Name: Rebecca Clunn
Email: rebeccaclunn@live.com.au
Skype: rebeccaclunn
Website: http://existenceperformanceart.wordpress.com
www.myspace.com/rebeccalyncunningham
Phone: +61 [0] 7 3122 0346
University: Griffith University
Griffith Business School
Nathan campus Griffith University
170 Kessels Road, Nathan QLD 4111 AUSTRALIA

Title: Operational dynamics of non-hierarchical, organic, informal networks:
an exploration of the global performance art network

Introduction
The global performance art network is central to linking performance artists together and facilitating the generation and continuation of this inspirational and transgressive art medium. However, neither the working intricacies nor the dynamics of this network have been researched to any extent. The global performance art network appears to differ in its operation to many other professional networks, as it presents as a self-organising, self-monitoring, organic system working as an informal network that encourages generalized trust. The network is likely to purport a group or community mentality with its own set of unspoken social rules and norms. Although members herald from all corners of the globe, similar perceptions of humanity appear to be a point of individual members’ commonality with each other, and a strong sense of solidarity and reciprocal altruism is felt, from the Philippines to Chile, Indonesia to Germany, and Norway to Australia. Without the artists and the art itself, the network would naturally cease to exist; this perpetual stream of individuals continually shape and reshape the global
performance art network. The advent of the internet and increased capacity for communication has changed the way this network functions and indeed the practice itself. Performance art has always avoided precise definition, and in doing so tends to remain in a haze of flux, responding to the world in which it exists. However, from its history, one can extract a sense of its essence.

My interest in this study began as I myself am an artist and a member of this network. My experience of the global performance art network in the past three years left me with questions to which I wanted to find answers. I had experienced great generosity, as artists offered time and resources free of charge; I had experienced artists opening up their homes to other artists [such as myself] whom they had never personally met before. I had experienced a sense that there was no formal hierarchy within the sector; observing experienced artists, who in other sectors would be considered to be at the top of a hierarchy, remain approachable, open, and generous. In this sense, the network I experienced tended towards informality, with members operating as sole agents, moving around the network as relationships and resources allowed. In addition, the network formed in an organic fashion, as new members entered and other members left as life allowed, and relationship ties were forged and died away. To begin, I first needed to find out if my experience was that of others in the network. Did other members perceive the network structure to global, non-hierarchical, informal and organic? And what were the operational dynamics at play?

This paper reports on a pilot study of thirteen interviews with the aim of exploring the operational dynamics of the performance art network and thus unfolds in the following order. First, a brief history of performance art, an outline of the practice and the role of the internet will be presented. Secondly, a description and definition of networks, including the structure, formation and governance of possibilities for networks followed by links to the community and
trust literature. Thirdly, I offer details of the studies procedure and findings; qualitative data derived from semi-structured interviews with artists will be presented in this paper; both convergent and in-depth interviewing practices have been utilized. Within these interviews, questions are asked in order to delve into the structure and operation of the global performance art network. The findings show the activity and ideologies of the performance art practice is reflected in its network structure and operation and that the network functionality is “glocal”, non-hierarchical, organic and informal. In addition, the networks functional dynamics include elements such as respect, cooperation, honesty, generosity and trust. The finding are followed by theoretical implications, this studies limitation and concludes by outlining plans for future research in this area.

