KÄÄNNE

A new arena for transformative political initiatives.

What happened in Helsinki, and what happens next.

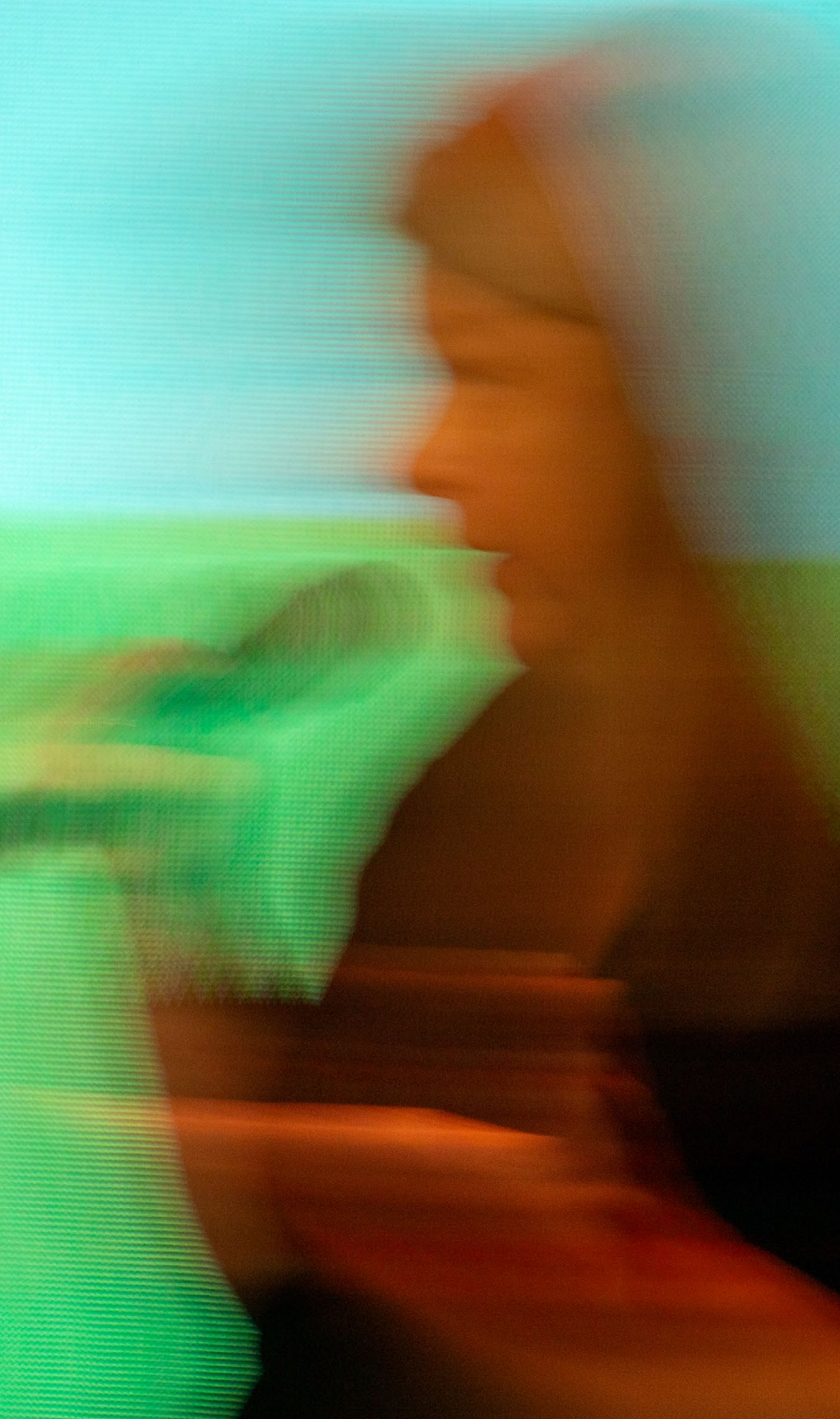




Politics needs a new place.

WE ARE BUILDING ONE. Every January.
In Helsinki. Free.





Why a political festival, and why now

THE WORLD IS IN CRISIS. So are democracy and the biosphere. We did not originate this diagnosis. Study after study confirms a pattern: the closer we drift to the edge, the harder it becomes to steer.

