

Brännö, Göteborg 2015-04-24

Dear Nordic Education Ministers and advisors,
please find letters of support from Circle 7 Crossing Context Artistic Research at NSU for the preservation of Nordic Summer University,

Ami Skånberg Dahlstedt, coordinator of Circle 7 Crossing Context Artistic Research at NSU

Dr Cecilia Lagerström, Sweden (in Swedish):

Till ministrar och andra berörda,

Jag har deltagit i NSU's konferenser och symposier, i den krets som behandlat praxisbaserad forskning och konstnärlig forskning under åren 2007-2015. I mitt arbete som forskare, regissör, handledare och lektor i scenisk gestaltning har detta sammanhang haft en mycket stor betydelse. Jag reagerar starkt mot förslaget att Nordiska Ministerrådet skulle dra in all finansiering till NSU's verksamhet i framtiden.

Kretsen kring konstnärlig forskning har varit unik på så sätt att den samlar såväl konstnärer som forskare, dvs konstnärer som ägnar sig åt forskningsrelaterad konst i det fria konstlivet å den ena sidan och konstnärer och forskare som är aktiva inom forskning på universitet och akademier å den andra. Forskningsvärlden saknar i övrigt helt och hållet denna typ av forum, ett forum som är av största vikt i ett fält som är under formande där identitets- och metodfrågorna ständigt står på agendan. Också för masterstudenter, doktorander och kollegor, från såväl min egen högskola som andra, har detta forum haft en viktig funktion. Denna krets har spelat en betydelsefull roll i en period när den konstnärliga forskningen växt fram i de nordiska länderna, där det på många sätt saknats vidare tvärdisciplinära forum och där samtalet lätt styrts av ett fåtal akademier med expanderande doktorandverksamhet.

NSU's unika demokratiska styre och former har smittat av sig också i kretsarnas kollegiala samtal. På ingen annan konferens har jag så tydligt upplevt ett demokratiskt förhållningssätt genomsyra former och dialog, och sätta sedvanliga akademiska hierarkier ur spel. Detta har lett till att andra typer av samtal, mer inriktade på forskningens innehåll och möjligheter, än det sedvanliga revirtänkandet och positionerandet som gärna följer i forskningens spår. Jag har upplevt detta som sällsynt och enormt värdefullt, bortom all tänkbar mätbarhet. Det speglar också en lång demokratisk tradition och praxis i de nordiska länderna, och en viktig tanke om forskningens frihet.

Ett annat signum är de experimentella formerna för konferensverksamhet, där kretsen kring konstnärlig forskning utvecklat olika möjliga format, med allt från sedvanliga paper-presentationer till workshops, performance lectures och laborationer. Detta har inneburit att konferensträffarna inte enbart handlat om att presentera färdig forskning utan också att vidareutveckla forskningen i ett direkt möte med kollegor från andra kontexter och länder. Resultaten från dessa experiment och möten har sedan levt vidare i den forskning som bedrivs på olika håll i världen. Detta saknar jämförelse inom forskningsvärlden.

Möjligheten att ta med barn och familj på sommarkonferenserna inom NSU vittnar om en ideologisk tradition där man inte skulle behöva välja mellan arbete och familj, och har möjliggjort för många, särskilt kvinnor, att kunna delta. Detta har också inneburit att barn inskolats i demokratiska tankesätt och intresse för forskning och experiment. Att se en konferensvistelse som en helhetsupplevelse där seminarier, måltider och aktiviteter ingår i ett helhetstänkande och stimulerar oväntade möten och korsande samtal, vittnar om en avancerad och mycket intressant form för forskning och utbyte som torde vara angelägen för andra att studera och ta efter.

Kretsen kring konstnärlig forskning attraherar en allt ökande grupp konstnärliga forskare från samtliga nordiska länder samt deltagare från en mängd andra europeiska länder, som får ta del av nordiska perspektiv på forskning och kultur.

