the art of being many reader for an assembly of assemblies kampnagel internationale kulturfabrik, hamburg
At the end of September 2014, artists, activists, researchers and participants from all over Europe and beyond will gather in Hamburg for an assembly of assemblies. Sharing experiences from real-democracy-movements and artistic experimentation they want to explore new ways of coming together: collective insights into the materiality, the timing, the agenda, the desires and the catastrophes of being many. At Kampnagel Internationale Kulturfabrik, geheimagentur* and friends will build an assembly hall and a camp to host them. Here, the assembly will become a laboratory of itself: a collective of friends and strangers with many voices and bodies including those of ghosts and things. Feel free to join!

* geheimagentur is an open collective and part of the many who initiated the project THE ART OF BEING MANY
Many of us will meet for the first time, but we all have something in common:
We witnessed moments of assembling that made the word ‘democracy’ sound important again. Those moments may not have brought about the political changes, we hoped for. Still, we believe them to be important. We want to acknowledge them as a starting point for a new art of being many.

Really? But isn’t the feeling of NOT being many that art and activism share most of the time - not enough of us to realise the desired changes or to win the important battles? Their shared desire for being many doesn’t make art and activism perfect accomplishments. It can reduce the “many” to an economic feature: consumption, participation, social media, data mining — in all these discourses “the many” are potentially treated as a resource. And success is defined as providing access to this resource one way or another. Nevertheless, the desire for being many is nothing to feel bad about. For good reasons, it rises up against the cultural tyranny of the individual: The individual, who has long been captured and redesigned as the self-opti-

mizing subject of capitalist imagination. The desire for being many rises up against the economics of attention, its imperatives of the big name, the keynote, the star, and the prin-
ciples of scarcity and accumulation. It rises up against the tendency to reduce “the many” to an economic feature: the concentration of power and capital in the hands of the few and fewer. And then, if all of a sudden, there is a feeling like a mir-

cle. When the many emerge and start to en-

gage in the constituent process of becoming a “we,” terrible and wonderful things can happen. The wonderful part is that, at such moments, the most important things can be reinvented: care, dignity, and the power to make our lives collectively.

So, let us ask: Is there an art of being many? How do we, as a community, authorise and create an art of many? To discuss these questions, geheimagentur initiated the art of many at the PHD program assemblies and participation: Urban/Public and Performance. Together with geheimagentur and the Institute of Sociology at the University of Hamburg the PHD-programme initiated assemblies and participation. Urban/Public and Performance. The programme was founded in Hamburg as a co-

operation between the HafenCity University, FUNDUS Theatre/Research/theatre and K+J Centre for Choreography. For more information see: www.versammlungsrahmen.de

1 Research projects by Margarita Tsomou, Inga Reimers, Martin Notchter, Eva Plaches, Dorothea Größbach, Stefanie Lorenz, Hannah Kowalski, Esther Pilkington, Sylv Krämer.

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The art of being many

Hamburg, September 2014

Together with geheimagentur and the Institute of Sociology at the University of Hamburg the PHD-programme initiated the art of many as an assembly of assemblies. There would like to discuss these questions with the many who feel addressed by this name and therefore will emerge as a public at Kampnagel in Hamburg in September 27th to 28th 2014.

Collectively chatting with activists from Syntagma square in an internet cafe in Hamburg. Having a “research dinner” while listening to lectures on sensual knowledge production. Having a walk. Exploring scenarios of the future with the Young Institute for Future Re-

search. Watching films made by te-

achers on monitors in buses and under-
ground trains. Listening to stories told by elderly people, and to the sounds of their bodies. Coming together to make decisions, using light, chairs and doors to vote. Meeting seafarers at a Seaman’s Club to play a game. Provoking and re-

membering the demolition of the Esoo Houses in St Pauli with the Megaphone Choir.

Since 2012, we have devised, staged and tested many different kinds of assemblies as part of the artist-academic postgradu-

ate research programme “Assemblies and Participation: Urban/Public and Performance.” Some of these events attempt-

ed to invent or introduce new types of assemblies, others took well-established settings for assemblies as their starting point and modified them in a way that new hybrid forms could emerge. These differ-

ent approaches explore what is at stake in identifying and investigating these experimental formats is the question of participation. They constitute attempts at facilitating a broader participation in the artistic and/or academic research process, and, more generally, they try to explore the potentials and possibilities of democratic participation as such: how can people come together who usually do not meet, what does it mean to produce knowl-

dge, together, what about the assembly of people who cannot actually be in one place at a certain moment, how can people communicate in groups, why is it so diffi-

cult to reach decisions, how can the voices of the assembly be made heard, how can they be amplified, and so on.

In a way, they are assemblies for assemblies, progenies for assemblies and how they should be, or maybe rehearsals for as-

semblies. The projects in the research programme do not only engage with the topic of assemblies and participation the-

matically but also practically and perfor-

matively by producing different settings and strategies of assembling. Creating assemblies to assemble assemblies – not only do research subject and methods co-

incide here, the research to some degree produces its own objects. A question that has thus emerged in our discussions about these assemblies is: is this still a rehearsal of a test-run/a scenario/speculation, or is this already it? And: to what extent do these assemblies – which in many cases involve or incorporate people from very different backgrounds, not only artists and scientists but also so-called “experts of the everyday”, children, seafarers, activists – feedback into socio-political contexts from which they emerge, to which they respond and with which they interact?