Not everything is failing. In Helsinki a free, activist-run festival has become, in two years, the fastest-growing forum for transformative political ideas in Europe. Three thousand people came in January 2025. Six thousand came in January 2026, with a queue around the block for over an hour on both days, in a Finnish winter. In 2027 we will have twice the room. The festival is funded by Finland's leading foundations, and every euro goes on one thing: a space for politics that is free to enter, open to anyone, and built for imagination and mobilisation rather than management. Even so, we cannot yet meet the demand (only Berghain has longer queues).

Our analysis is simple. In a political climate of high emotion and low consequence, bringing people physically together for two days of politics is a radical act. By people we mean people: not lobbyists, politicians, think-tankers or strategists, though they come too.

The second half of the analysis is that polarisation has to be fought, and we fight it in every session. A former Prime Minister with the economists working on the four-day week. The heads of the trade-union confederation and the employers' federation on the questions the wage round never reaches. A Centre Party elder statesman and a climate activist half his age on what is to be done about the climate. Gaza inside the geopolitical mainstream. At Käänne the binary world does not exist. ⟶

Käänne was founded, and is run, by a rag-tag group of experienced professionals who share a background in activism: the largest vote-winner in Finnish electoral history, a business strategist, a documentary maker, a policy wonk, a communications consultant, a visual artist, and so on.

Our view is planetary; our ground is Europe. We intend to become the standing base for transformative political initiatives on this continent: the place where they are made, tested and carried forward, in the open, free of charge, in front of tens of thousands of people by 2030. Room, in other words, for a European political movement that belongs to no party to take shape, grow strong, and fight the common enemy: the tyranny of no options.

Käänne is political and it belongs to no party. Later in this dossier we explain how. The short answer is the list of who has stood on our stages.

This dossier is an account of two winters and an invitation to the third. If you are reading it, the invitation is addressed to you.

THE KÄÄNNE TEAM
Helsinki, September 2026



Two festivals

96.2 %
would bring a friend

3,000

1 hour +
the queue, around the block, both days

6,000
people, January 2025 to January 2026

45

0 €
the ticket price, because there are no tickets

52
sessions

4.9 / 5
audience rating

KÄÄNNE is two days each January in Helsinki. Science, art and politics in one building, in Finnish, Swedish and English, free of charge. In two years attendance doubled and the building ran out before the demand did.

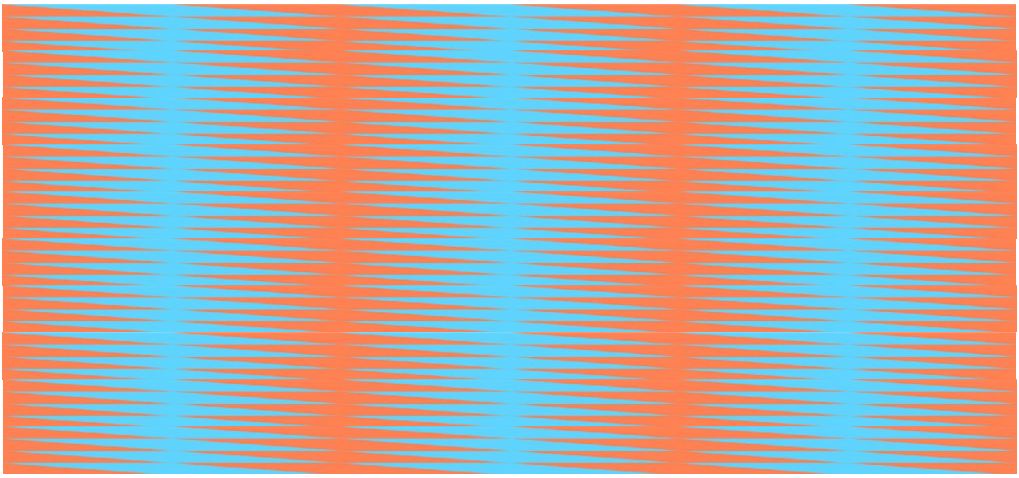
Four ways politics broke

1. Polarisation and encampment

Political debate has organised itself into fortresses. Opponents are read as threats to one's existence rather than as people one might work with. Culture wars and global tension harden the walls. Compromise becomes betrayal and politics becomes a zero-sum game, in which the only outcome worth having is the other side's defeat.

2. A politics that looks backward

Movements on both right and left have stopped describing the future. In its place they offer nostalgia. This is political melancholy, and it substitutes the reactive preservation of the past for any vision of what could come next. Forty years of neoliberal dominance narrowed what parties allow themselves to imagine and locked them into the economic frames they inherited. ⟶



3. A public sphere run by algorithms

Public debate is no longer set by parliaments, parties or newspapers. It is set by the ranking systems of a handful of platform companies, and those systems reward whatever generates engagement. In practice that means conflict and heightened emotion. The result is a set of echo chambers in which positions turn black and white and short-sighted, and politicians, who read the same feeds, adjust their behaviour and their priorities accordingly.

