

OPEN SOURCE / SHARING KNOWLEDGE IN ARTISTIC RESEARCH

SARN :: Swiss Artistic Research Network



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SWISS ARTISTIC RESEARCH NETWORK WORKSHOP BOOKLETS

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Swiss Artistic Research Network has since 2011 been an active network for artists and other researchers working within the Swiss art schools. The network supports an authentic dialogue on how and why artists do research, what the conditions are and how this work is made accessible to the public.

One of SARN's main activities has been a series of workshops 2011-2014 where projects (often on-going) were presented, discussed and thus 'used' by all participants to gain an understanding of the practice of this emerging field. Developing an open discussion based on volunteer contributions across institutional borders has been exceptional and rewarding.

The workshops took place in the schools in Bern, Basel, Zürich, Luzern, Geneva and Sierre on long afternoons in larger and smaller rooms in all sorts of seating arrangements and – as was noticed by guests and contributors – cultivated a particularly fruitful informality. Over the years the activities have shown us that it is possible to support an active and independent dialogue on Artistic Research between the practitioners of the different schools.

The booklet which you are holding in your hands right now (or reading online) is one of a series of reflections from the SARN-workshops compiled to capture the seriousness as well as the dynamic lightness of the work and to present some issues of Artistic Research in a comprehensible manner to an audience interested in tapping into and continuing the discussions.

Just as the buildings of the CERN area are not constructed for permanence or monumental fame, but rather to offer space to people unusually interested in solving unknown questions, the activities around SARN are knowledge driven and the challenge of the network is to support a high level of differentiation and give members the opportunity to exchange about their individual and intrinsically motivated work.

Artistic Research both highlights the important competences with which artists contribute to change as they make us question the set structures – also those of research itself – and contribute with both aesthetic and ethical practice and reflection which current society urgently needs.

SARN WORKSHOPS 2011-2014 (for details see www.sarn.ch). 2011 April, June, October, December Introduction to projects of Artistic Research in the 5 Swiss Art Schools. 2012 March: Publishing Artistic Research*, June: Organising Artistic Research, October: Topics in Artistic Research*, December: Exhibiting Artistic Research*. 2013 March: Open Source & Artistic Research* June: Panel discussion: Politics around Artistic Research*, October: Evaluation & Artistic Research 1, December: The Language Issue & Artistic Research*. 2014 April: Evaluation & Artistic Research 2. *Documented in SARN WORKSHOP BOOKLETS

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INTRODUCTION

Based on the proceedings of the small SARN workshop co-organised by HEAD and ECAV in Geneva March 2013 this booklet brings into question how 'open source' concepts, borrowed from software development, might best be applied to the field of artistic research.

As traditional fields of research gradually reassess the way they share knowledge, new formats are continually emerging, currently these include 'open access' approaches to publishing, 'open peer review' or the more extensive sharing of processes in 'open research' and 'open science'.

Artistic research is not only affected by such developments, but as a relatively new field, has the possibility to lead by example and engender new approaches to technology, interdisciplinarity, transparency, authorship and intellectual property.

As a digest of various topics that came up in the workshop, this text provides the context for the discussion and addresses the questions established for the session: What is best practice in regard to sharing knowledge in artistic research? How do we analyse and assess the efficacy of different approaches? What stands in the way of their development?

It also reflects on the key question that emerged from the session: How much should we share? How do we integrate sharing into the timeline of a project? And perhaps most importantly, how and at what point does a specific research project identify a community or allow a community to identify it?

ARTISTIC RESEARCH

Art is a relatively new addition to the roster of disciplines producing research, the term 'artistic research' having gained credibility gradually over the last two decades. As a young field, it unsurprisingly finds itself struggling with the pressure of comparison with its more established forebears, as it seeks methodologies that suit its own markedly diverse characteristics and claims to knowledge production. Clearly, the history of art-making as a predominantly extra-institutional practice can be seen as incommensurate with a movement towards what some perceive as art's academicisation in the form of research, carried out within the University framework. In this specific moment then, there appear to be conflicting forces at work that cannot be ignored when talking of 'openness.' On the one hand it is now clear that art is, and always has been, a field of knowledge production and that recognition of its value as research seems long overdue. While, on the other, reframed as researchers, artists need time to experiment with and debate the terms of their contribution to knowledge. In the light of this, pressure to define and qualify exactly what this contribution might be and to establish formats and criteria for its assessment seems both restrictive and premature. In the face of the various and at times conflicting artistic and institutional demands on artistic research,

openness seems key. Even as the questions mount up, the urge to answer them definitively needs to be tempered by a willingness to leave things open for the time being.