Förutom att utgöra en viktig vital och internationell samlingspunkt för den konstnärliga forskningen i Norden, betonar kretsen tvärdisciplinära möten och gränsöverskridande verksamhet. Sådana möten och experiment över gränserna sker också rent konkret i kretsen, där flera nya samarbeten växt fram vid symposieträffarna. Detta har i sin tur gett utslag vid flertalet konstakademier, forskningsinstitutioner och projekt i de nordiska länderna och exempelvis Storbritannien (inom konferenser, doktorandverksamhet och forskningsprojekt). Symposierna har varit viktiga tillfällen för att utbyta erfarenheter och forskningsmetodik mellan projekt och konstnärer, men också indirekt mellan institutioner och nystartade forskarskolor. Det tvärkonstnärliga anslaget, förekomsten av såväl konstnärer som konstnärliga och vetenskapliga forskare i kretsen, och den öppenhet och nyskapande anda som råder vad gäller arbetsformer och forskningskontexter är styrkeområden som fortfarande gör kretsen och hela NSU's verksamhet till en unik mötesplats.

Göteborg 2015-04-19

Cecilia Lagerström (fil.dr.)

Regissör, forskare och Universitetslektor i scenisk gestaltning

Ämnesföreträdare scenisk gestaltning

Medlem i forskningsplattformen PARSE, Konstnärliga fakulteten vid GU

Högskolan för scen och musik

Göteborgs universitet

Box 210

SE-405 30 Göteborg, Sverige

Professor Esa Kirkkopelto, Finland:

The uniqueness of the NSU relates to the fact that it provides a forum for art universities and the arts field to enter in communication as what comes to artistic research and researching art. Since these are not the same thing. The borderline has to be renegotiated constantly, kept vibrating. All the artists cannot become and should not become academics. The Academic artists should not loose their foothold on the free arts field. In Finland we do not have any forum for these kinds of encounters, except NSU.

Esa Kirkkopelto, Professor of Artistic Research of Performing Arts Research Centre at University of the Arts, Helsinki

Dr Tom McGuirk, U.K.

I have been a participant at the Nordic Summer University's winter seminars and summer sessions since 2010. As an academic, artist and particularly as a researcher, the Nordic Summer University has been an enormous resource for my work. It provides me with a connection to peers in my field, mostly in the Nordic area, but elsewhere as well. In my considerable experience of such institutions, I believe NSU to be unique in its provision of a stable, yet evolving platform for engagement with peers internationally. I have recently co-edited with a Danish colleague, Christine Fentz, an anthology of our Study Circle 7 (2010-2012): *Artistic Research*: Fentz, C. & McGuirk, T. (2015) *Artistic Research – Strategies for Embodiment: an Anthology of Texts and Workshops*, Aarhus, NSU Press. To be published later this year.

In the relatively new discipline of Artistic Research and Practice-Based Research in the arts, the publication of this anthology is a significant event and one that could not have happened without the cooperation that NSU facilitates.

I am Senior Lecturer in Art Theory/Critical Theory the University of Chester and apart from my own financial commitment, our faculty has at times been very generous in funding my attendance at NSU. Indeed in our department's recent submission to the national research audit here in the UK, The Research Excellence Framework (REF), our department's involvement with NSU was emphasised. Partly due to the excellence of my own research – indebted as it is to my involvement with NSU – our department achieved the highest REF results in the entire University of Chester. I don't believe that that success could have been achieved without the help I receive from NSU. And the anthology I mentioned was not taken into account as it has not been published yet. I will rely on it as part of my next submission.

On the point of Peer Review which seems to be an issue. Our Anthology was properly peer reviewed.

On a personal note. I have myself lived and worked in Denmark for five years: 2003-2008. Like others I know who have also lived and worked in Scandinavia in the past, and who are currently involved in Study Circle 7 of the NSU, this provides us with a vital avenue to continue our links and networks within the Nordic countries and to develop new ones. It also provides the Nordic participants with a network in the UK and the Republic of Ireland (where I am from myself and from where others have participated).

Finally can I say that I believe that a varied 'economy' is a healthy one, and this applies to research as much as to anything else. There should be more than one model for research organisations. I believe that NSU provides a viable model, one which produces particularly committed and engaged participants. It is particularly strong in its support for three vulnerable groups: early career researchers, independent researchers and researchers with family responsibilities (often but not always, these are women), allowing them to bring along their family to the Summer Sessions and thus facilitating them in developing their research in these circumstances. I have experienced a short time, between employment, where I was an independent researcher and my involvement with NSU both helped me continue my development as a researcher and ultimately it contributed to my getting a permanent tenured position. If that is not what research bodies are about I don't know what they are for.

I urge you to support the continued funding of what I believe is a venerable and more importantly sustainable Nordic model of a research body, the Nordic Summer University.

See below links to my research web-pages.