4. The loss of political imagination

The core task of politics is to create alternatives. Over the last decades that capacity has decayed. Technocratic quick fixes have replaced societal vision. Market logic has displaced utopian thinking so thoroughly that even progressive movements have been pushed into defensive positions, protecting what remains rather than proposing what should be.

What the four have in common is separation. Each keeps apart the people who would have to act together for anything to change: voters from parties, unions from employers, movements from ministries, artists from economists. Our answer is a place where that separation is suspended for two days a year. Physical, hopeful, open to anyone, and built on possibility rather than fear.

Literature: Levitsky & Ziblatt 2018 • McCoy et al. 2018 • Fukuyama 2022 • Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser 2017 • McDonald 2019 • Brown 2019 • Zuboff 2019 • Tufekci 2017 • Sunstein 2021 • Mair 2013 • Klein 2007 • Mouffe 2018




ARM

We bring people together gently

FIVE CONVERSATIONS THAT HAVE NO OTHER VENUE IN FINLAND.

Vanhanen and Jouste. Matti Vanhanen, Centre Party, twice Prime Minister, and Pessi Jouste of Extinction Rebellion, on democracy and what saving the planet requires. One of the most crowded rooms of 2025.

Marin and the economists. Li Andersson, Member of the European Parliament and Käänne founder, hosting Sanna Marin, a year out of office, with Will Stronge of the Autonomy Institute on the four-day working week. A former head of government treating a policy still called fringe as a serious one.

Mattei and Blakeley. Clara Mattei and Grace Blakeley, whose books Finnish readers knew only in translation, in the same room as the readers.

The union and the employers. The heads of the trade-union confederation and the employers' federation, who spend each year on opposite sides of the wage round, on the questions neither side can raise there. The session ran over its time.

Mendoza and Teittinen. Martha Mendoza, Pulitzer Prize, and Paavo Teittinen, Finlandia Prize, on how human trafficking is reported and what the work costs the reporter.


MARYAN ABDULKARIM &
HÅI NGUYỄN







MATIAS MÄKYNEN,
JOHANNES KANANEN,
OTTO BRUUN &
LOTTA STAFFANS




-KILPAILU

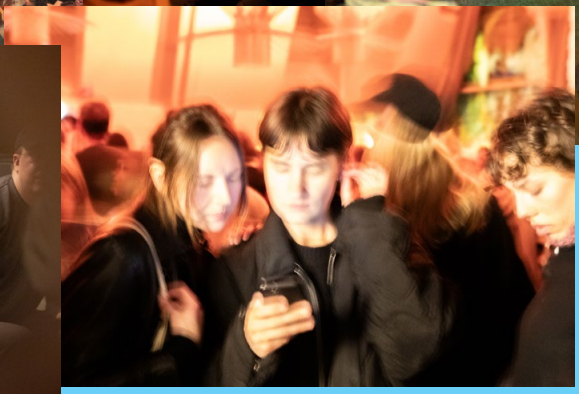



KASVU-
KRIITTISYYDEN
MONET SUUNNA
EKOFASISMIA
VAI OIKEUDE
MUKAISTA
KOHTUUTTA


ENNEN OLI KAIKKI
PAREMMIN! ENTISET
PUOLUEJOHTAJAT
KOHTAAVAT
PERTTI SALOLAINEN,
TIMO SOINI,
ANNIKA SAARIKKO,
ANTTI RINNE,
ANNI SINNEMÄKI,
PAAVO ARHINMÄKI &
JOUNI E. SEVIMA







Who has stood on our stages

SANNA MARIN MATTI VANHANEN TIMO SOINI ANNIKA SAARIKKO PERTTI SALOLAINEN KRISTA KIURU PAAVO ARHINMÄKI ANNI SINNEMÄKI ANDERS ADLERCREUTZ MATIAS MÄKYNEN ORAS TYNKKYNEN MINJA KOSKELA YOLANDA DÍAZ LUCA MESEC CLARA MATTEI GRACE BLAKELEY DANIELA GABOR WILL STRONGE YULIA YURCHENKO SIXTEN KORKMAN JARKKO ELORANTA JYRI HÄKÄMIES JUHO ROMAKKANIEMI JUSSI HERLIN JUHA MAJANEN MARTHA MENDOZA PAAVO TEITTINEN JOAKIM MEDIN MONIKA FAGERHOLM IIDA RAUMA EMMA HOLTEN ANNA MIETTINEN PENNI PIETILÄ FATHI AHMED PESSI JOUSTE

Ninety-seven sessions over two winters.