1: PERFORMANCE ART
A Brief History

Performance art is a unique genre within the broader artistic domain of the performing arts. Although there are many terms to describe it, from action art, body art, live art and performance to name a few, within this study, the term “performance art” will be utilized throughout (Nieslony, 2010a). Performance art and its surroundings have changed since its emergence around 1960. If we were to trace back its steps, we would see performance art emerged from the actionists [painters/theatre makers], and from the cultural movements of Futurism, Dada, Happenings and Fluxus (Goldberg, 1979, 1998). In the case of visual arts, the removal of the canvas left the body in action in space. In the case of theatre, the removal of words left the body in action in space. This became the realm of performance and more poignantly, performance art. Performance art has continued to evade definition and institutionalisation for decades while every artist claims their own definition of their practice (Goldberg, 1998;
Performance art has had a long tradition of community involvement and political activism; a focus on humanitarianism, activism, and the live moment. In a time of ‘crises’ where the world is facing the difficulties posed by the 21st century; performance art can jolt us, shift our perceptions, and provides a moment to pause, ponder, and asks us to question everything. While performance artists draw upon historical arts practitioners and practices for inspiration, the genre tends to push the boundaries of our experience by moving beyond a regular canvass or an identifiable stage designed for a particular purpose. Traditionally, performance tends to infer the imaginary, the pretend, or surreal. Performance art however essentially seeks to strip away any façade, with many artists looking to the real, the live moment, and the ritualistic for sources of meaning and connection (Goldberg, 1998). Performance artists perform real actions; for example, an actor may pretend to bleed; a performance artist will literally bleed (Ayers & Abramović, 2010). Another feature of performance art is the blurring of boundaries between the “artist” and the “audience.” Performances may occur in a variety of settings, from a gallery, to the street, and artist’s performers may interact with the audience and attempt to open a dialogue. The experience can be quite moving, even extraordinary, with this opting for the real moment of meeting, the ephemeral contact, allowing space for transformation (Frangione, 2007; Heathfield, 2004; MacLennan, 2004). Developing this sense of connection requires a certain personal openness and sense of generosity, which forms the basis of my proposal that the global performance art network earns its functionality from the perceptions and values of its members and their practice. Thus the network embodies this sense of openness, and egalitarianism.
Global Performance Art Network – Online
Performance art practices today are in some ways similar to the practices that took place forty years ago, with many of the symbols, materials, and intentions still in high circulation. One major change, however, is that of technology, with artists utilizing the possibilities new technology brings to various degrees: some artists choosing to remain low-tech and seeming to accept technology begrudgingly, with others surging forward and using technology as the primary medium and location for their work. In the 90s with the proliferation of the Internet, performances could go ‘live’ with artists utilizing freeware broadcast their works. Now in 2010, artists are using freeware such as Skype and vimeo to communicate their messages. Some artists also began making personal websites and uploading documentation images and video streaming on their sites, so their performances can be viewed at the viewer’s leisure anywhere around the globe. Digital archives and online documentation techniques are also becoming more and more popular. This represents a great innovation in that geographically isolated performance artists living in many parts of the world can now present and promote their works online. Examples of presentation utilizing online streaming are artists such as Colm Clarke who was involved in an event called “exist-ence” that I curated in January 2010. One this occasion the online freeware program called “Ustream” was used to send live images of his performance in Belfast, Ireland to the venue in Brisbane (Cunningham, 2010). Examples of promotion are the countless event pages on facebook and myspace and other social networking sites set up by artists. The internet has sped up the way the network keep informed of each other’s practice, as it allows artists to see each other’s work and relationships can be built without having to rely on local contact. There are numerous email lists, some arranged by
organisations, such as FADO and New Work Network, are sent out at regular intervals. Other lists are individual, such as the “live art list”, the “IAPAO” list, the “performance art google group” and many others. These lists are free to join, where anyone can find out what events are happening around the world, and post their own calls, questions and promotions – simply by sending an email to that list it is automatically posted to hundreds of subscribers instantly.

Although performance art has a priority on the live exchange, there continues to be much talk of documentation so that events are not lost into the ether, but maintain some trace of what occurred (Wheeler, 2003, p. 497). Some examples of online archives include ASA-European (Nieslony, 2010a), NEW MOVES INTERNATIONAL (International, 2010), Performalogica (Performancelogia, 2010), Indonesian Art Digital Archives (Archive, 2010) and Agor8 (McBride, 2010). In the last two decades, globalisation of the form has allowed transitivity between artists and the internet has played a leading role. In view of these changes, the heart of performance art remains steadfast in the present, perpetually concerned with interpersonal engagement and transaction.

2: Networks

In order to come to a clearer picture of the network, a definition of a network must first be defined and various network attributes discussed. The study of networks is closely connected to that of communities; thus a brief overview of related community types and characteristics will be outlined.

Defining networks

When coming to a definition of “networks” there are many. For example, Brass defined a network generally as the quality of a relationship between sets of nodes and ties (Brass, Galaskiewicz, Greve, & Tsai, 2004). Barringer and Harrison define networks groups of
organizations that work together through a series of social contracts and occasional legal contracts (Provan, 2007, p. 481). Within this study, I have synthesised an array of definitions to a singular definition that I perceive best represents the global performance art network: a collection of individuals “nodes” connected by a variety of multi-faceted relationship “ties” that may be connected together by particularly active members or events within the network, which work together for a similar goal.

