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To  
Ministers of the Nordic Countries

Zürich, 23.4.2015

## Letter In Support of the Nordic Summer University

To whom it may concern,

We participated in the NSU 2014 Circle 7 on Artistic Research as a group of scholars and artists from Zurich, Switzerland. As members of one of the largest art universities in Europe and spearheading institution in the field of artistic research, we have experienced the Nordic Summer University and its activities as extremely innovative, forward thinking, and a unique place for advanced thought, academic and artistic rigour, and transdisciplinary research. Several scholars with an international outreach, like Erin Manning (Concordia University Montreal), Stefanie von Schnurbein (Humboldt University Berlin), or Bodil Marie Stavnig Thomsen (Aarhus University) guided our attention to NSU.

All of us are currently based at the Zurich University of Arts and are working in the field of artistic research since several years. NSU as an institution and research program with a unique history requires protection and support for the following reasons:

- 1) Exploring NSU from an outside perspective we were very impressed about the open structures, the intensive, transdisciplinary exchange, the wide network and refined research culture it developed over so many years. In our academic careers in different countries across different continents we participated in many conferences and summer schools but have rarely experienced such an advanced place for explorative and foundational research like NSU. We have the highest opinions for NSU's open space for collaborative research practices that on one the one hand suspend conventional forms of fast turnover and shallow results and on the other hand provides a fertile ground for enduring and resilient research collaborations on an international scale.
- 2) We believe that these processes are key for the creation of real academic values and that excellent research can only grow in an environment that ensures sustainable collaborations, a constant exchange of knowledge, and experience over longer periods. The NSU enables such processes and we think it would be a tremendous loss for the academic world and the reputation of the Nordic Countries if NSU could no longer exist in its open, explorative and creative manner.
- 3) One can show the importance of the NSU exemplary with study circle 7 in which we participated. Study Circle 7 on artistic research receives its support by one of the most vivid networks of artists and researchers working at the forefront of a still emerging discipline. After only one year of engagement in this circle we were able to expand our network enormously and become part of a very strong and influential group in the field of artistic

research. Through the on-going exchange with other participants of this circle we were able to build up new collaborations (on an institutional, project based and personal level), we were invited to artist residencies and to do workshops in the Nordic Countries, we were able to engage with and further develop the international discourse about the epistemology and methodology of artistic research and to start working on publications and applications for new research projects.

- 4) Our group in Zurich has been involved in the activities of the SenseLab ([senselab.ca](http://senselab.ca)) one of the most refined places advancing contemporary discourses on artistic research on a global scale. The SenseLab emerged out of a need to establish alternative research platforms for artists and academics to involve themselves in truly explorative and collaborative practices within the framework of higher education institutions. In 2013 The SenseLab and a group of internationally acclaimed scholars and artists in Canada, Europe, and Australia received a partnership grant from the Social Science and Humanities Research Council Canada with research funds of CAN\$ 2.9 million including partner institutions in the Scandinavian countries. Similar to the NSU the SenseLab proves that innovative research practices require new forms of knowledge production including a wide range of disciplines and formats of exchange that do not succumb to conventional ways of knowledge representation. Similar to the SenseLab NSU is one of the few places coping with the requirements of contemporary research relevant for social, environmental, creative, and political concerns on a global scale.

We agree that doubting NSU's academic merits undermines its creative force and outstanding international networks across different research cultures. Discontinuing financial support will come as a loss not only of a strong incubator for advanced research but also as a seizure in the support of transdisciplinary, foundational, and explorative research. This concerns particularly young scholars of whom NSU has always been particularly supportive.

We therefore urge you to reconsider plans for cutting the support of NSU and by that dismantling an absolutely unique tradition of academic and creative research beyond any presumed national, disciplinary, and cultural boundaries.

With kind regards

Amélie Brisson-Darveau, Dr. Christoph Brunner, Sebastian Dieterich, Wiktoria Furrer