OPENNESS

In recent years a variety of concepts of 'openness' have emerged across the range of research communities, from the hard sciences to the humanities. Under the influence of changes in information technology in particular, the possible channels for disseminating research have multiplied, the ways we share knowledge have diversified and traditional approaches to reviewing research, in particular double-blind reviewing, have come under sustained criticism, in favour of a more transparent, dialogical approach.

The focus on paper-based documentation and on text, which traditionally finds the results of research made public, at the end of a long period of experimentation, writing up and peer-review, has shifted to less retrospective approaches that embrace the potential of sharing the research process as it happens, in all its messy, improvised and unfinished forms. By extension, technology and the new practices that accompany it not only have an impact on how and when we share our ideas, but also on who we share them with. Where in former times research communities could argue that being close-knit and even secretive was a virtue, today more open approaches to the issues of gate keeping and access to knowledge are common. Although not solving the question of who pays for the production of research, open-access journals use the web to publish research findings free

of charge to users – the only restriction being whether or not the reader can get online.¹

So, the Internet allows the sharing of research in new ways - in real-time, in colour and with new and indefinable publics.² Although problematic and at times litigious when the research has commercial application or national security implications, the practice of opening up the data-gathering process when the material is still 'raw' is gaining critical acceptance. In education people are talking of 'open-knowledge' and in the sciences of 'open science', 'open data' or more evocatively, 'open notebook science'.³ The researcher's notebook, left open, is an undeniably generous image and when applied to research, ideas of openness and transparency appear especially attractive because they re-imagine research as a collective activity – something conducted between peers, for the good of the broader community and ultimately society as a whole. Yet, as explored later in this booklet, it would be wrong to see these new attitudes towards collaborating on knowledge production as purely altruistic. Those who seek to make money from research are equally interested in a more fluid exchange between researchers in different areas, arguing that working with transparency can be more profitable in the long run.

1 See van Dijk, J. and Hacker, K. (2002). *The 'Digital Divide' as a Complex and Dynamic Phenomenon*. in *The Information Society, Spring 2002*.

2 *The issue of open access of research outputs through digital times was the focus of a 2011 European Commission project, http://ec.europa.eu/research/era/areas/knowledge/knowledge_sharing_en.htm [Accessed 20 April 2014]*

3 *The term was first coined by Jean-Claude Bradley in a blog post in September 2006: <http://drexel-coas-elearning.blogspot.com.es/2006/09/open-notebook-science.html> [Accessed 20 April 2014]*

The fact that questions of openness and transparency are today practically inseparable from questions of technology seems also to condition what we mean when we speak of sharing knowledge in research practices. It is hard to talk of openness in relation to research without the inevitable reference to the idea of 'open-source', which found its first iteration in software development in the late 1990s. A group of developers decided to deliberately make the source code of their programs public, so that users could copy, modify and re-distribute the software as they wished.⁴ Importantly, a new approach to licensing accompanied this move, allowing developers to maintain the 'open' character of their code, rather than seeing it snapped up and copyrighted by others.⁵ The model proposed by 'open-source' - that of placing the blueprints of our endeavours in the public domain - is easily transposed to other areas of knowledge production beyond software development. One of these is artistic research.

BEST PRACTICE

In his 2009 essay *Catch Me If You Can: Chances and Challenges of Artistic Research* writer and curator Mika Hannula insightfully explores both the question of practice and of sharing in the field of artistic research. For the workshop his ideas in this essay served as a starting point for discussion. Where Hannula revisits the Aristotelian idea of 'good'

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⁴ *The operating system Linux was an early example of such collaborative software development.*

⁵ *In particular Creative Commons Licences that have been developed by Creative Commons since 2001. <http://creativecommons.org> [Accessed 20 April 2014]*

practice, and uses this wording to propose that there are 'goods' internal to practice, the group extended their interest to the now common idea of 'best' practice, asking whether SARN members could distil from their experiences a set of recommendations for sharing in the field.