**Network Structure**

A social network is flexible entity, a living moveable feast of activity, from minute to minute, day to day, week to week, the dynamics of a network change (Adler, Kwon, & Hecksher, 2008; Alder, 2008, p. 363). As social networks are made up of a series of individuals, they may be viewed as having a social structure (O'Toole, 1997). According to Bourdieu and Colman (1991, p. 2), a social structure is “organic” and grows incrementally. These social structures may be categorized as being either constructed/formal or spontaneous/informal. The quality of the ties within this social structure, or network, defines whether the structure is constructed or spontaneous. Max Weber describes a “constructed” or formal organisation as being part of a “rationalization” of that society (Bourdieu & Coleman, 1991, pp. 3-4). In this sense, a constructed formal social organisation, such as a corporation, could be viewed as being more positive and progressive than an informal, spontaneous social organisation (Bourdieu & Coleman, 1991, p. 3). However, this is not a universally held view, as economist and philosopher, Friedrich Hayek regarded social spontaneous social organisations as often performing better and more positively than constructed, formal social organisations (Hayek, 1973). Within spontaneous networks, there may be instances where each tie may not only be dependent on one another, but be dependent on a third party as in the case of A knows B and
B knows C, so C knows A through B (Bourdieu & Coleman, 1991). Such contingent behaviours implies trust on behalf of the dependent parties on the referrers opinion (Kramer & Tyler, 1996).

**Network development or evolution.**

Provan asserted that there had been little academic discussion on the evolution of networks, how network structure matures, and how multilateral relationships develop within networks (Provan, 2007, p. 489). In Provan's comparative study, two broad categories of network development findings became apparent, namely: network attributes and processes, such as structure, development and governance; and network outcomes (Provan, 2007, p. 489). Social networks, such as the global performance art network are made up of and developed by a range of actors (Levin & Knutstad, 2003). When these actors meet and interact multiple times, the density of ties within the network increases (Granovetter, 1985). Provan argued that in networks such as this, that tie density will increase over time allowing clusters to emerge within the network (Provan, 2007, p. 502). In addition to clusters appearing, Provan hypothesised that individuals or “key nodes” are likely to emerge and that these individuals will be highly influential in the development of the network (Provan, 2007, p. 502).

**Network governance**

Network governance is a topic that has been especially studied within the business sector (O’Toole, 1997). However, when it comes to different types of networks, specifically social networks, the perspective on governance shifts as you are no longer looking at a single organization. When a network is a group of autonomous organizations or individuals it may be governed in a variety of ways. Different governance styles, such as informal or formal,
Networks and Communities are closely linked, and may be thought of as the same topic being viewed through different lenses. While networks are described as individuals or groups working together via a series of ties, a community may described as “a web of social relations held together by a variety of circumstances: common interests, strong shared values, feelings of solidarity, or coincidence” (De Cindio, Gentile, Grew, & Redolfi, 2003, p. 396). In order to fully understand networks, one must understand the community/communities that reside therein and in order to understand a community, one must understand the network structure from which it operates (Venkatesh, 2003, p. 339). In order to understand the network structure, one needs to know the network’s origin, how it has developed, and how it is changing.

Communities are observed and researched in a variety of ways, and these methods have evolved over time, just as community types have developed over time. Ferdinand Toennis observed the practices of individuals operating in a society [Gesellschaft] and in a community [Gemeinschaft] over one hundred years ago (Toennis, 1887). Today social scientists are still...
describing the way societies and communities evolve. Research into specific types of communities – a collaborative community and online communities, is pertinent to this study as there appears to be a confluence between descriptions of networks style and community type that may best describe the location and operation of global performance art network. The review of the community literature will be confined to these settings.

Collaborative Community

A collaborative community stands apart from other community styles in its unique social structure that promotes the horizontal organization of mutually dependent labour processes (Adler, et al., 2008, p. 366). This lateral organization for work differs from the classic mechanised division of labour (Adler, et al., 2008). Another distinctive feature of a collaborative community is that it is specifically developed for a shared purpose (Adler, et al., 2008; Heckscher, 1995). This propensity to collaborate based on similar goals links back to the goal-orientated networks, and their likelihood to have higher productivity when they share a similar goal (Provan, Fish, & Sydow, 2007). Communities also tend to grow exponentially when there is an element of commonality; whether that be a common goal, values, similarity in their social or personal identity make up. When individuals recognize these commonalities it allows them verify an alignment and sameness one with another. As Seligman eloquently describes, “Sameness then is the precondition for mutuality and collective self-affirmation” (Seligman, 1997, p. 45).

Adler says that the social mechanism of a community based organisation [such as the global performance art network], is trust; elements of control are exercised limited to inputs; interdependent tasks fit this network best, where favours, gifts and know-how are exchanged; the terms of the exchange are diffused as reciprocity is generalized rather than being specific
and the terms of the exchange remain tacit (Alder, 2008, p. 360). Structurally, network ties within a collaborative community are more likely to be more open, global, with stronger local ties; trust is founded on one’s ability to be friendly, to care, to contribute, and to be truthful, while authority will only be given if it is found to have value-rationality (Alder, 2008, p. 366). Collaborative communities also have concurrent levels of individualism existing alongside values of collectivism. As trust is a significant element of this community further detail shall now be expounded upon.