Yours sincerely

Dr Tom McGuirk

Senior Lecturer in Art Theory – Critical Theory

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Dr Lucy Lyons, U.K:

I have been part of NSU since 2010. Or should I say NSU has been part of me.

As an artist:

NSU has provided a critical forum for my practice where I have tested work and been inspired by the work of others. It has provided a framework in which work can be developed slowly with input from a number of ‘regulars’ and the views and opinions of newcomers. The chance to reflect and continue developing work over years is one not found at other conferences or symposia. Coming from a field of fine art research and practice based within the field of medical sciences, the inspiration a performative, interdisciplinary, international group have given has been essential to my work. The notions of collaboration and intervention formulated within the themes of the study circle have now become a main focus of my work.

Outcomes:

-Invited to exhibit in group show Ce Qui Fait Fragilité, at Galerie Vivoequidem, Paris, 2014, curated by Emeline Eudes, another member of NSU

-Developing first non-medical based project in fifteen years

<https://scenesofatextualnature.wordpress.com/>

As an academic and researcher:

My research investigates the role of drawing as a participatory activity that embodies knowledge and allows greater appreciation, insight and understanding into phenomena around us, specifically within the context of medical sciences. I have had the opportunity to develop this research thanks to NSU. Here I have been able to test methodologies and explore research techniques within ‘lab’ settings, the results of which have fed directly into my research. NSU’s unique format has allowed

my work to be challenged, guided, and adapted within a non-hierarchical, critical but non-threatening environment of peers. Being influenced by new disciplines I would not have encountered outside the NSU has led to my collaborating on performative presentations. It has been the catalyst for developing new aspects of drawing research and further investigations of themes of intervention and collaborative potentials.

Unlike other symposia and conferences, the format of NSU has given me the chance to develop work slowly over a period of years and allowed me to produce richer more thoughtful work due to this aspect.

My lecture programme and teaching has also been influenced by NSU and I adapt it constantly to incorporate many aspects unique to this institution. Experiences from workshops strategies developed there have helped with my work coordination further research projects.

Outcomes:

-Thanks to links with other academics at NSU I coordinated an international symposium called "Sensuous Objects" in Copenhagen in 2011.

-Published an article - 'Drawing your way into Understanding' article in Tracey Journal of Drawing and Visualisation Research, May 2012 (ISSN 1742-3570) which was based on gathered from sessions at NSU.

-Written chapter 'Drawing embodied knowledge: a dangerous activity' chapter in Artistic research anthology, Fentz C. & McGurick T. (Eds.), NSU

-Coordinator of Drawing Parallels, a 'Share Academy' collaboration between Barts Pathology Museum QMUL and UCL teaching and research collections.

<https://artisticencounterswithpathology.wordpress.com/>

As a person:

evidence

I have met and become involved with artists and academics from fields I would not usually encounter unless participating in NSU. I have collaborated on many interesting projects, visited other venues and institutions in Nordic and Baltic countries and developed strong working relationships and friendships. NSU's unique summer programme encourages participants to bring their children. This has meant my daughter has grown up with NSU. This has given her an open mind and unique perspective on art and academia from a young age. She has made friends from other countries that she sees year after year if not more often and developed language skills and a wider understanding of other nationalities.

Dr Lucy Lyons,
Acting Coordinator Foundation Art and Design City & Guilds of London Art School,
Lecturer in drawing research City & Guilds of London Art School,
Artist-in-Residence and Drawing Parallels project coordinator, Barts Pathology Museum,
QMUL

Magda Mrowiec Visual artist, Scenographer and Educator, France

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A Letter of Support for the Nordic Summer University

My name is Magda Mrowiec, I am visual artist and scenographer.

Native from Poland I am living in France. My artistic practice is nomadic.

Three years ago I was invited to the Circle 7 winter symposium at the School of Arts in Reykjavik. It was the first meeting of the three years cycle dedicated to the theme : « Crossing Context-Interventions through Artistic Research ». Since that first meeting I have attended all the Circle7-symposiums that have taken place and I wish to continue this so much interesting experience.

Why do I wish to pursue the Nordic Summer University experience ?

There are four reasons which contribute that the Nordic Summer University has become an exceptional room of intellectual and artistic sharings :

1) Nomadism – Born in the context of the scandinavian countries and cultures, the Nordic Summer University is a structure which doesn't belong to any place. Or also, any place belongs to the Nordic Summer University. This organizational model, established more than sixty years ago, resonates with the ways of live and thinking of many people at the begining of the twenty first century era. The Nordic Summer University through its nomadic experiences faces up to the reality in connection with our contemporary living conditions as multiple belongings (affiliations) : cultural, territorial, sensorial and emotional.

