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Abstract

Seeking return of democracy into the realm of politics and popular sovereignty into state institutions, populist movements and political parties arose across the world in the early years of the twenty-first century on both sides of the political spectrum. Whether conceived as a way of doing politics, ideology, style, figure, discourse, political logic, or strategy, populism in all these views implies a moment of division between the people and the elite. This is why the debate about populism is a political debate about constructing the people, that is, new forms of subjectivity, community, or collectivity. To envisage alternative ways of living together, some political philosophers from the left found inspiration in the horizontal, leaderless civic movements, such as Occupy, and the notion of the self-organized multitude. Others found inspiration in the vertical civic movements with leadership, such as Podemos, and the notion of constructed people. The segmentation of civic and political structures that emanates from such a dualism prevents the left from displacing neoliberalism, arresting the increasing institutionalization of right-wing populism, and invigorating democracy. To find a way out of this deadlock and empower the left, this chapter envisages the relationship between these disparate views in co-constitutive terms. What I will be calling the choreography of articulation is the performative practice that transforms horizontality into verticality, embodying the multitude of democratic identities in a popular form of collectivity. The performance 100% City by the German-based 'collective' Rimini Protokoll offers a view on articulation as a choreographing practice of embodying imagined forms of collectivity.

Keywords

performance, populism, community, collectivity, the people, the multitude, articulation,
identification, representation, art

Chapter 43

Performance and Populism

Choreographing Popular Forms of Collectivity

Goran Petrović Lotina

Until recently it was suggested that First World capitalist societies lived in a postdemocratic time. Following philosopher Jacques Rancière (1995), who proposed this term in 1995, and sociologist and political scientist Colin Crouch (2000), who has popularised it since 2000, neoliberalism has created the conditions for postdemocracy. This socioeconomic model of politics was developed after the Second World War and implemented in Western European countries throughout the 1980s. By foreclosing the idea of a political alternative, neoliberalism suppressed the conflictual nature of the left-right political spectrum and urged political parties to locate them at the center. By establishing “a consensus at the centre” neoliberalism intended to create a harmonious society inhabited by free individuals./1/ To achieve this goal, neoliberalism paved the way for a politics in which the interests of the people became regulated and controlled by financial capital, stripping state institutions of their democratic role of governance and enabling the banking and business elites to take power over them. This is how the hegemony of transnational and global flow of funds was established, restricting the role of state institutions to setting laws ensuring the smooth flow of capital and reducing the possibility of the people to exercise their democratic right to free elections that in reality offered no concrete choice. By establishing “consensus at the centre,” neoliberalism relegated democratic elements of popular sovereignty from the realm of politics and created what we call a postdemocratic age.

The challenge to postdemocracy arrived with the crisis of neoliberalism that was accelerated with the collapse of the global financial system. Following the international downturn of financial institutions which began with the crash of the investment bank Lehman Brothers in 2008 and subsequently influenced the debt crisis in several eurozone member states (Greece, Cyprus, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, and Spain), governments across the EU implemented huge bank bailouts. To sustain the banks, they introduced austerity measures and budget cuts across various sectors. One consequence was a decrease in the economic power of citizens and an increase in unemployment rates across the EU, particularly in the southern countries with already lower living standards. A sudden drop in living standards in this region caused dissatisfaction with current politics and gave rise to numerous unrests. In 2011 in Greece and Spain people took to the streets to protest these austerity measures. United around the Greek Aganaktismenoi (2011) and the Spanish Indignados or Movimiento 15-M (2011), they stood against the neoliberal model of financial resolution and the elite class of wealthy bankers and businessmen. The elite was accused of being more or less directly responsible for the crisis that affected their living standards. The protestors claimed a greater power of the people and the transformation of the political system and institutions that privilege one social class. Factions of these movements gave rise to left-wing populist parties: in Spain, Podemos (2014) under Pablo Iglesias Turrión, and in Greece, Syriza (2015), headed by Aléxis Tsípras. These populist parties set as a goal to transform institutions of parliamentary democracy at the national and the EU level and defend the demands of the people./2/