At this point: it is important that all these experiments with assemblies, even though they can be described as rehearsals, take place in public: Thus, they also convey certain ideas of how the public for this particular event should be composed and organised. In his book Publics and Coo-

terpublics, literary scholar Michael Warner has shown how publics come into being “by virtue of being addressed”: the ad-

dress calls a certain public into being by envisioning it as if it already existed and at the same time the public constitutes itself by at least partially identifying with that ad-

dress – it is both called into being and calls itself into being. Warner describes for publics can also be said for the pro-

gramme’s experimental assemblies: they are rehearsals exactly because they are public, because their public nature gives them the character of somethingunfinished, imagined, of a try out, yet for the same reason they are more than a rehears-

al, they manifest, they constitute them-

selves, they might already be it.

by Esther Pilkington

rehearsal assemblies – is this it?
Public protests in public spaces indicate the existence of political conflicts in societies. Such mass assemblies in public spaces were characteristic for the protests in the Arab states as well as for those against the neo-liberal cutbacks during the Euro crisis in e.g. Portugal, Spain, and Greece. But since these assemblies are part of political confrontations they are also subject to the respective interpretations of hegemony.

The Hamburg police forces revealed their underlying understanding of the law in a special meeting of the Home Affairs Hamburg Senate Committee in January 2014. They stated that whenever leftist groups registered a public assembly the routine protocol was to first check whether there were any legal grounds to ban this assembly. In case this would not be possible they would check then for possible restrictive requirements. It hardly needs stating that the constitutional requirement for the police to assist organizers in exercising their fundamental right to freedom of assembly is little valued by the Hamburg police leadership.

Consequently, in recent years, the operational management of the Hamburg police has had to face dozens of court decisions declaring obligations and resolution orders that concerned assemblies illegal. But this has troubled neither politicians nor the Ministry of the Interior—the unlawful practices have remained without any consequences whatsoever for the responsible police commanders.

Therefore, the right to assemble as the right to proclaim differing and oppositional points of view needs further defending on the streets of Hamburg. The right toassemble is a performative process of coming together. In fact, the European ‘we’, we are talking about here, is unfinished; it is in the making; it is a performative process of coming together.

End of February/Beginning of March 2014, a hundred activists from various parts of Europe gathered in Madrid for the conference ‘El nuevo rapto de Europa: deuda, guerra, revoluciones democráticas’, to discuss the topics of Debt, War and Democratic Revolutions. While a number of panels debated questions of organization in times of institutional crises and new forms of participation and the common, five workshops provided the ground for drafting a Charter for Europe. The conference participants developed both the foundations and a preamble for the entire paper, taking account of the themes of democracy, debt, commons, governance and borders.

In the following months, a first version of this Charter emerged and circulated via mumbles, skype-conferences, wikis and diverse other virtual communication channels and spaces. This version is planned to proliferate and get distributed over the next few months to discuss and further develop it. One place to do this will be the conference THE ART OF BEING MANY. Rather than considering this proposition as a text for a future constitution, it is supposed to operate as an impulse for a potential constituent process in Europe — in a way, it is already a component of such a process.

http://chartereuropa.net/wiki/charter_1.1

1. We live in different parts of Europe with different historical, cultural and political backgrounds. We all continuously arrive in Europe. We share experiences of social movements and struggles, as well as experiences of creative political work among our collectivities, on municipal, national and transnational levels. We have witnessed and participated to the rise of multitudes across the world since 2011. In fact, the European ‘we’, we are talking about here, is unfinished; it is in the making; it is a performative process of coming together.

2. In the wake of the financial crisis we have experienced the violence of austerity, the attack on established social and labour rights, the spread of poverty and unemployment in many parts of Europe. We have faced a radical transformation of the EU which now has become clearly the expression and articulation of capitalist and financial command. At the same time we have lived through a profound displacement of national constitutional frameworks, we have learned that they do not provide any effective defence against the violence of the crisis, and on the contrary are responsible for the disastrous governance of the crisis. In the ruins of representative democracy, xenophobic chauvinisms, ethnic fundamentalisms, racisms, anti-feminist and homophobic processes, new and old forms of fascism proliferate. We rise up against all this.

3. Representative democracy is in crisis. A crisis produced from above, by international financial markets, rating agencies, private think tanks and corporate media. But the credibility of democracy is also questioned from below. To talk about democracy is to (re)appropriate and to (re)invent a common sense of democracy. The guarantee of rights to the commons, of the transformation of citizenship, of equality, freedom, peace, autonomy and collectivity.

4. The 2011 uprisings across the world have rescued the living meanings of democracy. When we claim democracy in Europe we do not aim to restore the lusters of the old national constitutional democracies, but rather to invent the institutions that can catch up with the cry of ‘They don’t represent us’ spread by those uprisings. We want to claim back our belief in the self-government of the demos. Hold on to this concept. Hold on to its reinvention. Hold on to its transformation.

5. We are experiencing a post-democratic turn in Europe. National constitutions are being used for the private interest when the Triastra imposes budgetary decisions as well as social policies without democratic legitimation. Security, in a similar way, has become a central process in the emptying of significance and
The constitution of the people is what is at stake for us in what we term democracy. How can we re-think a democratic self-governance in pluralist and participatory experimental ways? How can we learn from the democratic practices on the squares around the globe and think of them as re-invention of participatory processes in the assembly of the many, in order to give ourselves our own rules, laws and rights? How can this process be pluralist, federalist, based on networks and assemblies, movements and relations instead of identities, functions and roles? We envision here something beyond the juridical form of democracy bound to a national sovereign. We are opening up this concept, to spread democratic practices into the social, the everyday, into production and reproduction of life. The state needs to be under scrutiny, challenged by the diffusion of radical inclusion and the invention of democratic tools from below.

