



European
Dancehouse
Network

The joy and sorrow of structures

A report on the EDN Atelier Dissemination and Creation
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Museum of Postmodern Art – The Rave (2015) by the Finnish performance company Oblivia features four performers rave dancing to silent music in a dance studio. Their 2,5-hour dance can be streamed live from the dance studio to theatres anywhere in the world. The audience can watch the performance or dance to its silent rhythm with the other spectators. *The Rave* feels like an intimate moment shared with both the people that are present and those on the other side of the screen. In February, several Finnish artists took part in a festival called They Come From Afar, organised in Auckland, New Zealand. *The Rave* also participated in the festival, but no air travel was required; their rave dancing in Finland was streamed live to the audience in New Zealand.

Air traffic emissions are probably among the least significant environmental detriments and I think people fly for poorer reasons and with fewer scruples than touring artists. Theatre, dance, and performance of the future are exploring their new forms, as *The Rave* so awe-inspiringly demonstrates. They are proposing new structures in the art world but also new ways of thinking and a more sustainable way of life which applies to everyone, not only artists.

However, the structures are often unavoidably dragging behind the art. At least in Finland, many aspects in the funding, production, and communications structures of dance seem to somehow be disconnected from reality. By nature, art is difficult to place elsewhere than slightly away from structures, but artists are perhaps a little too nice. In addition to making their art, they produce the required supplementary materials and answer e-mails instead of demanding deeper service of the art from the structures and the structural administration, communications, reporting, marketing, and production personnel working for upper middle class wages.

Tour structures and the networks between dancehouses were discussed at the Atelier seminar of the European Dancehouse Network in Helsinki 3-5 February 2016. The European art world is experiencing tour fatigue; tired of the nomadic lifestyle, artists are returning to their home cities and trying to find work closer to home. Finland dreams of a national touring network after a couple of unsuccessful attempts. Touring networks could entail more income for the artists for touring, longer lifespans for works of art, and more spectators for dance performances. Are touring networks, therefore, simply a distribution machine for dance? I

guess the most important thing should be the type of relationship formed between the guest artist, the work of art, and the artists, audience, and residents of the area. Envisioning these relationships requires that artistic directors and curators have in-depth understanding of the local, national and global way of life and dance and the ability to imagine their wild forms of entanglement.

How would a touring network potentially set up in Finland work? What would it be like? Would the longer lifespan of a work of art simply mean a larger number of performances? Would the touring network ensure sufficient time for rehearsing? Would it be possible to further develop the work of art over time if the artist felt it would enrich the work? Would the tour fees create a substantial addition to the artist's income? If repeating the performance format would not feel purposeful, what other forms of work would the touring network offer in different areas? What types of durations and time limits would the touring network provide for the work? Would only the same, relatively large cities housing the current city theatres and district centres be involved in the touring network? Alternatively, would it be possible to organise performances in different environments, such as service stations, forests, fields, lakes, sea, rivers, or fells? Would it be a problem if there were only five spectators at some performances?

I am convinced that neoliberal ideology is behind all the grief happening around the world today. It requires measurability from art, and also measures the success of an artists with questionable parameters. At worst, touring networks make artists compete for jobs and the visibility they create. They start having intrinsic value and become symbols of success that have little relevance to artistic interests but may determine future chances of working.

Therefore, we should build touring networks, dancehouses and new dance structures that do not produce any more all-destructive sorrow. They would not define the forms of artistic practices but the practices would create structures that are capable of change. In these touring networks, dancehouse, and new dance structures, artists could focus on their art in peace and let it happen without any rush. We would refuse to see the value of art in the numbers it creates. They would be structures created together out of shared interest, not based on the traditional hierarchic models but transparency and discussion, where the flourishing of the community would make an individual artist and their work flourish.

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