Nevertheless the challenge to the hegemony of the neoliberal postdemocratic politics of consensus did not arrive only from the left-leaning civic movements and populist political parties. The unprecedented influx of people across the Mediterranean from economically vulnerable areas and conflict zones in Africa and the Middle East into the EU, particularly in

2015 and 2016, /3/ has been instrumentalized by right-wing political parties for criticizing the EU debt crisis./4/ They are the Freedom Party of Austria; the French National Rally, formerly known as the National Front; the Italian Northern League; Alternative for Germany; the Netherlands Freedom Party; the Conservative People's Party of Estonia; the UK Independence Party; Poland's Congress of the New Right; and the Danish People's Party. In the course of austerity measures and with unemployment rates increasing across the EU, leaders of these parties gained support by designating immigrant workers and asylum seekers a threat to the economic and cultural stability of the nation-state, national identity, and national security./5/ They accused the current political elites of implementing immigration and integration policies that ruined the welfare state./6/ Promising to restore the economic power of the workers and the middle class at the national level, right-wing narratives resorted to racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, and other forms of intolerance. Besides criticizing current immigration laws on national and EU levels, they began to mobilize Euroskeptic, ethnic, and authoritarian discourses.

In a nutshell, the dissatisfaction with the hegemony of "consensus at the centre" opened up a possibility for new politics that aim at restoring democratic elements of popular sovereignty. Populist movements and parties designate politicians who put business interests above the interests of the people as the elite, dividing the social realm into two camps: the people and the elite. Nevertheless, whereas populist movements on the left are calling upon a recovery of democratic elements of equality and popular sovereignty by advocating much more progressive and inclusive forms of subjectivity that would embrace various cultural differences, populist movements on the right are mobilizing regressive forms of subjectivity based on nationalism, racism, xenophobia, and other forms of intolerance, at once relativizing past and current

responsibilities of “advanced” societies and neoliberal politics for wars, conflicts, and environmental crises that force people to emigrate.

To suggest, however, that the left-wing populist parties are seeking a solution in transforming the EU institutions while putting emphasis on economic problems, and that the right-wing populist parties are resorting to Euroskepticism while emphasizing cultural differences, would oversimplify the complexity of populism. For example, new forms of nationalism can be registered on the left. The political scholar Julian Göppfarth (2019) observes that left-wing movements with populist elements, such as Jeremy Corbyn’s Momentum in the UK, Jean-Luc Mélenchon’s France Insoumise in France, and Sahra Wagenknecht’s Aufstehen in Germany, call for restricted immigration in order to reestablish the welfare state. At the same time, a nationalistic imperative on the right began to show new tendencies too. In April 2019, ahead of the EU elections that took place between May 23 and 26, the then Italian deputy prime minister and leader of the right-wing populist party the League, Matteo Salvini, invited Euroskeptic parties to unite in a pan-European block (Giuffrida 2019). Thus, in both cases, new forms of popular identities are being created.

One conclusion can be drawn from such a conjuncture. Postdemocracy is the consequence of instituting “a consensus at the centre.” In neoliberalism, the politics of consensus are identified with individual liberty and the rule of law regulated by financial capital. This type of identification imposes same solutions for both the political left and the political right, doing away with any possibility of popular struggle. For consensual politics, all forms of contest, conflict, a(nta)gonism, and social mobilization are considered to be exceptions. The view on society as a harmonious unity of various individuals has been suppressing democratic elements of collectivity, equality, popular sovereignty, and the possibility of confronting the governing.

This is why the rise of populist movements may be seen only as an aspiration towards the return of democracy to the realm of politics and popular sovereignty into institutions. However, such a tendency, at least from the left-wing perspective, should not be seen as a way of establishing “a populist regime.” Rather, it should be seen as an expression of endeavor for the transformation of existing institutions and the construction of progressive politics.