Democracy in Europe means for us a two-sided process in which both democracy and Europe are interdependent, (re)appropriated and reinvented on the basis of the transnational social and political struggles of the many. Democracy as a practice, Democracy for Europe.

Nowadays, debt has become the main mechanism of both income and debt. Rating agencies, bankers and financial institutions do not represent us. Debt and income are the two sides of the same coin, when the very reproduction of life is increasingly tied up with the access to credit. They are geographical, they are the many and state borders, detention camps for migrants, electronic control systems, walls and barbed wires. They are the many.

Debt and income are the two sides of the same coin, when the very reproduction of life is increasingly tied up with the access to credit and, hence with the rise of private indebtedness. This is the most distinctive contraposition of the crisis - a contraposition between private and anonymous debtors and the many indebted. Rating agencies, bankers and financial institutions do not represent us.

The struggle for democracy is about fighting against the blackmailing of public and private indebtedness. The challenge is to transform this generalised private indebtedness towards the financial flow, into a common indebtedness of the many towards the many. It is the answer to the recognition that wealth is something we produce in common.

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The use of tear gas in combat is nothing new; in fact, Spartans took advantage of sulfur gas as a military resource in the V century A.D. Contemporary history indicates that this irritant was used during World War I, when the French army included in its arsenal, 26 mm grenades with tear gas.

These grenades and spray versions, became a common resource to dissolve public demonstrations in Latin America in the sixties, and are still the quintessential tool against revolts in the streets, even though tons of years of scientific research have shown that it is a poison that affects the health of human beings. About its harmful effects, a 1999 study called “Health Hazards of Pepper Spray” by Dr. Gregory Smith of the University of North Carolina, found that in the 90’s, 70 persons deaths, under police custody, were related with the use of pepper spray. The pepper spray has the same ingredients as the tabasco sauce, but at much higher concentrations. The tear gas or CS gas is mainly made of chili for its high content in capsaicin, which irritates mucous membranes and respiratory tract, and is used by state forces to disperse public demonstrations, protests and riots. Being long exposed to this gas can cause lung, heart and liver damage.

I propose a performance in which activists come into contact with smoke of peppers so they can experience a similar dynamic to a police brutality confrontation, asking participants to face their fears. I also seek to have a positive impact in the minds of the participants, using the magical and healing side of chilies. Prehispanic shamans used chili for spiritual cleaning and healing, which drives away evil spirits. I’ll do the same and try to achieve a magical spiritual healing upon the participants.

by Ivan Casasola aka Punk Orgy

**Ivan casasola aka punk orgy**

hear müsste noch die Kurzbiografie oder so hin ...

* tear gas democracy is a 35-minute-performance presented at the assembly/the art of being many

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*In the end of September 2014 artists, activists, researchers, and participants from all over Europe and beyond will gather in Hamburg for an assembly of assemblies. Sharing experiences from real-democracy-movements and artistic experimentation they want to explore new ways of coming together: collective insights into the materiality, the timing, the agenda, the desires and the catastrophes of being many. Many of us will meet for the first time, but we all have something in common: We witnessed moments of assembling which made the word ‘democracy’ sound important again. The square-squattings and neighbourhood-assemblies of the real-democracy-movement may not have brought the political changes we hoped for. But they have been the catalyst for a new art of being many.*
At Kampnagel Internationale Kulturfabrik, geheimagentur, WAV and other artists from Gängeviertel Hamburg, Freifunk, Showcase Beatle Mot and the PHD-Program, Assemblies and Participation will build an assembly hall and a camp to host the many. Here, the assembly will become a laboratory of itself: a collective of friends and strangers with many voices and bodies including those of ghosts and things. Before the public assembly starts about 120 people will meet in groups in order to focus on the art of being many from different angles. Together, they will prepare an assembly for about 400 people which is going to last for two days from noon to midnight. In a second step, the assembly hall will be opened to the public. The assembly of assemblies the conference is not meant to be a series of individual presentations. It is meant to focus on what can be done together. There is no audience, no performers, only those, who participate in the assembly for these two days. Just two days. Not the most important days in the history of anything or the break-through of a new aesthetics. No. We might just be sad together – remembering lost battles. We might be very tired. But we will try to have an assembly just the way we like, for two days or for as long as it takes.

DAY I
noon to midnight
materiality and decision
At the beginning of the assembly, we will put the materiality of the meeting to the test. Collectives from art and activism like The Lab of Insurrectionary Imagination, The Materials Library, geheimagentur, Sweet and Tender Library, geheimagentur, de Choque and others will examine the material make up of collective decision-making. What media, what materials do we need in order to decide as many as it? If and how we decide collectively will influence the character of a meeting: consensus or majority? Hierarchical or horizontal? Analog or digital? Soft or loud? By lot or oracle? Secrecy or sober? By applause-o-meter or by differing light moods? Shared decisions are necessary for joint actions. We will gather our knowledge about the different modes of collective decision-making. What is going to be decided by this assembly – and how?