Based.

From the audience feedback, unedited.

More of this.

No tickets and no charge. That is a really fine thing.

Based

The event was singular. It gave Hope and Belief.

WONDERFUL THAT SO MANY PEOPLE CAME!!! Change IS possible!

4.9 out of 5. 96.2 per cent would bring a friend.





A political party but not party political. How is that even possible?

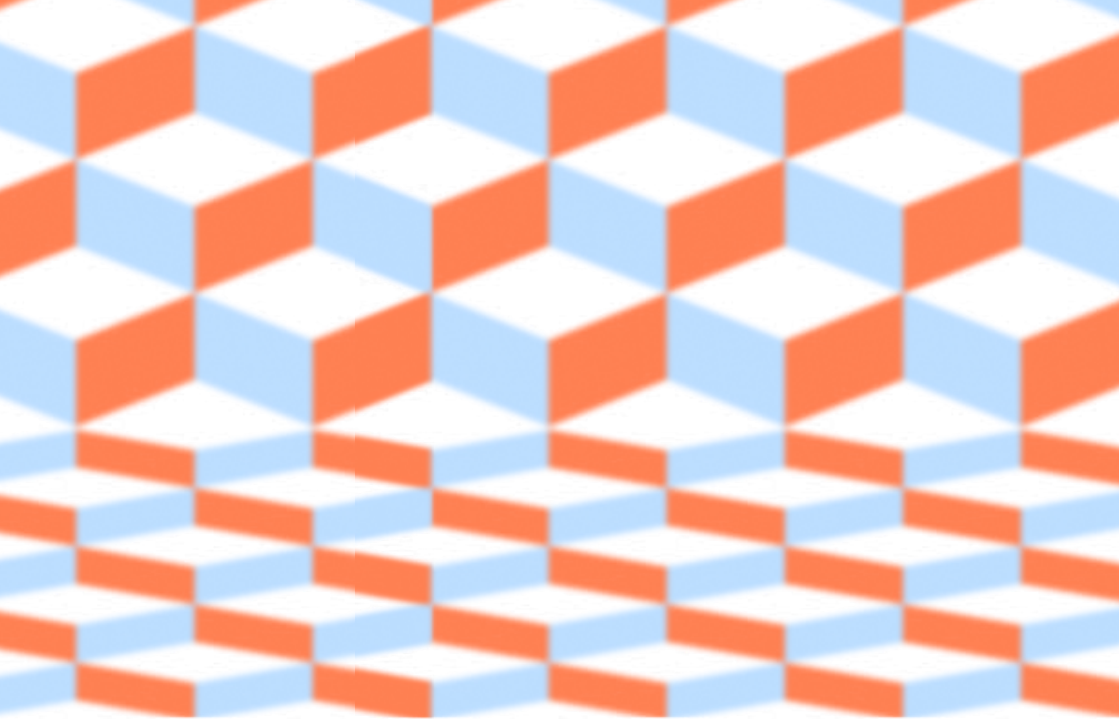
THE QUESTION we are asked most often, usually by people who want to fund us.

Every festival of ideas claims to be open. Most are open the way a party conference is open: anyone may attend, provided they already agree. Käänne set out to be something rarer. The answer is in three parts.

First, we are not neutral. Käänne exists to strengthen the visibility and impact of socially and ecologically sustainable ways of running an economy. We think the present arrangement is failing, and we say so.

Second, we are hospitable to new allies. Our commitment is to the cause, a political turn out of the tyranny of no options, and to no side within it. So we are diligent about inviting speakers and performers from every party that is not openly anti-democratic or racist.* They come because the room takes ideas seriously enough to engage with them properly, and because nowhere else puts them in front of six thousand people who did not vote for them. Some leave with allies they did not have in the morning. ⟶