In what follows I consider the return of democracy to the realm of politics and popular sovereignty into institutions as a performative practice of constructing the people, that is, innovative forms of subjectivity, community, or collectivity, on the political left. Providing insights into the politico-philosophical models of democracy that emanate from the differential civic movements—absolute democracy informed by the horizontal choreography of leaderless civic movements and agonistic democracy informed by the vertical choreography of civic movements that have leaders—I envisage the performative practice of constructing the people in terms of choreography of articulation that enables the moment of sublimation of horizontality into verticality, embodying the multitude of democratic identities in a popular form of collectivity. The choreography of articulation suggests a view beyond the dualism of position on the political left and a possible way of empowering the left to contest a dominant politics and a growing institutionalization of the right-wing populism and to embody alternative forms of living together. The performance *100% City* by the Berlin-based art collective Rimini Protokoll offers a view on articulation as a choreographing practice of enacting imagined forms of collectivity.

Constructing the People

Many political philosophers have discussed populism, offering different perspectives on it. Some recent and most influential contributors are Chantal Mouffe, Cas Mudde and Christobal

Rovira Kaltwasser, Benjamin Moffitt, Jacques Rancière, Kirk Hawkins, Ernesto Laclau, and Kurt Weyland. In their book *Populism: A Very Short Introduction*, Mudde and Kaltwasser (2017, 6) define populism as ideology, “a thin-centred ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic camps, ‘the pure people’ versus ‘the corrupt elite,’ and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people.” On the other hand, Moffitt (2016, 3) in *The Global Rise of Populism* describes populism as style, “a political style that is performed, embodied and enacted across a variety of political and cultural contexts.” In his essay “The Populism That Is Not to Be Found,” Rancière (2016, 102) envisages populism as a term that “serves simply to draw the image of a certain people.”⁷⁷ Because people as such do not exist, Rancière explains, there are only diverse and antagonistic images or figures that condense in themselves sequences of discourses that reject either governmental elites, practices, and ideologies or foreigners, differences, and otherness. In *Is Chávez Populist? Measuring Populist Discourse in Comparative Perspective*, Hawkins (2009, 1049) lays out a discursive definition of populism; analyzing the speeches of some populist leaders—actual words, tone, and style of the language—he defines populism “as a Manichaean discourse that identifies Good with a unified will of the people and Evil with a conspiring elite.” For his part, Laclau (2005, 74) in *On Populist Reason* envisages populism as a political logic that manifests through a discursive articulation of plurality of dissimilar and unsatisfied demands in an equivalential chain of popular demands. In other words, the political logic implies a symbolic unity of the people, or “the underdog,” against “an institutionalised other.” Kurt Weyland’s (2001) essay “Clarifying a Contested Concept: Populism in the Study of Latin American Politics” brings one more perspective on populism. He writes that populism is “a political strategy through which a personalistic leader seeks or exercises government power based on direct, unmediated, uninstitutionalised support from large numbers of mostly unorganized followers” (14, cited

Moffitt 2016, 20). Drawing upon Laclau's view on populism and findings from their joint volume *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (Laclau and Mouffe 1985), Mouffe (2018, 11) in *For a Left Populism* stresses that populism is "a way of doing politics that can take various ideological forms according to both time and space, and is compatible with a variety of institutional frameworks." Whether conceived as ideology, style, figure, discourse, political logic, or strategy, populism in all these views implies a moment of division between the people on the one side and the elite on the other.

What follows from this observation is that the debate about populism is a political debate about constructing the people, that is, new forms of subjectivity and community. The performance scholar Janelle Reinelt (2014, 37) writes that "the absence of 'people' or the inability to imagine one holds back the development of effective political strategies." This important topic, evolving around the notion of "the common," has been at the core of many political theories from the left. To envisage "the common," political philosophers such as Michael Hardt, Antonio Negri, Paolo Virno, Roberto Esposito, Maurizio Lazzarato, Giorgio Agamben, and Jean-Luc Nancy found inspiration in the horizontal, leaderless civic movements, such as Indignados, and the philosopher Benedict de Spinoza's concept of the multitude, which allowed them to envisage community in terms of absolute democracy. In *Theological-Political Treatise*, Spinoza ([1670] 2018) conceived of the multitude as a plurality of singularities that exist in the common public sphere, while rejecting any form of authority of the state. Drawing upon Spinoza's view, Virno (2004) suggests that the multitude survived the creation of the state through the distinction between the private and the collective. According to him, the multitude inhabits the middle region between the private and collective domains that he calls the "common place." The common place consists of shared linguistic and logical forms dubbed the "public intellect." Virno writes, "The movement to the front of the part of the intellect as