vogue and voodoo
How do the trance-like states come about that are sometimes experienced when coming together as many? By what rituals are they produced and/or attacked? In this session Grupo de Choque from Mexico City, Liebe Bar, KÖK Asa Queeneak and Yatá, SOMAL 21, Uachtí Galler Experience and others want to employ our pop-cultural imagination to examine techniques of ritualizing and appropriation that lead to enhanced states of self-presentation (“vogue”) or self-loss/ transcendence (“voodoo”). The rituals, rhythms, music, dances and stimulants that make up the art of being many are to be explored, exchanged, and unleashed as well as exercised. While drifting we will listen to some midnight-thoughts: Every assembly contains elements of ritual: dress codes, seating arrangements, customary gestures constituting and transgressing thresholds, etc. Who’s speaking in whose name and why?

sound, systems and voices
How do the spoken public space is constituted by voices, sounds and sound systems? How are temporary collectives produced acoustically? How are imaginations of political communities linked to sound machines and rhetorical techniques? For the session on sound, systems and voices ANIMA, Mobile Akademie, Megaphonchor, metrozones, Magical Flying Lovelace, The Temporary Radio and others will meet to work together on questions of echo and resonance. We want to exchange stories and experiences, tools and techniques dealing with sound in public assemblies. In this session the art of being many is all about graphic poltical protocols and sketches from our assembly will be presented and the Fablab-Flus from the Netherlands will provide ways and means to produce agitprop material of all shapes and sizes. The assembly might end with a series of pop talks from the many to the many about the many. Representatives of Teatro Valle Rome and Embriós Teatre Athens will start. You are most welcome to join in.

DAY II
noon to midnight
 timing and breaks
Timing is crucial for assemblies – for the formation of assemblies the conference is not meant to be a series of individual presentations. It is meant to focus on what can be done together. There is no audience, no performers, only those, who participate in the assembly for these two days. Just two days. Not the most important days in the history of anything or the break-through of a new aesthetics. No. We might just be sad together – remembering lost battles. We might be very tired. But we will try to have an assembly just the way we like, for two days or for as long as it takes.
some of the many (individual names not registered in collectives and novelties mentioned in the text) - the art of being many... 

Kampnagel and the art of being many

by Amelie Deuffhardt

The political revolts of the last years in the Arab and Western World raise the question what democracy means today. With the art of being many, Kampnagel approaches this question by creating a laboratory: a space of open assembly beyond traditional logics of representation—a space for exchanging, sharing, acting.

The terrain Kampnagel, a shut-down crane factory, was conquered by artists in 1982, at first in so-called “occupancy rehearsals.” The first protagonists were free theater groups that had been founded in the 70s to experiment with new forms of expression. These groups were founded as a reaction of young theater makers to the student movement: exit from the institutions, creation of new contents, politicization of the theater—that was their creed. The traditional theater space with its representational function and the institutional structures of the city theater were re-fused. Dissolution of traditional hierarchies, creation of other forms of community and basic democratic decision-making were central visions. Kampnagel was rescued from eventual demolition in a paradigmatic fight led by artists, political activists as well as citizens. It was established and then secured for the long term over a process of years and years. Today, more than 30 years later, Kampnagel is indeed a municipal “GmbH,” but it has remained a space that is open for the international and the city’s independent art scene. Kampnagel has started its reorientation in September 2007 referring to its historical point of departure with the project Strategensorgie. Today, Kampnagel intervenes programmatically in current discourses about the city, the metropolis and public space. It also contributes to discussions about political and global questions. The transgression of spheres of influence and artistic interventions at notorious places of the city have been part of the programmatic objectives from the beginning. By now, diverse actors use Kampnagel as a discursive platform. Formats that are particularly fitting incorporate artists, academics, activists, the audience or a city adroitly into the broader program. The Black Markets by Hannah Hurtzig, the Treffen Total, a platform for artistic exchange by Sweets & Tender Collaborations, or Matthias von Hartz’s Orchestra Charaoke putting entire halls into ecstasies should be noted in this context. … as should the project the art of being many that, for four days will put 400 people in a real-orchestra, or Matthias von Hartz’s Orchestra Charaoke putting entire halls into ecstasies should be noted in this context. … as should the project the art of being many that, for four days will put 400 people in a real place? Without a fixed schedule in an open process? Is it possible to curate participatory and non-hierarchically? Which action strategies can be developed in such a gathering? What happens when activists and artists after having encountered democratic movements at different places come together for four days to exchange ideas? When diverse people experienced in collective structures share their thoughts at a real place? Without a fixed schedule in an open process? Is it possible to curate participatory and non-hierarchically? Which action strategies can be developed in such a gathering? 

... timing & breaks theatre of research, everybodys, t-rich, macao, random people, turbo pascal ... block-ade & panic with protagonists from gezi park, syntagma, plaza del sol, tahir square ... vogue & voodoo theatre of research, everybodys, t-rich, macao, random people, turbo pascal ... sound, system & voices signa, the temporary radio, the magical flying love lab, mobile akademie, megafonchor, metroZones ... affects & documents sos halkidiki, pah, enmedio, with protagonists from gezi park, syntagma, tahir square ... real fictions fablab-bus, la fundación de los comunes, baldio habiCado, teatro valle rone, observatorio, embros theatre athens ... constructors showcase beat le mot, freifunk, we are visual, geheimagentur, kampnagel internationale kulturfabrik, zunderbüchse, phd-program assemblies and participation ... and many more arteleaks, fack, die koalition der freien, baldio, here to stay - lampedusa in hamburg, jeux sans frontières, initiative esso häuser, universität der nachbarschaften, s.a.l.e.-docks, your collective, strangers, fare dodgers ...
by Kai van Eikels

One obvious problem with time on occasion of an assembly is that while I never seem to get enough time to voice my opinions, express my thoughts, comment on what others have said, the entire event takes too much time. A crisp meeting, which leaves us with some energy for others have said, the entire event takes too much time. A crisp meeting, which leaves us with some energy for
others have said, the entire event takes too much time.