Hannula argues that an artistic research practice is per se open-ended:

*"There is no need to close any doors or to decide once and for all on any one set of a priori criteria. What it is and can become is something that only emerges in interaction. And yes, cherishing and maintaining this procedural openness, this content-driven activity, is one of the main ingredients of an adequate, valid research practice."*⁶

But we asked ourselves, what about existing examples of projects in the arts where specific strategies have been adopted for how and when to share their 'content?' Criteria may be inhibitive, but what forms can this interaction, referenced by Hannula, currently take? In order to ascertain best practice we needed to enter into a comparative exercise, where the merits of different approaches to sharing could be weighed up and assessed – so what different approaches could we observe?

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During a teaching module on artistic research, Julie Harboe set a group of fine art master students the test of gathering information of research projects in Switzerland using

⁶ Hannula, M. (2009) *Catch Me If You Can: Chances and Challenges of Artistic Research*. In: *Art&Research*. vol 2, no. 2, p. 10.

the Internet and five publications produced by Swiss Art schools. The results of their search were poor, with the majority of projects described only cursorily in both the publications and the web, sometimes in as little as 200 words. The students' attempts to dig deeper were thwarted by a lack of detailed information about the outcome of these projects and little or no access given to the researchers' experiences. Normal institutional paradigms for publishing, it seemed, were not sufficiently open or detailed for a genuine sharing of research. Simultaneously the unit for Artistic Research had an ongoing project creating 'working blogs' for all their artistic research projects. The site www.kunstforschungluzern.ch⁷ was developed as a tool for researchers to post their progress during projects, developing a public collection of material, which could be accessed by students, peers and interested outsiders alike. The comparison of more than 10 projects in this way showed a wide spectrum of understanding of which kind of information could be public. The process focussed projects such as *Kunstforschung in Transformation* were clearly more robust, as were *Art in Company* by Armin Chodzinsky and www.justarchitecture.ch, where the blog was part of the project's communication.

The possibility of the website as a depository for material gathered 'along the way' responds to the under-recognised fact that artistic research projects create knowledge during the whole process, rather than knowledge solely emerging in a synthesis of the whole. This might be understood as a critical difference between this form of research and others – that the inherited processes of editing, synthesis and 'writing up' of research, so important in other fields, may actually

⁷ *The site is no longer active, but still online. [accessed 20 April 2014]*

be counterintuitive in the field of the arts. At the same time, where open research might be seen as a novel alternative in other fields, artistic researchers working on an activity still in its infancy might well choose to instate openness as a norm rather than an exception. In the workshop, the recognition of this difference and the possibility it presents, introduced the question as to what extent these same frameworks, websites or online forums, might serve not only as alternative, time-based publication platforms but also as feedback loops for exchange between researchers.

Two projects served as, albeit atypical, examples in addressing this question, *Dorkbot*⁸ and *Micromusic*⁹. Although not primarily understood as research projects, these community projects initiated by new media artists and musicians exhibited a possibility for exchange with complimentary activities taking place both on and off-line, in a cycle of inspiring, discussing and creating content for the community to 'play' with.

Dorkbot describes its activity as "people doing strange things with electricity" and it began in 2000 as a monthly meeting of people involved in electronic arts in New York. These informal events allowed artists of all kinds to present their projects to peers from a variety of disciplines and in a short time people from other locations worldwide embraced the format and started organising their own dorkbots, aided by the website set up by the founders. Although several of the venues involved in these regular meetings are universities, the organisers promote the idea that a dorkbot is essentially a passionate exchange between practitioners

⁸ <http://www.dorkbot.org>

⁹ <http://www.micromusic.net> [Accessed 20 April 2014]

regardless of status or academic credibility – the very use of the word ‘dork’ suggests that participants are willing to step outside an inflated view of themselves and confess to their weird interests. In fact humour and an ability not to take things too seriously¹⁰ can be seen as key to Dorkbot’s success and the presentations are predominantly more personal, performative and silly than their academic counterparts.