2) Democracy – The democracy in Europe had started more than 2500 years ago. So maybe, we don't invent anything new setting up a democratic system now days? But however old the democracy has been, by its own definition, it involves a constant renewal and a constant calling into question of our societal systems. The Nordic Summer University has existed for several decades without recours to any leader but only thanks to the will and the intelligence of the participants. This Nordic Summer University experience could become an example as an efficient democratic system.

3) Multiple Languages – The Circle 7 has been created six years ago with the purpouse to develop artistic research. This is a multidisciplinary sharing space where multiple languages meet. For the Circle 7 participants the division between the practice and the theory (in the conventional understanding) doesn't existe. A performance is a way of thinking where the body, the gesture or the voice become language. As well as the using of words is not only reflective but also an empiric and sensorial experience. The artistic research developed in the context of the Circle 7 aims thus to question our contemporary world experimenting and meeting different lanuages of : signes, formes, gestures, actions and of words. This approach is, in a certain way, close to the philosophy of the Sensory Ethnography Lab at the Harvard University. For the director and creator of that laboratory, Lucien CastaingTaylor, the only using of the words is not sufficient to express the complexity of the real world. In this way, these researchers make recourse to experiences and to languages created and used by contemporary artists.

4) My own experience in the context of the Nordic Summer University – My participation to the Circle 7 meetings, coincides with the setting up and the developement my own artistic project : « Urban Dawns ». This is a nomadic, particpative and manyfold project which

aims to explore twelve european cities at dawn. Withing the framework of the Circle7 symposiums and with a great help of its participants I could developpe the performative part of my project. This performative part of the project consists of organising a breakfast at dawn. The Circle 7 context is one of the very rare places where the audience (participants) agrees with the courage and the joy to participate to a lecture outside door before the sunrise.

5) Now, largely thanks to the meetings within the Circle7, the project « Urban Dawns « has been invited to be developed with the inhabitants of Moscow. It is going to take part of the programme of the Museum of Cosmonautics in Moscow during « The Night of the Cosmos » from the May 16th to17th 2015. Your are cordially invited to the nocturnal picnic : « Cosmic Tales » on the square of the Museum of Cosmonautics from 00:30 to 04:14.

Maggie Jackson
Senior Lecture in Art History

I have participated in Circle 7 of NSU for the past five years and am dismayed to learn that the organisation may be in danger through lack of funding. NSU is an invaluable resource for artists and scholars because of its ethos of open minded participation and collaboration within a critical context. It is un usual to find an organisation which fosters a free exchange of ideas without losing any of the intellectual rigour which is necessary to an academic institution. I can testify to the fact that NSU has had a direct influence upon my research and writing, that this can be easily evidenced and that enterprises born out of NSU initiatives were a part of the REF submission at the University of Chester in 2013, to good effect.

It has already been noted by other colleagues that NSU is particularly valuable in fostering the work of new academics and artists, but it also holds true that those with long established track records in more traditional organizations are wedded to the inspiring, creative and productive spirit of NSU. It is very rare to have a successful organisation which attracts an international clientele from diverse backgrounds working productively together year on year. The list of impressive keynote speakers who have graced NSU summer schools bears testimony to the high regard in which NSU is held. The fact that my own University has thought fit to consistently fund my participation in NSU is also evidence of its worth.

I believe that the spirit of NSU is unique and special, in its fostering of the children's circle, its inclusivity and its breaking of boundaries, but I have also always believed it to be an integral part of all that is laudable about Scandinavian culture. As an art historian who has gained an inestimable amount from participating in NSU I am frankly askance that the future of NSU may be in jeopardy.

Yours sincerely,
Maggie Jackson
Senior Lecture in Art History
University of Chester

Luisa Greenfield, visual artist, writer, coordinator, Berlin

Nordic Education Ministers and Advisors

My introduction to the Nordic Summer University was one of those turning point moments in life. In 2011, what I thought was a simple response to a call for presentations at an artistic research conference in Aarhus, Denmark has turned, thus far into a five-year relationship with the Nordic Summer University. In twenty years of working within arts and academic organizations, I can state unequivocally that NSU has been one of the most rewarding, intellectually stimulating and truly democratic environments that I have encountered.