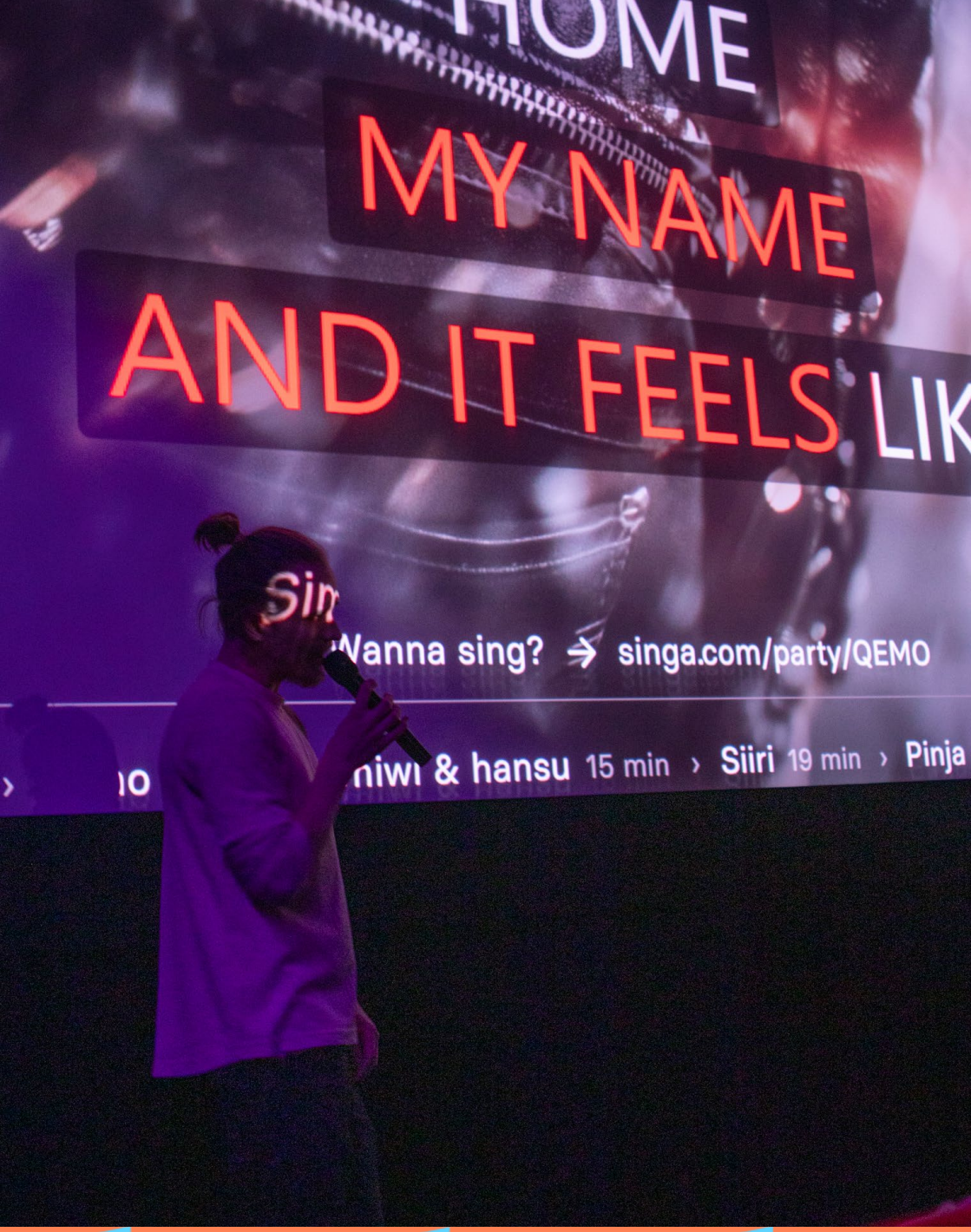


Third, intimacy does the work. Face to face, enemy images dissolve. It is difficult to treat someone as an existential threat after ninety minutes on a small stage and thirty more in the same queue for the bar. Today's political climate rewards the opposite behaviour. Käänne is designed as a counterweight to it.

This is also how a movement is built without a party. Transformative ideas often have majorities behind them already. What they lack is a form: a place where the people who hold them, across parties and sectors, can find each other, put a proposal on the table and carry it home to their own institutions. Käänne is one such form, and by design a physical one, once a year, in public.

The people who founded Käänne come from think tanks, parties, unions, NGOs, universities, theatres, corporations, communications agencies and newsrooms. Several hold or have held elected office. That is how we keep the festival politically relevant. There is no politics without politicians.

** For fellow nerds: we monitor our non-partisanship on five dimensions. (1. Larger questions than real-politics. The economy, democracy, technology, the planet, justice. 2. Politicians come for what they know, not whom they represent. 3. Every political affiliation in the programme is logged. 4. Balance is measured across the whole festival. So far the largest contingent is National Coalition, then SDP. 5. No politician owns Käänne.)*


HOME
MY NAME
AND IT FEELS LIK
Wanna sing? → singa.com/party/QEMO
niwi & hansu 15 min › Siiri 19 min › Pinja



The queue did it

KÄÄNNE 2027. Tanssin talo, Kaapelitehdas, Helsinki. 30 and 31 January.