Like Dorkbot, Micromusic is an online community resource that facilitates online exchange and offline events. At its most active between 2000 and 2010, Micromusic provided a forum for artists, in this case musicians, working with old and new technology in a very specific and deliberately pedantic way. As is often the case with social media, it is hard to figure out if the site gave voice to an underground community or if the activities of the first members inspired a craze, that in the case of Micromusic became known as lofi or chipmusic. Visiting the website one encounters an archive of tracks assembled entirely from the electronic sounds of ‘videogames’ of a bygone era, the plinks and plunks and squeaky soundtracks of the first 64k games systems are remixed in a variety of styles, from ‘funky’ and ‘worky’ to ‘relaxy’. Uploaded by community members the tracks are free to download and registered members can exchange precious samples, often salvaged from the last examples of dying technology. Importantly, Micromusic supported the community by drawing attention to numerous events worldwide, in which the musicians performed their compositions, normally using pseudonyms and occasionally dressed as fluffy animals.

¹⁰ Beckmann, R. (2006) Hearts of Dorkness. *Washington Post* <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wpdyn/content/article/2006/12/20/AR2006122001723.html> [Accessed 20 April 2014]

It would be easy to disregard communities like these as being unserious or amateur, but workshop participants recognised that irreverence and freedom of expression inherent to these projects frequently lead to far greater engagement and openness than more prescriptive and serious formats for exchange. Key to both communities is the aspect of live offline events, in which like-minded practitioners can get together and present their ideas. Again, it might seem unwise to compare a DJ night featuring costumed protagonists with an academic symposium or conference, but in essence the two formats have emerged to fulfil the same requirement for the presentation/performance and discussion of ideas in progress. In fact at this moment in time it is important to ask which format for sharing best suits the artistic research community, rather than simply adopt received academic norms and the timing of communication and types of sociability they denote. The development of the idea of the 'Unconference'¹¹ recently adopted by SARN, the use of salon and festival formats for recent events by the Society for Artistic Research (SAR)¹² and the collaborative conferences and

11 First used by SARN in April 2012 during the event 'we, the public', and again adopted for the second national symposium () A space to process and resonate questions of form in Artistic Research, in November 2014. The notion of unconference is related to Harris Owen's Open Space Technology, a bottom-up vision of leadership based on collective consultations that are not organized according to a specific agenda.

12 'Mind the Gap' at the University of Music and Performing Arts, Graz (March 2013) and 'Loitering with Intent: a Feast of Research' at the Stockholm University of the Arts (March 2014) www.societyforartisticresearch.org [Accessed 20 April 2014]

exhibitions initiated by artist and researcher Ronny Hardliz¹³ in Lucerne, all serve as a good indicator that members of the artistic research community are increasingly seeking live formats for sharing that avoid the necessity of giving talks or delivering papers.

Dorkbot and Micromusic are viral entities, with a strong copyleft tradition – meaning they offer an infectious format that is easy to reproduce and they provide a score that anyone can adopt and adapt without fear of legal retribution. In this tradition, it also makes sense, and is considered good form, to recognise the community in the publicity of events and upload the fruits of exchange in the form of new content to the community sites. For their contributors these archives represent both legacy, in the form of being an ongoing part of something bigger than themselves, and resource, as a rich vein of material to use in future work. The global character of the scenes they support, also allows associated practitioners to plug in to community wherever they find themselves.

As an example arguably a little closer to the field of artistic research the *Curating Degree Zero Archive*¹⁴ adopted, almost accidentally, similar strategies in order to develop and sustain an archive of material documenting critical

13 Both 'Just Architecture' (2012 and 2013) and the 'World Ornamental Forum' (2014) asked participants from a range of disciplines to provide video, image and textual introductions as a precursor to meeting and working together on a shared model of the questions they were involved in. The nature of these events was made possible by CreaLab, which specifically encourages interdisciplinarity at the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts.

14 The project was organised by Barnaby Drabble in collaboration with Dorothee Richter touring between 2003 and 2008. The resulting archive is now part of the special collections section of the Library and Media Centre of the Zürich University of the Arts (ZHDK). www.curatingdegreezero.org [Accessed 20 April 2014]

and experimental approaches to exhibition making. Initially planned as a symposium, insufficient funds lead to the organisers asking the planned conference participants to send documentation of recent projects as contributions to an exhibition in Basel in 2003. Responding to interest from other venues the project snowballed, with the organisers outsourcing curatorial control to hosting institutions around the world over the following five years. Those housing the archive were encouraged to add material that they felt further illustrated the critical changes in curating going on around them, and organise events to debate and discuss exhibition making, often involving those who over time had contributed to the archive. The tour came to a close after 17 venues, when the growing mass of material became prohibitively expensive to transport, and began to suffer from extensive wear and tear.