**Trust in communities**

Trust has been explored in a variety of fields including psychology, sociology, anthropology, economics, and each field has defined “trust” in its own way (Gambetta, 1988; Misztal, 1996). However, scholars can agree that in some form or another, trust must exist for humankind to function as a society (Arrow, 1975; Lewis & Weigert, 1985; Luhmann, 1979). However, within this study, the focus will be on interpersonal trust, and trust within a community group. Once trust is embedded within a social community it tends to recreate itself, as trust promotes cooperation and cooperation breeds trust; thus making a potentially complete circuit of positive interactions (Putnam, 1993). Upon looking at many various ways to understand and define trust, I have chosen the following definition underpin in the usage of the term within this study, as to the best of my knowledge and experience of the network, this definition by Hosmer best reflects the trust displayed within the global performance art network. This definition includes the aspect of ethics, which plays a part in the making of the values systems and rules, which circulate within the global performance art network.

“Trust is the expectation by one person, group, or firm of ethically justifiable behaviour – that is, morally correct decisions and actions based upon ethical principles of analysis- on the part of the other person, group, or firm in a joint endeavour or economic exchange.” (Hosmer, 1995, p. 399)
When looking at trust, it is important to consider the impact of cooperation as cooperation, which is linked to trust so much so that cooperation is manifested when trust is enacted (Good, 1988). Simultaneously trust is a requirement of cooperation as if one chooses to cooperate there remains a risk that the other party will not reciprocate (Williams, 1988). This makes cooperation and trust co-dependent properties of the other and assist to “lubricate” network and collaborative community (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998, p. 255). An example of a collaborative community may be some styles of online communities.

**Online communities**

A community has long been thought to be related to a “specific locality” however thanks to the World Wide Web, communities are no longer bound a single geography, but may exist across space and time in online communities (Venkatesh, 2003, p. 339). The “virtual community” has gained great popularity in recent times (Rheingold, 1993) however, there are many authors that shy from this term, as the term “virtual” can be somewhat ambiguous (De Cindio, et al., 2003, pp. 395 - 396). Rather, they are deemed “network communities” or “online communities” (Preece, 2002). Within these communities, there is a subset of “normative communities” which as those in which “members share rules for behaviour” (Carroll & Rosson, 2003). These “norms” of behaviour may be linked back to a set of “social rules” that have built up over time. These rules may be implicit [such as those in virtual communities as *netiquette*] and new members are slowly educated by long term members, where small deviations from the rules are understood by members to be “part of the learning process” which in time feeds into the communities sense of social capital (De Cindio, et al., 2003, p. 396).

This sense of connectivity and collaborative camaraderie is what inspired the study in the first instance. The pilot study and its findings will now be outlined.

### 3: The Study, Procedure & Findings
The Study

A sample of over 70 potential interviewees were selected and contacted using convenience and quota sampling to provide a qualified cross-section of the network (Neuman, 1997, pp. 204-222). These artists and curators are located around the globe and at varied stages of their careers, ranging from less than 10 years in the network to greater than 30 years. Ultimately, this group will be represented in the sample in my future research. Within the pilot study reported here, 13 participants were interviewed heralding from five continents. This sample is hence by no means an indicator of the network at large but provides a beginning in discovering the perceptions of the network operations from various geographical locals.

The pilot study aimed to gain insight into the performance art network and contribute to the development of the parameters of the wider study. Within this pilot study, I conducted a series of semi-structured interviews (Fontana & Frey, 2001, p. 660). Three interviews took place in person and the remainder took place by mediated means, including phone, video phone and Skype, which appropriately links with the nature of the global network.

The follow demographical information of the participants includes their sex, age, continent of birth and number of years in the field - Interviewee #1, female, 32, Europe, seven years in the field; Interviewee #2, female, 30, Australia, seven years in the field; Interviewee #3, male, 24, Europe two years in the field; Interviewee #4, female 43, Europe, eleven years in the field; Interviewee #5, female, 24, Mexico, six years in the field; Interviewee #6 female, 27, Europe, six years in the field; Interviewee #7, female, 27, Europe, four years in the field; Interviewee #8, female, age not disclosed, Europe, twenty-two years in the field; Interviewee #9, female, 55, Australia, thirty-five years in the field; Interviewee #10, female, 27 Australia, three years in the
field; Interviewee #11, male 30, Europe, eight years in the field; Interviewee #12, male, 56, North America, thirty-eight years in the field; Interviewee #13, male, 65, Europe, forty-four years in the field.

