary to engage with society in ways that advance social debate while preserving the autonomy and voice of art.

Practically, this can be achieved through:

— Targeted calls supporting capacity-building in mediation, conflict resolution, and community engagement.

— Facilitating networks and exchanges among art professionals to develop and share best practices for navigating societal challenges while maintaining their artistic freedom.

6. Engaging with other cultural funders

Evidence from Globus beneficiaries and other European funders suggests that innovation within a single programme cannot drive structural change unless the wider funding landscape evolves alongside it. While alternatives to project-based funding can be highly beneficial, organisations often revert to traditional models once such support ends.

For this reason, stronger coordination and synergies among funders willing to innovate the landscape is essential. This includes exchanging approaches to supporting cross-border cultural practices, collectively assessing the impact of different funding modalities, and identifying opportunities for a more coherent and complementary ecosystem. Given the specific challenges of international collaboration, closer connections between funders in this field can enable meaningful knowledge exchange, shared learning, and the dissemination of effective practices.

Co-financing is one important mechanism. By pooling resources, funders can support more ambitious projects, reduce individual risk, and offer greater stability to beneficiaries. It can also improve efficiency by building on existing infrastructures and tested models. However, joint funding requires careful design. Alignment across multiple funders can dilute more experimental or context-specific approaches, leading to more conventional frameworks. Moreover, joint initiatives among several influential funders have the potential to shape sectoral priorities: when funders converge around particular themes, they inevitably contribute to defining what is considered relevant or fundable and establish specific narratives and discourses about legitimacy and role of culture.

Collaboration can help innovate selection and assessment procedures, to reduce burdens on applicants and strengthen trust. Funders could share contextual knowledge, exchange contacts, and draw on networks of local experts to better understand applicants and their environments. This would support more informed decision-making while avoiding extractive application processes. Mechanisms such as cross-referrals between funders could further enhance continuity of support and reduce uncertainty for internationally active organisations.

Beyond operational coordination, collaboration should also strengthen shared discourse and advocacy around trust, reciprocity, and innovation in funding practices. Dedicated platforms—such as regular convenings or an annual forum—could support collective reflection, knowledge-sharing, and coordinated positioning.

Future collaboration among cultural funders could therefore move in three directions. First, more structured exchange on gaps, complementarities, and strategic trajectories, with a view of creating joint schemes to ensure continuity of innovative practices beyond individual programmes. Second, stronger mechanisms for shared learning and public discourse, particularly to influence policy environments. Third, collaborating in ways that remain evidence-based, strategically mindful, and diverse, rather than assuming that more partnership is always better.

Ultimately, collaboration is most effective when it builds continuity, strengthens strategic learning, and enhances the sector's ability to respond to political and structural pressures. It is least effective when it remains symbolic, under-resourced, or leads to the flattening of distinct approaches without meaningful alignment.

Visions for Funding Cross-Border Cultural Collaboration

1. Relevance requires evolving funding, not fixed programmes

In a rapidly changing geopolitical and cultural landscape, funding schemes must remain adaptable. Static priorities and rigid formats quickly become outdated, while flexible frameworks allow programmes to respond to emerging practices, risks, and opportunities in cross-border collaboration.

2. Stability is the missing infrastructure in international collaboration

Long-term partnerships, trust, and shared knowledge cannot be built within short funding cycles alone. Sustainable collaboration requires continuity across phases—from exploration to development and implementation—allowing relationships and ideas to mature over time.

3. Innovation needs structure, not constant restructuring

Combining stability with innovation is a challenge, but it is crucial. Funding bodies should maintain stable core programmes while experimenting through dedicated pilot schemes. It is crucial to test new formats, gather insights, and gradually inform programme evolution, while preserving continuous support schemes.

4. Trust must complement planning in funding design

Cross-border artistic work unfolds through uncertainty. Non-prescriptive applications, flexible timelines, and openness to deviation enable projects to adapt to local realities. Trust-based funding recognises learning, iteration, and adjustment as integral to meaningful collaboration.

5. Support relationships as seriously as projects

Partnership-building, shared inquiry, and network development are not preparatory steps but core components of artistic practice. Funding models should value relationship-building and process-oriented work alongside concrete outputs.

6. No single instrument can meet diverse collaboration needs

Cross-border collaboration spans early exploration, long-term partnerships, experimental pilots, and production phases. A balanced portfolio of funding instruments allows different levels of risk, duration, and maturity to coexist.

Visions for Funding Cross-Border Cultural Collaboration

7.
Start with people, not predefined projects

Many artists lack resources to identify partners and shape ideas before applying. Low-threshold entry schemes can support networking, exchange, and early-stage development without requiring fully formed project plans.

8.
Support trajectories, not isolated initiatives

Multi-stage funding structures allow collaborations to evolve over time. Exploration can lead to development phases and eventually to long-term programmes or infrastructures, strengthening sustainability and impact.

9.
Preserve space for self-defined collaboration

Alongside structured pathways, funders should support existing partnerships and experimental practices directly. This enables organic, context-driven collaborations that combine research, mobility, production, and learning.

10.
Reduce the burden of fitting into predefined boxes and assess vision instead

Simplified applications focusing on intent, collaboration quality, and relevance allow artists to concentrate on practice. Evaluations should prioritise ideas and relationships rather than speculative impacts and rigid KPIs.

11.
Build communities, not just grant portfolios

Facilitated exchanges among beneficiaries enable peer learning, solidarity, and cross-pollination of ideas. Community-building strengthens practices beyond individual projects and supports long-term collaboration.

12.
Funders must collaborate to enable continuity

Innovation within one programme cannot reshape the sector alone. Coordination, co-financing, and shared learning among funders can reduce fragmentation, support sustained collaborations, and strengthen global cultural ecosystems.

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