As with other examples the Curating Degree Zero Archive used a growing online resource to act as a point of reference for its activity, in particular affording 'visitors' access to online models of curating that had no physical presence in the archive. But, the reliance on a website as the backbone of community projects poses some problems, because the issue of limited access to the web remains a challenge to best practice in a global context. The presumption that artistic research is limited to parts of the world with good Internet access was, from the outset, a challenge for the second phase of Mobile A2K¹⁵. The research project, initiated by a group experienced in open-source and wiki-based models for developing and sharing knowledge, set out to support the development and sharing of innovative tools for education and promote the creation of content on urban transformation. In

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¹⁵ <http://www.mobilea2k.org/> [Accessed 20 April 2014]

2012 the project turned its attention to Africa, deciding to focus on the relationship between public art and safety in three African cities, Douala, Johannesburg and Luanda. Federica Martini was invited by SUPSI and Lettera 27 to advise the project in the contemporary art field amongst a team of sociologists and media activists. The idea of the group was to create a wiki – a collaboratively produced online database of knowledge, which would attract and archive people’s views on the focus of their research. She observed how, in their early meetings, the African researchers shared their doubts about the idea of using the Internet to identify a community and encourage participation, asking their European counterparts “Have you heard of the digital divide?”

Sensitive to this question of access, but encouraged by the recommendations articulated by the research project the *African Copyright & Access to Knowledge (aca2k)*¹⁶, the research group went ahead with the plan. They identified the creative commons license as a tool for best practice in sharing their ideas and the outputs of their early trans-disciplinary workshops were shared on Wikipedia and African wiki-media platforms. Rather than the presumption that these ideas were useful from the outset, they were used more as the first step in an online brainstorming in which the wiki became the site of negotiating questions of suitability and terms of exchange. The group encouraged the adaptation and rewriting of these initial texts by African University and educational communities, in a process of describing a knowledge space where academics from the two continents could actually meet; a common ground. In summarising her impressions to the workshop Martini noted:

¹⁶ <http://www.aca2k.org> [Accessed 20 April 2014]

“You have first to put something out there and then create a small community around it. We are now at the stage of getting ideas about how these texts are changing within the structure, so the research is really going on.”

One aspect of successful communities or projects that outsource control to their members is their ability to harness interest swiftly and allow this to produce content, thereby creating a cycle of use and contribution. By linking engaged individuals, web-based platforms can create the ‘snowball’ effect, where once rolling very little maintenance or institutional control is required. In respect to the archiving undertaken by Dorkbot and Micromusic, the institutional websites where Julie Harboe’s students failed to find the depth of material they were looking for, fall short of a satisfactory level. Outsourcing control of such spaces, to create richer and more networked archives, is perhaps easier in the fields of electronic arts and computer music than in other, less obviously technological, circles. But, as the Curating Degree Archive has shown, the movement of attention between virtual and physical spaces, between a website and an exhibition that actively supplement one another for example, can be a successful. The Mobile A2K project reminds us, however that we should be careful not to presume that the willingness to share ideas and the establishment of platforms for doing so is equal to the ‘openness’ we are searching for. Technologies get in the way, whether the hard-wired questions of access to the Internet, the bureaucratic ones of visas and permission to travel or the softer technologies of language and discourse, which can be equally exclusive. We need to seek ways of sharing that acknowledge this uneven playing field, and seek to address them, rather than glossing over them. In all cases

‘putting something out there’ does however appear as an important first step, even when this something is in a far from finished state. In fact, if we see the best practice of sharing in artistic research as synonymous with community building, the rawness of the material shared and the willingness to be open that this suggests is key to the trust that can lead to genuine exchange.

RISKY BUSINESS

Parallel to the growth of artistic research we are witnessing increasing pressure on the institutions that house our activities to evaluate outputs and argue the worth of what they are producing. The importance of the terms ‘third cycle’, ‘creative economy’ and ‘intellectual property’ in the political and economic discourse that indirectly frames the activities of Universities of the Arts in Europe cannot be overlooked in respect to this. The Arts might seem like the last place to look for commercial gain, but the frameworks in which research is produced and evaluated are operating at odds to this supposition with the result that, as in other industries, our confidence in sharing results and methods is affected. Working in a culture where the funding of future work is most frequently based on the assessment of outcomes¹⁷, rather than a recognition of the kinds of knowledge produced, researchers see the opening up of their processes along the way as more a risk than a benefit.