The assemblies I have attended so far were nominally organized according to the former principle, but often failed to implement it. Recently I discovered one that follows the latter: the Afghan Loya Jirga. Much to the chagrin of UN diplomats, this Grand Assembly of tribal chiefs knows no previously agreed-on time limit. It lasts as long as it requires the attendees to settle matters. The leading during discussions therefore will not be one of urgency, of time pressure supposed to ass-kick the process, but one of generosity. Although time to talk cannot be infinite (we’ll all have to die, most of us have others to come home to), the act of giving each other a generous amount of time as a sort of welcome present establishes an atmosphere quite unlike a professional convention whose every second at-tests to scarcity determining time’s value.

Barthold Brecht’s play The Caucasian Chalk Circle starts with a gathering of farmers conflicting over a valley, while a group of elders have been using the green meadows to produce small amounts of high-quality goat cheese, a younger, progres-sive-minded group are about to establish an efficient industrial system of agricultural produc-tion. A professional facilitator has traveled to the countryside for the meeting. Being from the city, he sympathizes with the progressives, and the elders too are aware, and ready to respect, that this decision will ultimately be in favor of industrial-ization. The facilitator is eager to get done with the affair and embark on his return trip as soon as possible. Still, after a meal, the members of the progressive faction who host the gathering surprise him with a theater performance that em-ploys “the old masks.” The play that, they vague-ly say, “has to do with our question” takes three hours or more to perform. In fact, Brecht’s script of this play within the play is almost absurdly pompous, with many changes of scenery, dozens of extras — very unusual for the notoriously economistic dramatist. The Loya Jirga and The Caucasian Chalk Circle can teach us two things about the time of assem-bling. First, giving time is the munus, the far that must be paid for entertaining a temporal commu-nity. Yet only a rich gift will have the effect of en-riching the collective, of switching its default set-ting on “affluenza” which converts conversation into a luxury, elevating it above the necessary. Any assembly is also an attempt to get back the political freedom of being free to decide from the socio-economic business of having to decide. We won’t achieve that by simply ignoring the necessities, and neither will nostalgic fantasies of recovering the pre-modern slow prove help-ful. However, we may put on the old masks and smuggle an element of extravagance into the modern schedule. Every assembly needs one element that exceeds the limited economy of time, turning its shortness inside out, as it were.

Second, time is involved in making decisions not only in steering the processes, but also in defining the process. Time’s passing also has a hand in the deciding. Time is nev-er neutral in respect to political decision, even though its inclination mostly won’t be as patent as Brecht’s notion of progress suggests. The or-ganization of an assembly should acknowledge this: a good way of organizing deciding will have a critical-affirmative sense of what will happen anyway (since it already is happening), and of how the collective dynamics can be set at ease with this penchant of time.

by Tommy Noonan

Sweet & Tender Collaborations is an artist-driven initia-tive and an artistic project in constant development. It began as a grass-roots initiative from a group of partic-ipants in the 2006 DanceWEB program at ImPulsTanz Festival in Vienna. The initiative focuses on self-organiza-tion of artistic processes and production and emphasizes collaborative forms of working. Apart from individually produced projects, Sweet and Tender Collaborations exists as a shared practice of physical encounters. S&T meet-ings are celebrating the art of being many by making the process of deciding as important as the decision itself.

These days, the most common question about Sweet and Tender Collaborations is: “Does Sweet and Tender Collaborations still exist?” This is a difficult question to an-swer, simply because it is difficult to define the existence of Sweet and Tender Collab-orations in the first place. It has no official structure, no base of operation, no lead-ership, no fixed membership and no defini-tive rules to govern its actions. Normally, I answer: “I don’t know”, which is also how I answer people who ask me if I am part of Sweet and Tender Collaborations.

I can say this: starting in 2007, around 30 performance-related artists from many countries began to assemble periodically in larger and smaller groups, sometimes in formally produced environments, often in sporadic informal gatherings. The num-bers swelled to over 50 in one gathering, 10 in another, again 35 in another. We met in France, Portugal, Switzerland, Norway, Mexico, Germany, Holland, Belgium, Spain, the UK and other places. We had no hier-archy, no structure, no formal agreement or procedure and most importantly, no single shared purpose (though we were unified by many common goals and desires, such as learning from one another, having space and time to experiment and share informa-tion, tools and skills).

We can best be described as an emergent and fluid community that only exists because enough of us have used a com-mon name to describe a loosely formed and ever-changing collection of individu-als who believe in the sharing of resourc-es and knowledge, and the notion that we can all benefit from gathering together. It is a radically simple idea, which many art-ists, businesspeople, activists and citizens have been utilizing ever since the Internet has dramatically dropped transaction and communication costs, and travel has be-come more affordable in the last decade.
Of course, emergent, collective, and swarm behavior are all related phenomena which have received great attention in recent years. Sweet and Tender Collaborations has been one of many interconnected communities that can be described as such. Its emergent nature characterized by a structure of decentralized control and a constantly shifting form, determined by multiple interactions between individuals. In other words, no one in charge and no map.