such, the fact that the most general and abstract linguistic structures are becoming instruments for orienting one's own conduct, this situation, in my opinion, is one of the conditions which define the contemporary multitude" (15). When the public intellect is situated in the common space, outside special places, community, or the state, the multitude is a plurality that manifests in a collective action of the many without converging into one, into a *volonté générale*. It stands for new forms of subjectivity and community that emanate from the common space, the harmonious and smooth space without a constitutive division. Such a community, enabled by the principle of withdrawal from state institutions and the logic of representation that they imply, is an expression of direct rule of the multitude, of the horizontal politics of absolute democracy.

On the other hand, to envisage alternative subjectivities and forms of community some other left-wing political philosophers, such as Laclau and Mouffe, found inspiration in the vertical social movements with leadership, such as Podemos, and the philosopher Thomas Hobbes's notion of the people.^{8/} In *De Cive*, Hobbes ([1642] 1983) explains that the multitude, which consists of a plurality of individual wills with no rights and laws and which is as such threatened by violence of the other, at a certain moment has to transform by means of social contract into the people that has one will and to whom one action may be attributed. In Hobbes, the concept of people is correlated to the state and the existence of rules and laws, which can guarantee peace and security to all citizens. In modern democratic societies, the rule of the people is secured through elections. It is through the plurality of voices that elected leaders may represent and defend the demands of the citizens and protect their rights. Accordingly, the elected representative does not have one will but represents various democratic wills within the institutions of parliamentary democracy.

Mouffe stresses the importance of institutions for establishing a concrete social order and constructing the people.^{9/} She writes that antagonism, a form of relationship in which opposite sides are seen as enemies, is inherent in societies and that the role of democratic institutions is to transform or articulate potential antagonism into agonism, a form of relationship in which opposite sides are seen as adversaries (Mouffe 2013). This view suggests that the role of institutions is to construct the people as agonistics.^{10/} Agonistics stands for a plurality of democratic identities that inhabit a striated space, such as women, workers, LGBTQIA, people of color, immigrants, and environmentalists. These democratic identities are constructed through the principle of identification with the set of ethico-political values that are shared among the members of one or more associations. They symbolize various democratic struggles, such as feminist, labor, or antiracist struggles, against a hegemonic politics that regulate their identities through the existing institutions. And it is only through engagement with institutions that dominate them that various democratic identities may contest a hegemonic politics, defend their demands, and invigorate democracy.

Accordingly, left populism should be seen as a reaction to the failure of a hegemonic politics to represent and defend a multiplicity of democratic demands within institutions. It entails mobilization of various unsatisfied democratic associations of people in a social movement, calling for the return of popular sovereignty to the realm of politics. This populist tendency requires the articulation of the initial horizontality of the multitude democratic identities into a vertical structure of a popular identity represented by a charismatic leader. This, for example, was the case with the horizontal movement Indignados (2011), which articulated in the vertical political structure with the leadership of Podemos (2014). The role of the leader is to incorporate, defend, and represent the unity of different democratic entities that share similar ethico-political values. Such a moment of representation implies a choreography that inscribes

the people within a particular symbolic order and embodies a collective will. Accordingly, populism is a performative practice of constructing the people on the symbolic level. It articulates a particular set of relations between the differential democratic entities into a form of popular (comm)unity that is symbolically united and represented. When community is envisaged in such a way, it becomes what Gramsci ([1935] 2007, 186) calls “‘concordia discors’ that does not have unity for its point of departure but contains in itself the reason for a possible unity.” When the reason for unity lies in the shared quest for freedom and equality, that is, in shared ethico-political values, the common cause of struggle for left-wing populism must be envisaged as a critical engagement with institutions dominated by the elite and threatened by the right-wing populist parties. It is through strategic engagement with the existing institutions, symbolic orders, and representational norms that innovative forms of community may be embodied.