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¹⁷ For an instructive point of view on assessment see Borgdorff, H. (2012) *The Conflict of the Faculties, Perspectives on Artistic Research and Academia. Chapter 10, Leiden, Leiden University Press.*

To return to Hannula's essay, in the opening section he eloquently introduces the challenges facing artistic research in a series of metaphors. The third he cites as a 'warning example,' albeit one he argues we could set about changing. He describes artistic researchers:

*"Moving like Smugglers' Boats, moving quietly in the night, with no lights, almost colliding with one another, but never quite making contact."*¹⁸

Reflecting on the discussion of 'best practice' workshop participants recognised that this desired level of trust and exchange with peers is still rare in the institutionalised field of artistic research, as is a sufficient sense of a broader community. Sharing is, for the most part, still taking place according to traditional academic norms, where researchers or research teams are compelled to publish research by the departments they work within and understand this as part of a process of evaluation rather than as a tool for the furthering of their projects. Hannula's smuggler's boats struck a chord with the group, who decided to address the problems associated with this image by asking what stands in the way of developing new approaches to sharing our research. What is hindering artistic researchers from engaging with each other and developing platforms for sharing their work in progress? Five years after Hannula's observations, why are we still, so frequently, passing in the night?

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In commercial fields of research, sharing ideas is done in respect to restrictive guidelines because it has the potential to undermine the competitive advantage of your company or

¹⁸ Hannula, M. (2009) *Catch Me If You Can: Chances and Challenges of Artistic Research*. In: *Art&Research*. vol 2, no. 2, p. 2.

team. Organisations like the Creative Commons, sprung up precisely to provide legal formats to counter such a default situation, where material that should constructively be in the public domain was being withheld for fear of wholesale theft by competitors. As mentioned above, attitudes are changing in this regard. But to what sense can we understand artistic research as commercial and could anxiety about competition be standing in the way of sharing our ideas and processes?

APPROPRIATE SHARING

In addition to institutional procedures, other, more pragmatic, factors play a role in restricting sharing, including concerns about copyright and insecurity and embarrassment about publicising half-baked ideas and failed experiments.

In the first stages of projects, artistic researchers' tables are often stacked high with collections of 'raw' source material, where once these may have been books, reproductions, objects and materials, nowadays much of this is digital; scanned, copied, downloaded or ripped. It is necessary to recognise equivalence with the pre-digital age to remind ourselves that appropriation has always been a key tool for the artist in their relation to knowledge. The Internet has simply amplified the scope of this activity, just as the advancement of the idea of intellectual property has problematized it. As Kenneth Goldsmith points out in his book *Uncreative Writing*, we can see William S. Burrough's cutups as an offline version of today's google-driven approaches to experimenting with material, with all the contradictions this throws

up about the relationship between knowledge and plagiarism¹⁹. In the early stages of research, the process of doing something with these constitutive elements has not yet begun and, as copyrighted material, technically they should not be legally shared further. It is clear that publishing material without permission can jeopardise projects and compromise the professionalism of the research group. The practice of sharing bibliographies, or setting up Wiki's to publish and co-author ongoing ideas can be seen as beneficial, but again it is hardly sharing the real, messy stuff of research. And if this mess is full of inconsistencies, imprecise methodologies and ideas borrowed, in an uncredited fashion, from other people, is there really a benefit in sharing it?

Noting the risk and work involved Hannula asks the same question:

"Why this openness, transparency and comparison? Why the effort of giving and taking?"²⁰

23 From his point of view we need to be cautious not to see sharing as some altruistic gesture, an add-on with a nod to open-source logics. Instead he argues that *"...the motivation for doing this is found in the internal logic of qualitative research work."* Operating in the 'information society' we are dealing with a structure of inter-connected networks, not top-down hierarchies, and for Hannula open-source is the only future for knowledge, so the danger for artistic research lies in 'not sharing' and thereby finding itself isolated and disengaged:

¹⁹ Kenneth Goldsmith, *Uncreative Writing: Managing Language in the Digital Age*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2011.

