

PROPOSITIONS FOR NON-FASCIST LIVING

PROPOSITIONS #2: *Assemblism*

25 NOVEMBER 2017

Performative
conference



Program



Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en
Wetenschap



Gemeente Utrecht

bak

basis voor **actuele** kunst

With:

Kate Shea Baird (Barcelona en Comú); Merve Bedir (architect and co-founder of Land+Civilization Compositions); Grégory Castéra (curator and co-founder of Council Paris); Maya Felixbrodt (composer and musician); iLiana Fokianaki (writer and curator, State of Concept, Extra City); Quinsy Gario (artist, activist, and 2017–2018 BAK Fellow); Menno Grootveld (DiEM25 The Netherlands); Havin Güneşer (journalist and women's rights activist, Freedom for Abdullah Öcalan/Peace in Kurdistan); Ernst van den Hemel (researcher at Utrecht University and activist); Birgitta Jónsdóttir (poet, Icelandic Pirate Party); KUCHENGA (writer and agitator, Black Lives Matter UK, Bent Bars Collective); Aurélie Lierman (radio producer, vocalist, and composer); Lorenzo Marsili (founder of European Alternatives and member of DiEM25 coordinating committee); Shela Sheikh (researcher at Goldsmiths, University of London); Jonas Staal (artist and founder of *New Unions*); Igor Stokfiszewski (journalist, artist, and activist, Political Critique, DiEM25); and Samuel Vriezen (composer and writer).

Propositions #2: Assemblism

We are witnessing the rise of a new authoritarian world order. From Trump in the United States to Temer in Brazil, from manifold ultranationalist and fascist movements in Europe to Erdoğan in Turkey, from Putin in Russia to Modi in India: new divisions of “us” and “them” are imposed.

Simultaneously, from the Arab Spring to Los Indignados, from the Rojava Revolution to Black Lives Matter and the rise of new pan-European movements, millions of bodies have gathered in liberated autonomous zones, occupied buildings, city squares, prisons, and cultural spaces to collectively enact a different demand for egalitarian society.

Philosopher Judith Butler terms such practices as “performative assembly,”¹ describing how bodies whose structures of life support are severely threatened gather, seeking new collectivity in response to their shared experience of precarity. Butler partially relies on an artistic vocabulary to describe how performative assembly brings into being different social forms of living and alternate institutionalities. She speaks of the assembly as “assemblage”² and as a practice with “theatrical”³ components.

What democratic cultures manifest through assemblist practices? And how do such democratic cultures contribute to establishing new forms of emancipatory (self-)governance? During this event, art workers,

political representatives, and activists discuss the cultural dimensions of performative assembly, from pan-European movements to forms of non-human assembly, seeking new alliances in the face of the rising authoritarian world order.

Propositions #2: Assemblism is the second performative conference of BAK's long-term research itinerary *Propositions for Non-Fascist Living*, prompted by the dramatic resurfacing and normalization of historical and contemporary fascisms in our present. *Propositions for Non-Fascist Living* attempts to articulate and inhabit methods of de-individualized living; methods in which multiplicity and difference enact relations other than those enamored with power and hierarchy.

Propositions #2: Assemblism is developed following the 2017 collaboration between BAK and Studio Jonas Staal's campaign *New Unions* (2016–ongoing), with contributions from, among others, architect Paul Kuipers and designer Remco van Bladel. The campaign developed installations for the public assemblies of the pan-European Democracy in Europe Movement 2025 (DiEM25), which are on display during the performative conference.

The activities of BAK have been made possible through financial contributions by the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and the City Council, Utrecht.

¹ Judith Butler, *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015).

² *Ibid.*, p. 68.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

Program

11.30–12.00

DOORS OPEN

12.00–12.10

WELCOME: PROPOSITIONS FOR NON-FASCIST LIVING

Maria Hlavajova (BAK, basis voor actuele kunst, Utrecht)

What does it mean when a contemporary art institution parts from traditional modes of societal critique and moves toward one of propositions, especially when confronting the rise of a new, authoritarian world order?

12.10–12.30

ASSEMBLISM: INTRODUCTION

Jonas Staal (artist, *New Unions*)

How to define, through the work of Butler, the artistic dimension of performative assembly? And how does assemblism change the practices of artists, and the definition of art as such?