It is notable that Sweet and Tender, unlike virtual communities, is based in embodied meetings and relationships which exist in built space(s); also, it has no defined goal or reason for existence, other than the aggregate sum of the individual goals held by its various participants. And yet Sweet and Tender gatherings have represented much more than the meaningless actions of flash mobs. They have repeatedly concerned themselves with the process of decision-making – not only to make decisions themselves, but to decide how to make decisions together, both in physical and in virtual space.

In making decisions, we were always uninterested in Democracy, and generally incapable at consensus-based agreement, due to our large numbers, our unbridgeable differences, or to the porous nature of our ‘membership’. Still somehow, the overall project continued. An organic decision-making process evolved through repeated meetings; decisions were not made, they were simply apparent in the movement of the group. Over time, we let go of agreement as a requisite part of our decision-making process (though some of us still fought vehemently at times). Decisions were successfully reached less through conversation as they were through a continuous back-and-forth between action and group reflection. Reflection and discussion informed action; action propelled the need for reflection and discussion. Many of us felt an appreciation for the group as well as a sense of personal gain through our involvement, and therefore we continued to subscribe ourselves to the common we of Sweet and Tender.

Yet this has never been a fully functional process. It has been, at best, a tendency that emerged at times as the network continued to meet. Each meeting was a different group with a different character – yet a kind of evolution was apparent over time, there was a shift from goal-related decisions to process-oriented ones that were supported by the set of criteria which defined our gatherings: horizontal exchange, sharing and common evolution. Rather than mobilizing large groups towards a specific end, our project has been about mobilizing large groups towards articulating in the void of the unknown. This had required several things of those individuals: notably, engaging with the tension between the impulse to affect the direction of the group and acceptance of its utterly uncontrollable nature. The tension between these two modes of participation is what drives the emergent actions and decisions of the group as it hurdles forward, alternating between action and reflection.

And so what is the benefit of a group of people who do not agree, have no goal and no idea where they are going? Though we are dealing with the art of the many, the art of the many is still for the benefit of each individual. We as individuals utilize one another as resources for our own needs, and in so doing, we develop a way to support and grow our communities, based on a foundation of sustainable collaboration, the group is not the point, it is the result of a shared principle of individual action.

With Sweet and Tender, the absence of agreement reflects the absence of a decisive goal, which in turn reflects the absence of competition for resources or political power. This is of course not how our political, economic and social institutions function in most parts of the industrialized world; and that is exactly why it is so important to carve out temporary enclaves like our meetings sometimes do, wherein communities and groups may function together under alternative models for a period of time. To momentarily step out of our constructed social and political realities, and to experience the confrontation between Self and Other through a process-oriented emergent community, allows a moment to air the possibility of other realities. It can also allow us to better access the resources and information we each require.

The inhabitants of contemporary West are either individuals or a collective profile traced by statistics and classification or the result of a reactive urge for local and territorialized identities.

As individuals we are scattered around, either depressed or competitive or resigned and isolated. But something is already at hand, the urge, or even a need. And, from the very beginning it is transindividual. Austerity EU policies have effectuated a material common sense with respect to what could have appeared as a sort of political ideal. There is a new awareness: water, education, housing, culture – these are what we need for sure. No persuasion, no higher skill in analysis, just a motion and an urge.

Thus, something transindividual is already at hand in our techno-cognitive-bodies, and only on an additional level this can be ideologically separated in individuals, related to each other through contracts and cost-benefit computation. And the more the economical and juridical effects of neoliberalism expand, the less its art of splitting the many into individuals succeeds.

If transindividuality is the trigger, being many is a counter-conduct, is entering the space inside-outside, the city – they are at significant Politics as a material subversion of the dominant narrative.

In action, in a starting action – occupying, re-owning, restituting – individuals become many as a differentiated and, yet, connected subject. Action literally takes place. Space is redefined, new habits come out of alternative forms of relating, inhabiting, producing. Art is in the awareness that each single act is both labor and emotional, discursive, rational capabilities. Rather than production, the core is now social reproduction.

When the result of an action becomes a new reality, the art of being many is an art of re-maining. There is no division of labor, but rather rules that progressively take shape, as days go by, as action becomes a process. The many start to feel familiar, familiarity risks to transform the many in a community identified by spatial and yet invisible borders. The antidote: the art of welcoming, the art of the first words addressed to the newcomer, the art of dissemination by engendering new connections.
The labor and leisure of performing the many

Martin Jörg Schäfer

The current Real Democracy Movements have often been perceived as a reenactment of the political assembly on the ancient Greek agora. Equating democracy with gathering shifts two sets of metaphors associated with "modern" politics: that of labor and that of theater. On the one hand, the power and labor of democracy is to be undertaken by each and everybody. One of the catchphrases of the “Real Democracy” movements proclaims their anti-representational ambition: “direct” democracy instead of a delegation of power while those who delegate just watch and listen to those who speak and act for them. In the 18th and 19th century, the bourgeoisie “representative” theater came to stand for the gathering public as a whole. The critique of the leisurely gaze passively taking in what is presented has long been a starting point for political theory from Rousseau to Rancière. It has also been at the heart of many theatrical practices aiming at the transformation of the traditional performers/spectators relationship. The audience is to be activated, i.e. to be pulled out of some poisonous stupor dreaded as the death of political life from Plato to the Marx. Would the dawn of a democracy as we have not come to know it yet mean the end of a certain kind of theatrical leisure as well as political laziness, then?

