

Under the Protection of the Nordic Democracy & Welfare (Helsinki, 20-22 Oct 25)

University of Helsinki, Finland, Oct 20–22, 2025

Deadline: Feb 28, 2025

Riikka Haapalainen

Under the Protection of the Nordic Democracy and Welfare: artist collectives, collectivism, and activist future-making of the 1970s and beyond (Session of the NORDIK 2025)

The session focuses on artist collectives and collective artmaking in the Nordic countries, especially in the 1970s. The decade is often associated with a polarized atmosphere, radical political positions versus reactionary attitudes. The collectivity that set in, was a counterforce that tested the unity of Modernism, and sought to actively reform art and society.

The 1970s served as a divider, after which society and the economy emphasized human-centered, individualistic ideals of growth, consumption, conformity, and neoliberal market economy. By looking at the activities of the artist collectives of the 1970s and the artistic and social aspirations that motivated them, it is possible to build an understanding of alternative futures.

The currents of student radicalism, experimentalism, and interdisciplinary artistic collaboration of the early avantgarde were carried on in the communal efforts of the 1970s. We can assume that the ideas of collectivity continue in the 2020s, for example in the actions of Extinction Rebellion, artivism and DIY activism.

The session asks whether there is something particularly Nordic in the Nordic artists collectives' activities that Nordic democracy and welfare state model made possible. We welcome both more theoretical presentations and case studies related to artist collectives of the global North in the 1970s and also presentations that discuss the notion forwards and backwards in time. We hope for presentations that study cross-sectoral collaborations related to technology and experimental ecological thinking, but also papers on the efforts to break the authorship and individualism of art through collective pedagogical, partly utopian approaches.

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Please submit your proposal to session chairs by 28th of February 2025.

Keywords: collectivity—collaboration—avantgarde—activism and art—democracy—welfare state

Reference:

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