12.30–14.00

FIRST ASSEMBLY: THE PAN-EUROPEAN ASSEMBLY

Keynote by Lorenzo Marsili (European Alternatives, DiEM25), with iLiana Fokianaki (writer and curator, State of Concept Athens, Extra City), Menno Grootveld (DiEM25 The Netherlands), and Igor Stokfiszewski (Political Critique, DiEM25)

The future of the European Union has been taken hostage by the ultranationalists gathered in the “Leave” campaign and the Eurocratic austerity elite in the “Remain” camp. What other options can be imagined and put into practice in order to assemble a transdemocratic union?

12.30–12.40

INTRODUCTION BY MODERATOR ILIANA FOKIANAKI

12.40–13.10

KEYNOTE LECTURE BY LORENZO MARSILI

13.10–13.25

RESPONSE BY IGOR STOKFISZEWSKI

13.25–13.50

CONVERSATION

13.50–13.55

STATEMENT FROM THE AUDIENCE BY MENNO

GROOTVELD

13.55–14.00

SUMMARY BY ILIANA FOKIANAKI

14.00–14.15

COMPOSING ASSEMBLY—FIRST ACT

Composition by Maya Felixbrodt (composer and musician), Aurélie Lierman (radio artist, vocalist, and composer), and Samuel Vriezen (composer and writer)

How do the manifold voices and manifold composers in performative assembly translate to new democratic cultures—a musical culture in particular?

14.15–15.15

LUNCH BREAK

15.15–16.45

SECOND ASSEMBLY: NON-HUMAN ASSEMBLAGES

Keynote by Shela Sheikh (researcher, Goldsmiths, University of London), followed by a conversation with Merve Bedir (architect, Land+Civilization Compositions), moderated by Grégory Castéra (curator and co-founder of Council Paris)

Practices of performative assembly are often understood as forms of human gathering, but humans depend also on larger ecological assemblages. How do non-human subjectivities assemble, and how are their political agencies to be understood and recognized?

15.15–15.25

INTRODUCTION BY GRÉGORY CASTÉRA

15.25–15.45

LECTURE BY SHELA SHEIKH

15.45–16.05

LECTURE BY MERVE BEDIR

16.05–16.40

CONVERSATION

16.40–16.45

SUMMARY BY GRÉGORY CASTÉRA

16.45–17.00

COMPOSING ASSEMBLY—SECOND ACT

Composition by Maya Felixbrodt (composer and musician), Aurélie Lierman (radio artist, vocalist, and composer), and Samuel Vriezen (composer and writer)

17.00–17.30

BREAK

17.30–19.30

THIRD ASSEMBLY: AFTER THE ASSEMBLY

Conversation between Kate Shea Baird (Barcelona en Comú), Havin Güneşer (Freedom for Abdullah Öcalan/Peace in Kurdistan), Birgitta Jónsdóttir (Icelandic Pirate Party), and KUCHENGA (Black Lives Matter UK), moderated by Ernst van den Hemel (researcher at Utrecht University and activist)

In North and West Kurdistan, decades of secretive assembly have led to revolutionary declarations of regional autonomy. In Catalonia and Spain, 15M/ Los Indignados translated energies and imaginaries into new political parties and municipal governance. How is power taken and practiced differently after the moment of assembly?

17.30–17.40

INTRODUCTION BY ERNST VAN DEN HEMEL

17.40–17.55

ERNST VAN DEN HEMEL IN CONVERSATION WITH HAVIN GÜNEŞER

17.55–18.10

ERNST VAN DEN HEMEL IN CONVERSATION WITH KUCHENGA

18.10–18.25

ERNST VAN DEN HEMEL IN CONVERSATION WITH KATE SHEA BAIRD

18.25–18.40

ERNST VAN DEN HEMEL IN CONVERSATION WITH BIRGITTA JÓNSDÓTTIR

18.40–19.25

CONVERSATION

19.25–19.30

SUMMARY BY ERNST VAN DEN HEMEL

19.30–19.45

COMPOSING ASSEMBLY—CLOSING ACT

Composition by Maya Felixbrodt (composer and musician), Aurélie Lierman (radio artist, vocalist, and composer), and Samuel Vriezen (composer and writer)

19.45–20.45

DINNER

20.45–21.30

ROET IN HET ETEN BOOK LAUNCH

Book launch of *Roet in het Eten* by Quinsy Gario (poet, artist, and 2017–2018 BAK Fellow)

A vegetarian lunch (€5) and dinner (€10) catered by Utrecht-based Rammenas and Koffie Leute can be purchased during the event.

KATE SHEA BAIRD

joined Barcelona en Comú in June of 2014. She coordinates the platform's International Committee, which organized the *Fearless Cities* summit in June 2017, bringing together over 100 municipal platforms from all over the world for the first time.