Procedure

Each interview had a duration of approximately one hour, during which I asked questions allowing participants to expand upon their creative practice, their perception the networks operation and their individual experiences within the network (Riege, 2008). Each interview was recorded after interviewees consent, and later transcribed. Each transcript has been subjected to initial coding and preliminary thematic analysis. Ultimately this process will be reflected upon and further developed analytically. In order to conduct the preliminary thematic analysis, I deeply immersed myself in the transcripts and audio recordings for some days without distraction from other texts.

Findings

From the thirteen interviews undertaken, it emerged that indeed, there is a global performance art network but it is perceived as a series of glocal networks what are non-hierarchical, organic, informal networks. Once it was ascertained that indeed these are network characteristics, operational dynamics were explored. It was found that dynamics of respect, cooperation, honesty, generosity and trust were important in maintaining relationship ties within the network. Without these attributes, it was thought that the network would cease to function.
The findings will be presented by way of themes; global/glocal hierarchy/non-hierarchy, constructed/organic and formal/informal. These themes will be followed by what emerged to be the operational dynamics being that of respect, cooperation, honesty, generosity and trust.

**Theme 1: Global/Glocal**

The term glocal was not used by the participants but was coined by Manfred Lange in the late 1980s (Friedman, 2006). The term was then expounded in Friedman’s “The World Is Flat” when describing the operation of localized networks that although had a global perspective maintain local members and nuances (Friedman, 2006). When participants were asked about their experience in the global performance art network, many asked “which one” [interviewee #s 3, 5, 6, 10 and 11]. Although participants may have worked in various parts of the globe, the “networks” were thought to be regional such as the IAPAO network [online], Performalogue [online predominantly South American artists], New Work Network [online, UK], the “European network” the “London network” and others. Interviewee #12 said that “there are different networks that one is a member of and they change as time goes past”. None of the participants noted any cohesion between these networks, although some artists do transverse between them [interviewee #1, 12, 13]. In addition, it was noted that performance art collective *Black Market International (BMI)* consists of 12 individuals heralding from five continents who have been working together since 1985 [interviewee #12] (Nieslony, 2010b). This is one example of a group of artists spanning the global networks, and many members of this group also curate festivals within the cities where they live; for example, Helge Meyer curates the event “Art of Encountering” in Ilsede, Germany and Lew Wen, the “Future of the Imagination” in Singapore [interviewee #12]. This is not to infer that Black Market is the only international performance collective, but they are a strong example of how individuals who work together over a long period of time become integral members of the network at large and also create smaller local networks around individual members in their home towns [interviewee #12] thus strengthening
the local sector. The presents and experience of many glocal networks does not negate the existence of a global performance art network, however, further research is required to map and analyse this overarching network.

**Theme 2: Hierarchical/Non-hierarchical**

To say that the network is in and of itself absolutely non-hierarchical would be erroneous. When I asked interviewees whether they though the network was hierarchical the majority replied “yes”. However, upon further questioning it was uncovered that this hierarchy is different to that of a corporation. In addition, participants experienced two spheres at work. On the one hand, a more formal hierarchy appeared in locals with more infrastructure and financial support for the form. However, where there are fewer infrastructures, less money, and more artist-run-initiatives operate, less hierarchy was experienced. It should be noted that within the artist-run-initiative sphere, there is still an informal hierarchy, which participants likened to a “tribe” [interviewee #s 3,5,10] or even a “family” [interviewee #1]. There appeared to be an “old guard” [interviewee #9] which consisted of members of the network how have been involved since the inception of the form. There was general consensus that this respect was deserved as those members had “earned their stripes” [interviewee #9]. Even though some individuals are offered elevated positions within the community, it was thought that majority of those individuals do not subscribe to this hierarchy. The sentiment was appreciated, but they do not perform in a fashion that perpetuated the hierarchy. These positions were earned and offered rather than claimed. Interviewee numbers 12 and 13 are considered to be members of the “old guard’ by many members in the network. When I questioned interviewee #12 if he experienced the network to be hierarchical or non-hierarchical, interviewee #12 said that there is most certainly not a formal hierarchy, but rather that these notions are in the “eye of the beholder” [interviewee #12]. Interviewee #13 said that although there were some networks that operated hierarchically, he was not interested in those networks. In the early 1980s interviewee #13
stated to have been involved in the forging of European networks that started as egalitarian, non-hierarchical networks, however, in time, hierarchies developed. Individuals within the network then worked very hard to bring the network back to its former structure again. Interviewee #13 also said that there were times when a hierarchy emerged and could not be shifted, and in these instances he chose to boycott that particular network and moved on with others which were non-hierarchical. It was reported that “high levels of attrition” exist within the performance art sector and indeed the arts sector in general; this may have some impact on the respect offered to artists that have been in the field for a long time [interviewee #12]. However, how those individuals who are offered positions of respect and elevation respond to the position is completely individual. Interviewee #12 listed a number of famous performance artists who he said are some of the nicest people he’s ever met. Interviewee #12 also talked about a “cosiness” that “familial” that can occur at meetings such as festivals, which can on the flip side be experienced by some as “cliqueyness”. Also, that although there is not an intention of hierarchy there may be an experienced one, again, dependent on the “eye of the beholder”.