²⁰ Hannula, M. (2009), p. 5

“The fact is that you can only survive by putting yourself into a site and situation of challenges and comparisons, one that enables you to find your focus, your subject and what it is that you want to say.”²¹

So the argument is strong that within a trusted community, sharing material throughout the process of research is of great value. Given that artistic researchers often work with very subjective areas of inquiry, a trans-disciplinary team may differ hugely in their understandings of what is valuable to the project and what not. Put another way, one researcher’s bad idea may be another’s inspiration. Even where ideas are universally accepted as misguided, sharing them helps to better define the direction of the project because the recognition of weaknesses and pitfalls is an important part of the research process. Of course no one wants to be known as the researcher with all the bad ideas, but sharing bad ideas is considered preferable to sharing no ideas at all. In this light, self-imposed regimes of tidying up before sharing can find potentially useful material prematurely binned or shredded. The exposure of ‘raw’ material to dialogue may often result in the reclamation of ideas initially thought of as unsuitable or sidelined at particular stages in the process.

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On the questions of competition and appropriate sharing, the issue of confidence seems key. That is that, on the one hand, researchers have the confidence to open up their individual research materials to debate and discussion within and between trans-disciplinary teams, and on the other that teams address the institutional framing of their work critically

²¹ *Ibid*

and feel confident to voice their requirements even when they seem at odds to institutional norms. The question remains however, whether artistic researchers can successfully argue for another approach to the assessment and evaluation of their work by the institutions they work within, one perhaps where openness is considered central rather than supplementary.

COMMUNITY BUILDING

The SARN workshop participants were unanimous in their opinion that a sharing ideas about their research could only take place successfully in a climate of trust and that in their experience the institutions that form the context for research are only part of the way towards providing this, given the propensity for internal and inter-institutional competition and doubts about assessment, evaluation and appropriate sharing amongst individual researchers. However, if we say that the starting point of openness is identifying a sustainable community then we come close to a task for the coming years, one which SARN itself has set out to address in the Swiss context, and which extends beyond the institutions. However, questions remain about how and at what point a specific research project identifies a community or allows a community to identify it?

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In their recently published handbook for artistic research education, Mick Wilson and Schelte van Ruiten²² pointedly turn to Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger's concept

²² Wilson, M. and van Ruiten, S. (eds.) (2013) SHARE Handbook for Artistic Research Education. ELIA, Amsterdam. Pp. 240-243

of *Communities of Practice*²³ when considering how artistic researchers might best be seen as engaging with the task of networking. They identify the danger of understanding networking in its purely technological sense, which risks reducing its scope to the ever expanding space of the Internet and tying its potential solely to the organisational or work-related aspects of research. Using Lave and Wenger's work on the social dynamics of knowledge production, they argue that networking be seen in relation to the embodied and face-to-face interactions favoured by artists in the past, connections formed along the lines of mutual engagement, understanding and repertoire, which are as often informal as formal.²⁴ In addition they believe, as argued throughout this booklet, that the development of such networks is key "not only to the dissemination phase, but also to the entire lifespan of research projects."²⁵

Clearly, this 'lifespan' differs from project to project and sensitivity is required in regard to choosing a suitable moment within the gestation of a project to open up methods and materials. Equally, in some cases the rights of the researcher to keep secrets should be recognised – particularly where they are deliberately working with multiple or 'soft' methodologies, which might be the subject of over-definition when exposed to dialogue. Ironically, in some cases, being forced to be open can have quite the opposite approach. Openness is emergent rather than scripted, it needs to come naturally and, as researchers, we need to feel the necessity.

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23 Lave, J. and Wenger, E. (1991), *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*, Cambridge University Press

24 Wenger, E. (1998), *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

25 Wilson and van Ruiten (2013) p.241

In concluding the session we came to understand 'openness' as an essential quality of artistic research and to accept that sharing was not simply an activity that we apply to artistic research but something that we find within it. Looking 'within' then to find this specific, shareable core of the research remains a difficult task, as does timing and staging the interactions which externalise this information and open it to cycles of use and contribution. But, it is clearly beneficial and, in the longer run a necessary part of the ongoing process of experimentation and debate that establish and support the epistemological claims of art.

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