BARCELONA EN COMÚ

Launched in June 2014, Barcelona en Comú functions as a citizen platform. Its political agenda advocates social justice and community rights, promotes participatory democracy, and develops a new model of tourism for Barcelona. Through collective action, the platform proposes a transparent and collaborative model for the city and its institutions.

MERVE BEDIR

is a co-founder of Land+Civilization Compositions, and a PhD candidate at the Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment at Delft University of Technology, Delft. She is a member of Matbakh-Mutfak, a transnational women's collective in Gaziantep, a founding member of the Center for Spatial Justice in Istanbul, and part of Future+Aformal Academy, an independent school for urbanism and art in Shenzhen. Her first book *Vocabulary of Hospitality* is forthcoming (2017).

LAND+CIVILIZATION COMPOSITIONS

Land+Civilization Compositions, based in Randstad and Istanbul, uses multidisciplinary practices and collaborations to work on the issues surrounding built form in a variety of contexts.

GRÉGORY CASTÉRA

is a co-founder and co-director of Council, Paris. He has served as a co-director of Les Laboratoires d'Aubervilliers, Aubervilliers, a coordinator of Bétonsalon, Paris, and is a co-author at the online project *Encyclopédie de la Parole* (Encyclopedia of Spoken Words).

COUNCIL

Council is a nonprofit organization based in Paris that assembles knowledge from the arts, sciences, and civil society in order to foster new understandings of societal issues. Founded in 2013, Council curates exhibitions, creates public programming, commissions artworks and texts, and has a fellowship program.

MAYA FELIXBRODT

plays viola, composes, draws faces, makes large-scale collages, dances, researches movement and music, makes performance art, sings, improvises, makes videos, writes about her dreams, writes poetry, performs as a soloist and with ensembles, and initiates and takes part in many musical and interdisciplinary collaborations, including her ensembles *Zvov*, *32*, and *GHOM*. She is also the curator of *Synzine*, a magazine for musical games.

ILIANA FOKIANAKI

is a writer and curator. She is a co-founder of the platform *Future Climates*, is conducting PhD research on the synapses between art, identity, politics, and economy at Panteion University, Athens, and since March 2017, is a curator of Extra City

Kunsthal, Antwerp. Fokianaki is the founder of State of Concept Athens, Athens.

STATE OF CONCEPT ATHENS

Founded in 2013, State of Concept Athens is the first nonprofit gallery in Greece to promote Greek and international artists through exhibitions. In addition, State of Concept Athens organizes a variety of events, projects, and aims to be a bridge between Athens and the international contemporary art scene.

QUINSY GARIO

is a visual and performance artist from the Dutch Caribbean. His work *Zwarte Piet Is Racisme* (2011–2012) critiqued the knowledge surrounding the racist Dutch figure and practice of Zwarte Piet (Black Pete). Gario holds an MA from the Master Artistic Research program at the Royal Academy of Art, The Hague, and has an academic background in gender studies and postcolonial studies.

MENNO GROOTVELD

is a journalist, translator, and publisher with a background in pirate radio, television editing, and organizing media conferences. He is a member of Democracy in Europe Movement 2025 (DiEM25) The Netherlands.

DEMOCRACY IN EUROPE MOVEMENT 2025 (DIEM25)

DiEM25 is a pan-European, cross-border movement working toward a democratized European Union in the face of rising nationalisms. Launched in 2015, DiEM25 organizes through participation and openness to develop common answers to the

five crises they identify as affecting Europe: debt, banks, poverty, low investment, and migration. In addition to Grootveld, *Propositions #2: Assemblism* contributors Lorenzo Marsili and Igor Stokfiszewski are affiliated with DiEM25.

HAVIN GÜNEŞER

is an engineer, journalist, and a women's rights activist. She is one of the spokespersons for the international initiative Freedom for Abdullah Öcalan/Peace in Kurdistan and a translator of Öcalan's books.

FREEDOM FOR ABDULLAH ÖCALAN/PEACE IN KURDISTAN

Freedom for Abdullah Öcalan/Peace in Kurdistan is an international initiative launched in 1999 after the arrest of the Kurdish leader. It works for a peaceful and democratic solution of the Kurdish question. The initiative is committed to lobbying, public relations work, and publishing.

ERNST VAN DEN HEMEL

is a researcher at the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies at Utrecht University, Utrecht and an activist. His scholarly work covers topics of nationalism, populism, and religion.