Theme 3: Constructed/Organic

All participants agreed that the global performance art network is an organic network. One participant thought it should be more constructed [interviewee #4] and this desire was to allow for better communication within the network. This notion of the network being organic included the organic nature of network membership and network development. Interviewees 5, 6, 7, 8 and 10 all spoke of their joining the network simply by making work. By being active, membership was immediate. Membership of the network is flexible, organic and informal, with new members added if and when they decide to take part, and members falling away, when demands on time and life change, and may reconnect when life allows. Thus, the network provides a lateral mobility between members occurring whenever there are events, and resources for artists to access. This flexibility and mobility within the network builds its own
momentum. This organic mobility is important when it comes to artists moving work. As artists, each of course wants to present their work in various festivals and events, with more artists than events, and more events than funding, there is bound to be competition. However, it was thought that this completion was “healthy” [interviewee #8] and that it was relationships rather than money was important in the mobility of artists. All participants agreed that the most important meeting was that of the live meeting, at festivals and events. There were some that also used the internet to meet new artists [interviewee #s 9,10] however, the live meeting was always preferred. Festivals and events also play a role in the maintenance of the network, as the live meeting of artists, some known, and some only known via online communications, sparks connections that had been previously only potential or dormant. The global performance art network operates as an informal knowledge network. All participants mentioned the usefulness of information being shared via online social networking websites, such as Facebook, Myspace, LinkedIn and personal artist and event web pages and email lists [previously mentioned]. These immediate connections make maintaining relational ties within the network expeditious and organic.

**Theme 4: Formal/Informal**

The majority of participants agreed that the network is an informal one. Some respondents referred to the larger events and festivals which are based on more traditional organizational models which are more formal. However the majority of the networks activities, particularly that of the artist-run-initiatives was experienced as very informal. Interviewee #13 spoke of the paradox that exists within this property of the network – that to be truly informal one must first by very formal in its processes, very organized. This allows the sense of informality to exist and infer the approachability of members, without detracting from a high level of professionalism exhibited throughout. The notions of its informality linked back into the spontaneous organic functionality of the network. Often within the performance art network, artists are invited to
festivals based on recommendations of other artists. This is a strong example of contingent behaviours which implies trust (Bourdieu & Coleman, 1991; Kramer & Tyler, 1996). For example, I was invited to a performance art festival in Vietnam in 2010 called DOM DOM, which is curated by an artist who I have never met, based on a recommendation by an artist from Myanmar whom I have only had email contact. Personally, I have also invited artists to perform at festivals I have curated based purely on other curators and artists recommendations. Interviewees #1, 9, 12 and 13 also reported this experiencing and enacting this method of working and curating.

Thus concludes the preliminary findings on the structural properties of the global performance art network and we move onto the operational dynamics of this network.

Operational Dynamics

In order to ascertain the operational dynamics of the global performance art network, I asked interviewees questions about their experience and perceptions of the network and the artist community. To describe the network, interviewees were using terms such as “family” [interviewee #1], “supportive” [interviewee #2, 7, 8] a “strange tribe” [interviewee #3 quoting Guillermo Gomez Pena], “fantastic” [interviewee #7], “open” and “warm” [interviewee #10] and a notion of “kinship” between its members [interviewee #12]. There were those who felt isolated, saying “network...what network...it is disjointed” [interviewee #9] and that there tended to be cliques noticing that the same people were being chosen for various festivals which made the network feel quite small, especially if you weren’t in that clique [interviewee #s 4, 11 and 12]. Key factor of the networks operational dynamics that continued to emerge were those respect, cooperation, honesty, generosity and trust each of which will now be discussed in turn.