There is a certain arbitrary character to the attribution of “labor,” “work,” or “leisure” to any given action. My labor may be your leisure depending on personal tastes, cultural codes and potential wages involved. In Hannah Arendt’s famous theory of Atic politics, women and slaves keep busy with the labors of daily life while the “free man” leisurely stage the play of democracy. Freed from other duties to appear to each other, in Arendt’s words, on a “perpetual stage on which there are only actors and spectators” and actors on the square? What about lavatories? These labors weren’t on the outside of democracy but proved to be their center. 2) When entering the Arenditan stage the procedures and implicit scripts governing daily life weren’t left behind. Power relations were addressed; procedures were adopted or invented. The theatrical elements of ritual governing assemblies (dress codes, seating arrangements etc.) became part of the process. Instead of staging “freedom” or other political phantasm, the theatrical procedures themselves were put on. 3.) Assembling on the squares was an “endurance performance” for everyone involved whether leisurely hanging out or toiling through time. Taking part in an assembly means going off for long periods of time. But just going along with the flow can mean becoming part of the very “working” of the assembly. At times, it even translates into a leisurely festive mode of gathering, e.g. shared states of intoxication brought about by cigarettes, alcohol, drugs, oxygen or the lack of it. Like democracy it is always in danger of derailing over into a perversion of a free or even dangerous mood. In such democracy (just like in current capitalism), the distinction between labor and leisure might lose its meaning. But the ways both are performed when gathering remain crucial.

The emergence of modern political sovereignty is founded not on a subjugated, working, tormented, reproductive, or disciplined body but on a stolen body. The establishment of sovereignty through the punishment, control, productivity, and disciplinization of the body is a recurrent theme of classical political and social theory: Hobbes’s genesis of Leviathan, Marx's surplus value, Polanyi’s great transformation, Foucault’s great confinement. These are the stories told from the perspective of dominant power: how power gets inscribed onto the body, how the order of power absorbs the body and renders it fertile, creative, manageable, profitable, and governable. In The Life of Romulus, Plutarch tells the story in a different way. The myth and birth of Roman power starts with the abduction of the Sabine women. By means of subterfuge, Romulus kidnapped the women of the Sabine tribe so that the future growth of Rome’s population could be assured. In its first moment, the myth of modern political sovereignty is founded not on the issue of the productive transformation of the body under its power but on the theft of bodies. The life of power is a primordial result not of a capacity to transform the body into an available thing but of its dispossession over life. The life of power is parasitic. It devours something it never owns. The stolen body never returns. The body as a whole is contaminated over time. The theft of bodies is also the theft of social relations. What is at stake is not just sex but the very definition of the political. What is at stake is sovereignty. Power is always political sovereignty without people? materialising experience and politics in the time of crisis

Vassilis Tsianos & Dimitris Papadopoulos

The emancipation of modern political sovereignity is founded not on a subjugated, working, tormented, reproductive, or disciplined body but on a stolen body. The establishment of sovereignty through the punishment, control, productivity, and disciplinization of the body is a recurrent theme of classical political and social theory: Hobbes’s genesis of Leviathan, Marx’s surplus value, Polanyi’s great transformation, Foucault’s great confinement. These are the stories told from the perspective of dominant power: how power gets inscribed onto the body, how the order of power absorbs the body and renders it fertile, creative, manageable, profitable, and governable. In The Life of Romulus, Plutarch tells the story in a different way. The myth and birth of Roman power starts with the abduction of the Sabine women. By means of subterfuge, Romulus kidnapped the women of the Sabine tribe so that the future growth of Rome’s population could be assured. In its first moment, the myth of modern political sovereignty is founded not on the issue of the productive transformation of the body under its power but on the theft of bodies. The life of power is a primordial result not of a capacity to transform the body into an available thing but of its dispossession over life. The life of power is parasitic. It devours something it never owns. The stolen body never returns. The body as a whole is contaminated over time. The theft of bodies is also the theft of social relations. What is at stake is not just sex but the very definition of the political. What is at stake is sovereignty. Power is always political sovereignty without people? materialising experience and politics in the time of crisis
In May 2011, a description of the so-called “phenomenon of squares” in a mainstream Greek newspaper went like this: “It was a mosaic of ages, wages, and demands. A multitude that was belonging everywhere and nowhere.” The journalist went further; he tried to categorize this multitude. First: the newlyweds. Practically this category included just a couple that “celebrated their wedding with a kiss in the square among the indignados.” Then: the activists defined as “these individuals” that came at the square holding their bicycles instead of holding the Greek flag like others. Then arrived: the gadget geeks accepting invitations from “friends” in social media. Their goal being “to upload everything.” Then: the veterans, experienced syndicalists and members of parties, some “standing embarrassed” in front of the motley multitude, while some others feeling “pleasantly surprised” by seeing colleagues that had never participated in protests in the past now standing in front of the parliament.

The refusal of the many on the square to select representatives embarrased state politicians because it was inverting the usual practices of power: practices that are based on the aspiration of the leaders and, as a matter of consequence, the breakdown of the movement. It is characteristic that mainstream media used a psychiatric term to describe the anti-representative will of the many by calling it “depersonalization.” In an interview with Alexei Penzin, Paolo Virno talks about the relations between the land the many, referring to the theory of Levi S. Vygotsky. He states that initially there is a “we,” but this “we” is not equivalent to the sum of many well defined “I’s.” On the contrary, the mind of the individual is the result of a process of differentiation: “The real movement of the development processes of the child’s thought is accomplished not from the individual to the socialized but from the social to the individual. Gradually the child acquires the collective ‘we’ that can be defined as an intersubpsychical dimension turning it into an intrapsychical reality: something intimate, personal, and unique. However, this introduction of the intersubpsychical dimension, this singularization of the primordial ‘us,’ does not come to a conclusion during childhood: it always repeats itself during adulthood.”