The Choreography of Articulation

Various ways of constructing the people that emanate from civic movements inspired some performance scholars to examine how artistic performances embody democratic forms of community. There are performance scholars who find inspiration in the horizontal politics of absolute democracy, in the rule of the self-organizing multitude. For example, in *Artist at Work*, the philosopher and performance scholar Bojana Kunst (2015) writes that the production of subjectivity and community is at the center of the capitalist processes of production. Drawing upon Virno (2004), she stresses that the shift from the industrial phase of capitalism, or fordism, to the postindustrial phase, or postfordism, is a consequence of changing the process of production and the role of work. With such a change, not only has the focus of

production moved from the synchronization of the body with the machine to the exploitation of constant movement, creative potentials, and linguistic-cognitive competencies of individuals to produce capital; more important, the line between work time and leisure time disappeared, and everything became work, including social relationships. Kunst suggests that by means of exploitation of human potentials to think, imagine, communicate, and collaborate through movement, artistic performances have also been put at the service of the production of capital, adding economic value to the physical and linguistic-cognitive abilities of humans and hence to the homogenization of society. Bodily movement in dance and performance, collaborative relations between the performers and the audience, as well as the visibility of art and artists, are also exploited to produce capital. By subordinating every aspect of human life to the demand of capital for the acceleration of consumption, postfordism succeeded in accelerating even time, adding economic value to temporality. The consequence is a creation of a community embodied in workers' identity.

To replace the postfordist condition, Kunst introduced a postrepresentational and temporal dimension of duration. According to Kunst, manifestations of duration, such as slow movement, sleep, laziness, and inactivity, reveal that our perception of time is constructed and economically conditioned. Hence it is a temporal dimension of duration that provides the people and the workers with the potential to subvert the capitalist process of production. She locates the subversive potential of duration in the strategies of avoiding the movement accelerated by capital. What Kunst (2015) calls "a durational search for new political embodiments" through strategic avoidance shows in both civic movements and artistic performances. For instance, she writes that the international, horizontal civic movement Occupy (2011–2) consists of "localised but connected forms of temporal persistence and endurance in certain places" (117). She traces temporal persistence and endurance too in Igor

Štromajer's and Brane Zorman's performance *Statika* (2007), broadcast from the Lippo Centre in Hong Kong onto a big screen installed in the Hellerau Festival House in Dresden. During this performance, which lasts over thirty-five minutes, the audience observes a static robot in front of the flickering city lights. The audience's waiting for something to happen, their persistence and endurance, becomes a durational pleasure that can create a radical political and antagonistic disruption and discloses the plurality of ways of living together.

Accordingly, duration as an alternative view on temporality fosters an understanding of the common as a "merely the ordinary state of being together, deprived of all historical tasks" (Kunst 2015, 92). When the common is understood in ahistorical terms, community enables a constant dispossession of collaboration. In such a community there is no exchange, no identity, no representation, no economy, no universality, no otherness or anything else to be shared; in fact, in such a community, Kunst writes, "there is no common being" (96). There is only "I," or as Nancy (1991, xxxix) who inspired Kunst suggests, a "strange being-the-one-with-the-other to which we are exposed." The community that is thus called into existence consists of the parallelism of positions of embodied "I." The theory behind such a view suggests that a popular form of community is not united by any representation but by the temporal dimension of what Kunst calls meeting, which stands for a durational procedure capable of addressing a specific relationship with movement.

However, despite an attempt to avoid any representation of identity by means of duration and enable the embodiment of the self-organized multitude, Kunst's view on community remains trapped in the very problematic that she aims to challenge. By ascribing political value to duration, Kunst preestablishes identity at the level of a temporal dimension manifested by less work, inactivity, and waiting rather than by acceleration, flexibility, and efficacy. The

consequence of this tactic, which opposes the workers' identity associated with acceleration with the one associated with duration, is the creation of an essentialist identity. It reconfirms the workers' identity that, in reversal, works less, slowly, and lazily. As a result, a unity of people becomes designated by class identity incapable of avoiding, that is, withdrawing from the postfordist techniques of production and returning to "common use" social, affective, cognitive, and other life forms, as Kunst would like it to be. Within this view, community becomes simply a class-differentiated model of democracy.