In January 2026 we doubled the floor space at Korjaamo and it was still too small. Six thousand people came in. For over an hour on both days a queue stood around the block, most of it waiting for rooms that were already full. We read that as a capacity failure, and we spent the spring fixing it.

Käänne 2027 moves to Tanssin talo, the dance house at Kaapelitehdas, the former Nokia cable factory that is now Helsinki's largest cultural complex. Roughly twice the capacity of Korjaamo. Five stages. Kaapelitehdas houses over a hundred artists' studios, ten galleries and several theatres, which gives the festival's artistic collaborations room to grow for years.

Larger rooms mean the sessions turned away in 2026 can be staged in 2027. A larger site means the alliances made on stage have somewhere to continue afterwards.

Where this is going

2025
Korjaamo 3,000 the first Käänne

2026
Korjaamo, doubled 6,000 the queue

2027
Tanssin talo, Kaapelitehdas room for 9,000

2030
over 20,000 the leading arena in Europe for transformative political initiatives, open to anyone and free of charge



What we will talk about in January

Transformative political initiatives. International examples and policy-relevant proposals, presented to current party leaders and to the groups formed to carry them forward.

The ideology of AI. What the technology giants actually want, in their own words and their own plans.

The classic formats. Former party leaders in one room, without their parties. A bedtime-story corner. Party karaoke. Festival cats. One stage left blank, programmed on the day by whoever turns up.

Democratic security. What an intelligence service is for in a democracy. What is wrong with the police.

Late capitalism, three ways. Through animals. Through womanhood. Through the case for taxing the rich.

Hyperpolitics and mobilisation in the 21st century. Why everything is political and nothing seems to change. How to move from mobilisation to movements.

What the environmental movement must do next. Tipping-point diplomacy: what a collapsing Atlantic current does to foreign policy. Ecological reconstruction as an economic programme.

Imperialism now. An international-politics session run as an open question hour, where the audience sets the agenda.

Violence, and the mind. Why men kill women. Mental health as a political question rather than a private one.

Art, class and the body. Art and the middle class. A strand on embodiment.

A corner for charts. For people who want the numbers.