It was clear from the start that forums such as this one are not built overnight. The presentation I gave during the Aarhus symposium consisted of reflections on my recent Fulbright year documenting and researching community gardens in Berlin. The critical but respectful exchanges within NSU's interdisciplinary group encouraged me to take my work in new directions and also prompted my attendance to the summer symposium in Falsterbo, Sweden. I then became a coordinator for the artistic research study circle 7 first with Disa Kamula (FI) in 2012 and for the following three years with Camilla Graff Junior (DK).

NSU is a rare workspace where artist researchers develop ideas in different Nordic and Baltic countries and although it is a migratory body, participants are nevertheless motivated to voluntary committed engagement. In my case, the intense collaboration and camaraderie that was generated through coordinating the symposiums have manifested in several projects generated by NSU that reach out into other academic and arts communities including current collaborations with the Humboldt University of Berlin Department of Northern European Studies, the College Art Association in New York, MoKS artists residency in Estonia and the Month of Performance Art Berlin among others.

The invaluable skills I have learned from exchanges with colleagues in the Nordic arena have resulted in nothing less than a cultural shift within myself. As an American who came to Europe through a program that was established to increase mutual understanding between people through exchange of knowledge and skills, I can say that where I actually experienced true democracy, diplomacy and generosity of spirit was by working with my colleagues in the NSU.

Sincerely,

Luisa Greenfield

Ami Skånberg Dahlstedt, choreographer, film-maker, PhD student, Sweden

I am the new coordinator for Circle 7 Crossing Context Artistic Research at NSU together with the visual artist and PhD student Ilya Noé. I started to present at conferences and symposiums in Finland, the UK, Sweden and the US, already as a master student, and the NSU symposium was something I immediately made obligatory in my calendar. This is the most important symposium I have ever been to. Here, art historians, choreographers, film-makers, philosophers, visual artists, composers, dance historians, educators meet for critical and creative talking and writing, and to collaborate on equal terms. This is the only symposium I have been to in which 'practice' and 'theory' work so well together. I have already started collaborations with artists in Finland, Iceland

and the UK.

The NSU summer symposium is the only academic conference in which children are catered for, they have their own circle and their own activities, which is very important from a gender equality perspective. My teenager sons loved NSU at first sight, and they now have friends in many of the Nordic countries, and also in UK. They have learned so much about languages, culture, democracy, dance, art, craft. Close encounters with nature, Norwegian mountains, Icelandic puffins. At NSU, my husband was encouraged by a Danish professor to apply for the position as Obel Professor at Aalborg University, and he now is.

As one of our participants has said: "It is easy to dismantle something as complex as the NSU but damn hard to put it together from scratch. I can think of many institutions who would be prepared to spend vast amounts of money establishing the structures that the NSU have carefully evolved over many years."

If NSU loses financial support it would be no less than a tragedy, and this is why we need your help to prevent it to happen.

Ami Skånberg Dahlstedt, choreographer, film-maker, writer, PhD student at Royal Holloway, University of London, and one of the new coordinators at NSU.

From Eduardo Abrantes, Sweden/Portugal

To you who are in a position to make a difference,

My first contact with NSU came in 2010, while attending its summer session as a participant of the Artistic Research circle 7. At the time I was based in Copenhagen, having recently started my PhD research in the area of Philosophy at the Center for Subjectivity Research of the University of Copenhagen. Two years after that I moved to Stockholm, where I have recently concluded my PhD research at the Södertörn University. Since 2010 I have attended 8 NSU sessions, including both winter and summer, every time presented my work both individually and in collaboration with fellow NSU participants, and am currently involved in the edition of the upcoming anthology on the theme of "local" within the context of artistic research – composed of critical and artistic work submitted by the participants of the 2013-2015 cycle of NSU artistic research circle.

Like most of my fellow NSU participants I have had a broad and varied international experience in interdisciplinary practice. Having been born in Portugal, and having completed the early stages of my higher education there, I have experienced conventional academia in the context of radically different cultures, and the respective differences in educational systems and tradition between southern Europe and the Nordic countries.

During my PhD research I have researched and taught in Denmark, Sweden and Portugal, and presented my work internationally in three different languages and in more than 30 international conferences, in such countries as Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, UK, USA, Canada, Poland, Turkey, France, Switzerland, Austria, Germany, Estonia, Latvia and Ireland.

In parallel with my academic research, I am artistically educated and a practicing artist, working in the fields of documentary film and sound art in the context of integrated interdisciplinary performative practice.