1: Respect
Respect was spoken about not only in terms of showing respect to each other as decent human beings, but that there would be a respect for the work. Interviewee #9 talked at length about plagiarism, and how that for them is one of the most fundamental social rules. If you deliberately plagiarise another artist's work, there is a basic lack of respect. Respect was also mentioned within the context of the work, specifically in regard to the relationship between the artist and audience. Interviewee #6 recalled an incident during a performance where she had exposed her genitals to the audience and an audience member, reportedly lacking respect for the artist's personal space, attempted to penetrate the artist's vagina with their hand. This attribute of respect and risk links in with the artist's reliance on trust, especially when it comes to the relationship between the artist and the audience as in some instances, the work blurs the boundaries between the two [interviewee #1,2,6,12].

Respect also was mentioned when talking about social rules with the network; social rules such as knowing when to be kind about another performer's work, and when to offer constructive criticism [Interviewee #7]. Finally, respect also emerged when talking about a hierarchy or lack of hierarchy within the performance art network, as many noted that there is a respect for artists who have been in the field for many years [Interviewee #1, 4,6,7,8,9,10,12,13].

2: Cooperation

Cooperation emerged when talking about the activity of artist-run-initiatives and their reliance on volunteer workforces. Interviewee# 3, 10 and 12 all spoke about the risks involved when relying on a volunteer workforce. The social contract between the two parties is based on trust and mutual cooperation rather than a sense of obligation which often inhabits a financial contract. Cooperation and trust are tightly linked as was seen in the literature on a collaborative community as cooperation is manifested when trust is enacted (Good, 1988). Cooperation is also at work when performances make work together [Interviewee #13].
Interviewee #13 spoke of a performance collective “Black Market International” [previously mentioned] who cooperate in performances. “Black Market International” is made up of twelve members [although this is flexible], and the performances operate as each performer makes their own work simultaneously to each other in the same space “in parallel” each the other [Interviewee #13]. Interviewee #10 also mentioned the need for cooperation in performance, as in some instances it may be necessary that parts of a performance or performance preparation be undertaken by other people on the artist’s behalf. This sense of cooperation may not be unique to the genre of performance art, as it may appear in other forms of collectives [bands, theatre groups, etc], but is an important observation none the less.

3: Honesty

When asked if there were any social rules at work within the network, Interviewee #5 said that honesty is very important. And Interviewee #8 talked about being true; true to your work and true to yourself to be successful in performance art. Interviewee #12 said that if a piece of performance art is “going to be any good, it has to be honest.” Honesty was also mentioned when it came organizing and artist-run-initiatives, as artists often are invited to events by email, sometimes not knowing the organizer. As artists often travel to events at personal financial expense, there must be trust that when they arrive, there will be an event, and that the organizer can and will provide what they have outlined in prior correspondence. Interviewee #11 spoke about an instance in a festival where his expectations were not met. This artist arrived at an event after being told that accommodation would be provided, however this was not the case. This put the artist in a precarious position, as he was in an unfamiliar country with limited financial resources and now a problem of finding and paying for accommodation. Further research with a wider participant pool is required to uncover whether instances of unmet expectations or an instance of an artist or organizer being dishonest results in a significant change within the networks operational dynamics.
4. Generosity

The generosity experienced within the networks operation appeared in various guises. It was mentioned as a general mentality of members; Interviewee #6 saying that members are “very open and very generous” offering information, time, teaching and opportunities as resources allow. Some saw a sense of generosity or of gifting as being intrinsic with the work itself [Interviewee #1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12]. In some cases, there is a literal gift, an object offered by the artist to audience members [interviewe #5, 11]. Interviewee #13 spoke of “Die Gabe” within the work and the network. “Die Gabe” is a German term which according to Interviewee #13 there is no direct English translation. However, it a close interpretation of the term may be the spirit of generosity, when someone is offered a gift and this gift changes their life [interviewee #13]. “Die Gabe” is often conceptual rather than being a physical gift [interviewee #13]. Interviewees also reported that this spirit of generosity flowed to the operation of the network itself [Interviewee #1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 12, 13]. This generosity and reciprocity was not expected to be direct [A give B something and in time B gives A something in return], but rather a general spirit of reciprocity [A gives B something and in time B gives C something]. I have experienced both sides of this: in 2008, when co-curating a festival, we had arranged hotel/apartment accommodation for artists throughout the festival, but if artists arrived early, alternate arrangements needed to be made; for five artists arriving the day before the festival, this meant staying one night with my husband, myself and our cat. We offered them all the hospitality our modest budget could muster, offering them whatever we had, with good intention, and when it came time for the festival proper, the same attitude was applied – to be as kind and open as possible and provide the artists with whatever they needed to the best of our ability. Almost one year later, my husband and I were in Europe and were invited to stay with an artist in Bergen, Norway. I had met this woman at two festivals previously and had seen her work, but had spent less than 48 hours in total with her. Within the first few hours of
meeting and having a coffee in Bergen, she had given us the keys to her apartment, saying she was going to China in a week for an event, but that we could stay as long as we wanted. There was one instruction: leave the keys in the mailbox when we left.