Can the manifestation of the Many on the square be interpreted before this background? Was there an upcoming desire to form new institutions of communication – based on a different relation between the I and the Us not constituting a People anymore? Was this the beginning of a new form of life? Maybe the answer is again in Virmo’s claim: “For the people the One is a promise, for the many it is a promise.” In any case at the square, consciously or not, the many performed rituals for future institutions. But these peaceful rituals didn’t last long.

Violence as ritual
Violent clashes during protests are nothing new. Going back in time, protests of workers, syndicates, students etc. were turning violent for several reasons. But all of these protests were protests of the people. Therefore what the occurrence of violence did to the many on the square was new in terms of subjectivity. When the Greek riot police decided to fully raid the square using thousands of canisters of tear gas the many faced the erosion of the ‘no subject.’ What since then was loosely called “riots” encircled the movement of the square, punctured it, penetrated it and produced deviations from the practices of the movement so far. Violence was practiced as a ritual.

Who was this emerging no-subject that practiced violence as a ritual? In 2011 we were already in the middle of the crisis and the number of the unemployed especially among the youth was already high and still increasing. Precarity produced exclusion. For thousands of young people mostly belonging to the lower social classes the grounds they stood on were lost. Losing the ground means losing subjectivity. Where the objective conditions of living, the objectivity of a social section, and the vital space of desire production are cancelled there is no subject anymore. The subject disappears. But was this no-subject—group part of the many? The answer is yet to come. The many kept a rather contradictory stance towards violence.

This stance was visible during the two days of June 2011 when the police was raiding the square. The first day many voices among the many were against violent involvement with the riot police. But this changed the second day after experiencing the “hate for society” that was performed by police forces.

Sunday 12th of February 2012 was the day the movement of the many as well as the violence skyrocketed. This day was more or less expected. It was almost announced in the mainstream media. Nobody did something to block its arrival and nobody could do something about it. That day the many faced the rage and at the same time experienced the tactics of the state. It was a crucial day because it was a necessary explosion for the reintegration of power structures. A violent re-integration into the state through discipline and oppression but brought on by the state itself breaking the law. It was a risky situation for the state as well as a brand-new lesson for the movement of the many. It was the day that many among the many realized the end of the workers’ movement. The rupture between power structures and the people was total. That day the many won the battle because they stood in the streets in spite of the oppression. Nonetheless, they lost themselves. They lost themselves not in fear but in hope. They went home expecting the promise of the One, like normal people.

The many on demand (as people)
There have been no significant protests since Sunday 12, February 2012. Attempts to “reconstruct” a massive social movement failed. A new political landscape, which stands until today, has arisen from the 2012 elections. The majority expects a “solution” from parliamentary parties. However, hundreds of assemblies, collectives, and social initiatives have spread all over the country. Maybe the many responded to the demand to become a People again but some practices and ideas of direct democracy – regardless of the wildness of the landscape – remain alive. Will the magic – turning the People into the Many – work again in the future and how? It remains to be seen.

Ilias Marmaras
Ilias Marmaras is a media artist and part of the many who squatted the Synagoge Square in Athens in 2011. He is also part of the many who made the website www.the-art-of-being-many.net
Departure: Hi there, wherever you are. [...] You look great in those shoes. They will surely take you to wherever you need to be. [...] Please take a moment to anticipate where you are going. Imagine the space. Imagine the furniture: rows of chairs, neatly organised, or piles of them, a barricade [...]. Please take a moment to consider what you are leaving behind. [...] Every gathering, every assembly requires a journey, or, to be more precise, many journeys: the journeys that all participants undertake to come together. But this journey also opens up the assembly, connects it with other times and other places, like the place where you are now. [...] is this already the beginning? [...] think of this as a rehearsal: repeating that which has not yet happened: mic check one two one two protest test test test [...].

On the move: You might have noticed already that there is some ambiguity here in how you are being addressed: it is not quite clear if that “you” means you individually or a larger group of people, a collective, a public, something like the many. It can mean “you” who is travelling at this moment, alone perhaps, or it can mean all the people who are on their way. Let's enjoy this uncertainty for a moment. It will never completely go away [...]. Maybe the possibility to not identify completely with this “you” or “we” introduces a certain openness that is needed to even conceive of something like the many: participation, not belonging. [...] Think of the people who cannot make it: their number always exceeds that of any concrete gathering of people, because everybody is invited. [...] there are different manifestations of the many [...] those who turn up, and those who turn on, those who participate without being there, virtually, in spirit, but for real. Those who send their message of solidarity. Those who can't afford the train fare. Those [...].

Arrival: Soon, we will be many. We might already be many, but soon, we will meet. Democracy is like a blind date: you don't know who'll turn up. The date might have been set in advance, or you might be reacting spontaneously to something [...]. There might be people there you know, there might be people there you've met, but it is a blind date nevertheless. You know where you are going, but you don't know where you're gonna end up. [...] Soon. Very Soon. [...]. Perhaps you can see it already?

*random people is a performance collective and part of the many who prepare the session on timing and breaks for the assembly in September