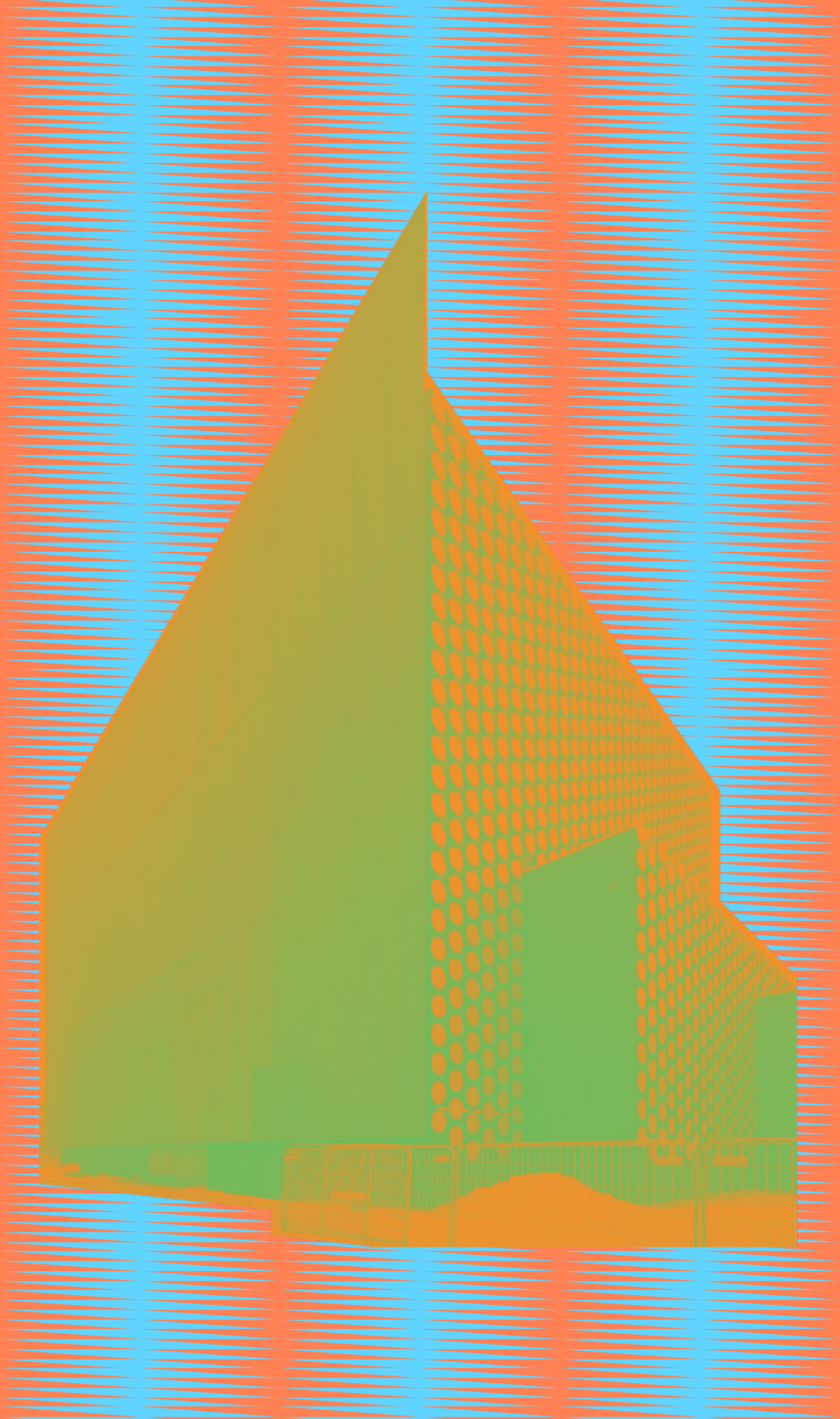
Who makes Käänne

FOURTEEN PEOPLE. **Mimmi Ahonen**, writer and dramaturge, **Li Andersson**, Member of the European Parliament, **Mia Haglund**, Secretary General, Nordic Green Left, **Aleksi Karppinen**, special adviser, **Eetu Kevarinmäki**, producer and visual artist, **Saila Kivelä**, film director, **Sara Koiranen**, playwright, **Roope Mokka**, founder, Demos Helsinki, **Olga Palo**, screenwriter and author, **Henri Salonen**, senior adviser, OAJ, **Alku Sirén**, urban activist, **Touko Sipiläinen**, country director, Greenpeace, **Sara Vainio**, journalist, **Eero Vassinen**, researcher and writer, **Amy Gelera**, art director.

Käänne is run by KÄÄNNE ry, a registered association tied to no party, and largely by volunteers.

ELEVEN FOUNDATIONS AND FUNDS, 2026. Koneen säätiö • Suomen Kulttuurirahasto • TAH säätiö • Nesslingin säätiö • Työväen opintorahasto • Stiftelsen Tre Smeder • Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung • Helsingin Sanomain Säätiö. Koneen säätiö supports Käänne through 2028.

PARTNERS. Puistokatu 4 • Demos Helsinki • Pueblo • SAK • STTK • Schick Toikka



IN THE PRESS. Helsingin Sanomat • Hufvudstadsbladet • Yle

2024
- 5.12. Iltalehti [⟶]
- 5.12. Kansan Uutiset [⟶]
- 5.12. Ilta-Sanomat [⟶]
- 5.12. Suomenmaa [⟶]
- 5.12. MTV Uutiset [⟶]
- 5.12. Yle Uutiset [⟶]
- 5.12. Radio Helsinki [⟶]

2025
- 18.1. Helsingin Sanomat [⟶]
- 18.1. Helsingin Sanomat [⟶]
- 18.1. Ilta-Sanomat [⟶]
- 18.1. Demokraatti [⟶]
- 18.1. MTV Uutiset [⟶]
- 31.1. EDIT [⟶]
- 3.2. Jacobin [⟶]
- 21.8. Hufvudstadsbladet [⟶]