5. Trust

Although the term “trust” wasn’t used excessively within the interviews - only interviewee #s 2, 4, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12 & 13 used that term - other terms such as “cooperation” “sharing” and “generosity” were used frequently. It has been previously mentioned that trust and cooperation are co-dependent properties (Good, 1988; Williams, 1988). In addition to complementing each other, it has been found that once they are the norms within a system, they have the propensity to self-generate, creating a “cascading” effect within the network (Fowler & Christakis, 2010, p. 1). This cascading effect has been found to influence individuals beyond those who initially experience the cooperation; once a member experiences cooperation, the likelihood that they will offer cooperation to another enhances, and studies show that such cooperation may extend out to two and three degrees of separation (Fowler & Christakis, 2010). This runs parallel to the experience of generalized reciprocity within the network, as it too has an expectation of a cascading effect. Interviewee #12 said that trust is “very important to the live art world” and indeed “all aspects of our lives”. Interviewee #12 and 13 also talked at length about the role of trust within the network, how there was a general expectation for members to be honest, to be generous and that there are risks artists undertake when making work, risks that require trust. Interviewee #13 differed from every other participant in one aspect of trust, in that Interviewee #13 said that he didn’t need to trust other people, and he didn’t need other people to trust him.
Rather, Interviewee #13 needed to trust himself, and other people needed to trust themselves. This perspective does not nullify the experience of the operation of trust with the network, but rather places the responsibility of trust on the individual, rather than on others. Trust was reported to be intrinsic, so much so that if I asked if trust was important, interviewees responded in a surprised fashion. Even if they had not used the term themselves, it was an assumed and required characteristic to the network.

Limitations and Future Research

As there has been little research undertaken within the global performance art network, there was a limitation on academic materials upon which I could draw. However, this offers a great potential for future research as it is an underdeveloped field of study. When I began this study, I was of the mind that this was one question: what are the operational dynamics of the global performance art network. However, the more I delved in, the more I found that firstly I needed to ascertain whether there was a single global network, and secondly, if this network was non-hierarchical, informal and organic before looking at the operational dynamics as I found no prior research on these elements. As the perceived scope of this study began to increase, aspects such as embeddedness and repetition of ties, although interesting, fell outside the scope of this study.

As this pilot study consisted of 13 participants the scope of the study is limited. It is also important to mention that these thirteen participants do live in five separate continents and have experience in the field from early career to having been active in the sector almost from its conception. There were also four participants of the thirteen who in addition to being artists are also themselves curators. All participants openly volunteered for the study, and all but one I had some previous interaction with, either via online communication or live meeting. The
results of this study are biased as my request for participants was posted on the IAPAO online email lists and to my personal network email list, thus excluding network members who are not members of these lists. Further research is required to engage a larger participant pool in order to provide more definite results on this subject. In addition, further research is required to discover if the global performance art network functions as a collaborative community. These initial findings are a positive step, as it has been found that trust is important, favours and knowledge are exchanged freely and this reciprocity is generalized rather than being specific; these qualities being that also of a collaborative community (Alder, 2008, p. 360).

Further research, planned for 2010 – 2012 will include both larger groups of participants and a network map to measure and provide insight into other network properties such as levels of embeddedness and instances of repeated ties. This network map will be made available to the sector via a purpose build website, aiming to be a useful tool for performance artists worldwide. This may have practical applications in the performance art network as well as theoretical application for networks in other fields. A greater understanding of the operational dynamics of networks may facilitate greater performance within knowledge-based networks in the creative and innovative fields of research and development and to the performance art sector itself. Ultimately, further research will provide greater insights into the performance art genre and the values therein, and contribute to both the performance art, network theory and trust literatures.

Conclusions

In conclusion, although this pilot study is limited in its findings and further research is required, preliminary findings established that within the global performance art network there exists numerous glocal networks. Some artists move freely within a number of networks while others stay within their cliques. Most networks appear to have no formal hierarchy, although there
maybe informal hierarchies at work depending on the perspective of the respective members. The networks were also reported to be informal and organic, and as such are self-monitoring and perpetuated and driven by individuals within the respective networks. Operational dynamics were found to be respect, cooperation, honesty, generosity and trust. These qualities were thought to be intrinsic to the networks activities, without which the network would cease to operate.


Ayers, R., & Abramović, M. (2010). The knife is real, the blood is real, and the emotions are real - Robert Ayers in conversation with marina Abramović. *A Sky filled with Shooting Stars* Retrieved 01/05/2010, 2010