BIRGITTA JÓNSDÓTTIR

is a "poetician," a former parliamentarian for Civic Movement and Pirate Party in the Icelandic Parliament, and a chairman for the International Modern Media Institute, Reykjavik. A long-time activist, Jónsdóttir specializes in twenty-first century lawmaking and focuses on direct democracy, freedom of

expression, information, and digital privacy.

ICELANDIC PIRATE PARTY

Founded in 2012, the Icelandic Pirate Party is a political party whose core policies include: democracy, transparency, civil rights, the right to self-determination, public access to information, and responsible decision making. In the 2017 parliamentary elections in Iceland, the party received 9.2 percent of the votes and now has six parliamentary seats.

KUCHENGA

is a writer, an agitator, and an avid consumer of all culture, high and low. She is a Black trans feminist whose work sparkles with vivacity and originality. A member of Black Lives Matter UK and the Bent Bars Collective, she lives by the River Thames in London and can be found frolicking in Battersea Park with her dog Nene.

BLACK LIVES MATTER UK (BLMUK)

BLMUK is the United Kingdom chapter of the Black Lives Matter Global Network, working for Black empowerment and the end of violence on Black communities. The coalition is committed to all Black lives, works in coordination with other anti-racist groups, is not affiliated with any political party, and embraces intersectionality within the movement.

AURÉLIE LIERMAN

is a radio artist, vocalist, and composer fascinated by the narrative power of abstract sound and music. She frequently adds dramatic and documentary elements to musical

compositional structure (or vice versa), and presents new music by myriad emerging composers. She appears as a sound artist and vocalist on two albums by Nurse With Wound.

LORENZO MARSILI

is a writer, political activist, the founding director of the transnational organization European Alternatives, and one of the initiators of the pan-European movement DiEM25. He has previously worked in journalism and was the founding editor of *Naked Punch Review*. His latest book *Citizens of Nowhere* is forthcoming (2018).

EUROPEAN ALTERNATIVES

European Alternatives is a civil society organization that is dedicated to exploring the potentials of transnational politics and culture. The organization carries its messages of democracy, equality, and culture beyond the nation-state through means of participatory spaces, campaigns, events, publications, and the annual Transeuropa Festival.

SHELA SHEIKH

teaches at Goldsmiths, University of London, London, where she convenes the MA Postcolonial Culture and Global Policy and the PhD Cultural Studies programs. Her current research focuses on colonialism, botany, and the politics of planting. She is co-editing, with Ros Gray, a special issue of *Third Text* entitled "The Wretched Earth: Botanical Conflicts and Artistic Interventions" (Spring 2018).

JONAS STAAL

is an artist and the founder of the artistic and political organization *New World Summit* (2012–ongoing), the *New World Academy* (co-founded with BAK, 2013–2016), and the *New Unions* campaign (2016–ongoing). Staal's interdisciplinary work focuses on the relationship between art, democracy, and propaganda. He is currently completing research on contemporary propaganda art at the PhD Arts program of Leiden University, Leiden.

NEW UNIONS

New Unions is an artistic campaign that organizes gatherings throughout the European continent to confront its current political, economic, and humanitarian crises. Through the imaginary of art, *New Unions* aims to bring together emancipatory forces from the domains of art, politics, and activism in order to establish a new transdemocratic union. *Propositions #2: Assemblism* is the culmination of the 2016 collaboration between BAK and *New Unions*.

IGOR STOKFISZEWSKI

is a researcher, activist, journalist, and artist. He is a member of the Political Critique (Krytyka Polityczna) team and DiEM25, author of *Zwrot Polityczny* (Political Turn) (2009), editor of *Culture and Development: Beyond Neoliberal Reason* (2017), and co-editor of—among other books—*Build the City: Perspectives on Commons and Culture* (2015).

POLITICAL CRITIQUE (KRYTYKA POLITYCZNA)

Established in 2002, Political Critique is the largest Central and

Eastern European liberal network of institutions and activists. It organizes workshops, exhibitions, debates, seminars, an online quarterly magazine, a publishing house, cultural centers in Poland, and activist clubs in Germany, Poland, and Ukraine.

SAMUEL VRIEZEN

is an Amsterdam-based composer and writer. Recently, he completed *Schade* (Damage), a play for VPRO radio on the hidden politics of oil pollution in the Niger Delta and the temporalities of irreversibility and survival. In 2016, he published *Netwerk in Eclips*, as well as essays and poems focusing on change in a networked world. He teaches artistic research to composers at the Royal Conservatoire, The Hague.