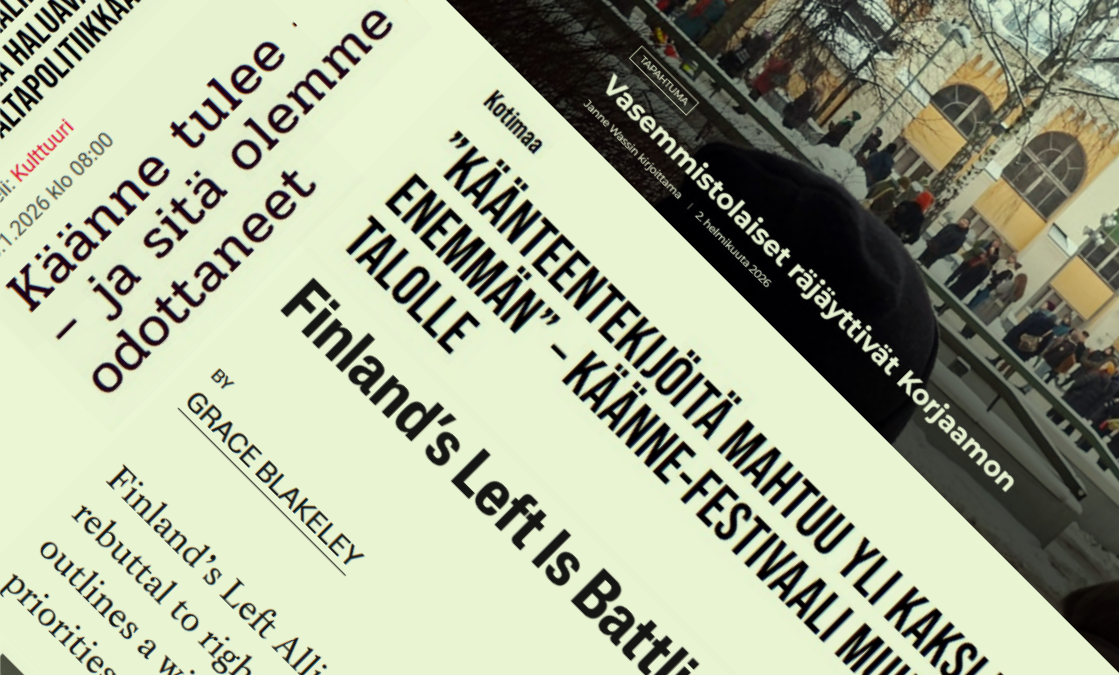
2026
- 13.1. Helsingin Sanomat [⟶]
- 15.1. Hufvudstadsbladet [⟶]
- 15.1. Radio Helsinki [⟶]
- 23.1. Vasen kaista [⟶]
- 2.2. Ny Tid [⟶]
- 10.6. Kansan Uutiset [⟶]

KÄÄNNE 2027. Tanssin talo, Kaapelitehdas, Helsinki. 30 and 31 January. If you would like to be in the room, on a stage or in the audience, write to us.

kaannefestival.fi [⟶] • IG: @KäänneFestival [⟶]

Kotimaa

”KÄÄNTEENTEKIJÖITÄ MAHTUU YLI KAKSI KERTAA ENEMMÄN” – KÄÄNNE-FESTIVAALI MUUTTAA TANSSIN TALOLLE



Finland's Left Is Battling the Far Right

BY GRACE BLAKELEY

Finland's Left Alliance is uniting a left coalition to deliver a rebuttal to right-wing austerity. Former leader Li Andersson outlines a winning playbook that combines environmental priorities with robust workers' rights.



Käänne tulee – ja sitä olemme odottaneet

...li: Kulttuuri
...1.2026 klo 08:00

...A HALUAV...
...ALTAPOLITIIKKAA

Kolumni

Suomen johtava degrowth-liike

Suomalaiset suuryritykset ovat vaipuneet keskinkertaisuuteen ja niitä vaivaa kunnianhimon puute, kirjoittaa HS Vision esihenkilö Anssi Miettinen.

Näin lohkaisi Sanoman ja Koneen entinen strategi **Eero Vassinen**, joka hissiyhtiöstä lähdettyään on keskittynyt järjestämään uutta poliittista tapahtumaa **Li Anderssonin** kanssa. Käänne-festivaali lupasi tuoda yhteen kapitalistit ja antikapitalistit Helsingin ...orjaamolle tänä viikonloppuna.

helsingin pörssin päälista on Suomen johtava degrowth-liike.



Sanna Marin yllätysvieraana Li Anderssonin politiikkatapahtumassa, puhui työviikon lyhentämisen puolesta

Sanna Marin sanoi alustuspu...
LEHTIKUVA

...ersson: ”Det saknas ...lig politisk debatt”

...nte bara vara ...festival

Elokapinan kes...
...äisen yleisö...
...tivaali synny...
...tapahtu...



Photo credits: Henri Salonen, Jukka Vaso, Kalle Erkkilä, Juuli Kangasniemi & Jenni Holma • Layout: Marko Ylitalo