In sum, I have extensive familiarity with crossing the territories that encompass conventional

academic research, interdisciplinary artistic research and artistic practice.

It is the knowledge and experience gathered from this familiarity that has allowed me to appreciate the nurturing, supportive and highly challenging research community that is NSU.

To speak on behalf of NSU, a unique network of research that is currently under threat, is for me to speak on personal terms, because, as I have made clear, I am personally invested in NSU. This personal investment translates into the work I have produced in the context of NSU, but above all on the collaborative practice that has opened new horizons to the context of my own research, and made me both more open to experimentation and more demanding, having been inspired by the high standard of the cross-disciplinary critical environment I found in NSU.

These are the elements that to me compose the uniqueness and excellence of NSU:

1. It is a community in the full sense of the word. Nomadic in scope, yet concretely situated in its practice, NSU is all about the people who compose it and who are the living resources that constitute its structure, maintain its drive and fuel through their commitment and engagement its constantly renewing critical spirit.
2. It is a true network. It does not rely on a mere broad listing of participants and their respective disciplines together with institutional affiliation. It relies on the sharing of knowledge and resources, on collaboration as a method for creation, and on opening up for long term possibilities of furthering the very understanding of what a network can be.
3. It is radically peer-reviewed in the sense that it is constituted by peers who act like peers. Every participant brings his/her own work into what is essentially a public forum marked by positive criticism, challenging questioning and a supportive ethos based on dialogue and pooling of skills and broadening of interests in order to expand the scope of the individual work, within NSU as well as in the practitioners' own individual careers and respective institutional contexts.
4. It is self-renewing by being both open to new participants, and to the continued engagement of "veterans" who interact in a fully equal footing with the newcomers. NSU is not about perpetuating hierarchies based on seniority, it is about focusing on relevance of content, artistic practice and critical dialogue as tools that both level the "playing field" and challenge the "players" to be the best they can be.
5. It is cost effective due to its high level of reliance of DIY dynamics. Both the organizing and coordinating roles are taken over by participants. In the context of the larger scales summer meeting, the always inspiring "Children's Circle" allows for participants to bring their families, with no age limitations, and to have even the younger ones have an integrated experience of NSU as participants in their own terms and according to their own comfort and creative needs.
6. It is open and representative of the wide diversity of participants when it comes to gender, nationality, ethnicity, career stage or professional context, economic situation, cultural context, language (operating with both Nordic languages and English as *lingua franca*), geographic location and specificity of practice. It thrives on difference, on contrast and diversity of background, on embracing otherness and on non-homogeneity, and as such stands for the values of multi-cultural tolerance and awareness that have been so relevantly highlighted as exemplary in Nordic societies.

Last and most important, NSU should not be penalized by being a successful alternative to conventional academic practice, if anything it should be rewarded. Contemporary conventional academia has become more and more profit driven, sustained upon quantitative indicators of productivity instead of upon quality of research in the sense of its potential to be intervening in society, risk-taking in its questioning, and relevant to the building of a better world. Funding attraction has become the criteria for the investment in the furthering of selective knowledge, and this can only lead to barrenness and the increasing irrelevance of academia as an agent of intervention in society.

NSU stands as an alternative to this. It stands as an alternative by being composed of quite different people who are deeply invested with their time, creative resources and active ethical engagement with the production of knowledge, into opening up a field of experimentation and support it by becoming the kind of community they believe can better nurture cross-disciplinary contemporary relevant research.

NSU is a unique living experiment of collaborative research. It has an inspiring past, an engaged present and needs your support to secure the possibility of a ground-breaking future.

Thank you for your attention and the care given to this letter!

Eduardo Abrantes

(artist, artistic researcher, PhD candidate, Södertörn University/University of Copenhagen / member of Nordic Summer University (NSU) research circle Crossing Context: interventions through artistic research / associated member of R&D Unit on Language, Interpretation and Philosophy, University of Coimbra, Portugal / researcher at Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, New University of Lisbon, Portugal / member of the Nordic Society for Phenomenology / member of Psi – Performance Studies International)

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

To whom it may concern,

please find enclosed our letter outlining arguments and our perspectives on the future developments of the Nordic Summer University.

In light of our appraisal and support of NSU we urge you to further provide funds for one of the most singular and advanced places for contemporary interdisciplinary research on a global scale.

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 Stavning 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) 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,

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Your sincerely,

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