To envisage community beyond reductionism to class identity, we must acknowledge that the capitalist forces cannot be perceived only in terms of postfordist techniques of production. They also manifest in postfordist techniques of domination that aim at putting under control forces embodied through various social practices by means of which different human associations are able to resurrect ethico-political values suppressed by economic interests and to contest the capitalist forces that dominate them. Techniques of domination are set in motion by various systems of control, such as law, bureaucracy, obligations, mass media, surveillance, and knowledge production. They rely on discourses that govern affects toward the construction of a community united around symbols that foster the reproduction of capital and sustain a hegemonic politics in power.

When capitalist forces are understood to hegemonize social forces through both the techniques of production and the techniques of domination, community must be envisaged beyond reductionism to any preestablished identity that has an ultimate ontological foundation, such as workers' identity, women's identity, immigrants' identity, or any other essentialist construction of identity. In fact, such a community must be capable of welding various democratic demands guided by disparate ethico-political values that are being suppressed by

global capitalist forces, such as those of women, immigrants, refugees, people of color, environmentalists, the poor, LGBTQIA, and antinuclear weapons activists, including demands that vary between the workers in the same or different company, country, or continent./11/ Accordingly, a community that embodies various democratic identities can be seen only as the result of collective identifications around a set of shared ethico-political values. Radical relationalism that stems from the process of identification transforms the multitude of democratic demands, or democratic wills, in Gramsci's ([1935] 2007, 164) "collective" or "popular will."

This view implies that community, or rather collectivity, is historically constructed in the encounter between different human associations that anticipate "I" in terms of "we" and "they," or of "the people" and "the elite." Consequently, to embody a popular form of collectivity that upholds suppressed ethico-political values, the people must unite and engage in a struggle against a common cause of subordination: against the hegemonic forces that dominate, possess, and exploit them at every level of their lives. If the hegemonic politics rely on discourses that govern affects toward the construction of a popular identity united around symbols that foster the reproduction of capital, then the strategy of engagement with institutionalized politics requires a moment of countersymbolization. Such a countertactic points out that every social unity is a potential hegemonic unity constructed at the symbolic level and conditioned by that which it excludes. It is then by articulating a (counter)hegemony that a popular collectivity mobilizes affects toward the construction of democratic forms of living together allegiant to shared ethico-political values./12/

The choreography of articulation of the multitude into the people, of an immediate horizontality into a mediated verticality, enables the return of democratic social forces in the realm of politics

and popular sovereignty in the institutions. It calls for the sublimation of the initial temporal dimension of duration that avoids and resists a hegemonic politics into a proactive engagement with and struggle against the institutionalized forces that dominate various aspect of people's lives. To establish a popular collectivity, then, through the strategic engagement with the politics, discourses, and symbolic representations that have power over institutions, the temporal dimension must articulate at a particular moment in the spatial dimension. As Laclau (1990, 40–3) writes, time always becomes spatially represented through a cyclic succession of dislocations. What is called space is a sequence in which relations between the different subject positions allegiant to shared ethico-political values are partially structured, embodied, and represented on the symbolic level within a particular institutional context and at a particular moment. This approach suggests that the power of people does not reside in use-value, in moving fast or moving slow, but rather in collective identification around shared ethico-political values advocated through various social practices, including the performing arts.

Imagining a Popular Form of Collectivity in Rimini Protokoll's 100% City

In *Populism and Performance in the Bolivarian Revolution of Venezuela*, the performance scholar Angela Marino (2018) suggests that left-wing populism is a performance of re-creating the state. She stresses that popular performance is constructed by complex cultural and political arrangements that move through a charismatic leader to re-create the state. She dubbed these arrangements or various embodied acts of performance “such as fiesta dance, theatre, music, and everyday performed behaviours that transmit unifying strategies of collective identification” “populist repertoires” (3). We can retain Marino's view that (left-wing) populism is constructed by various embodied acts of performance. However, we must

recognize that various performance practices not only transmit unifying strategies of collective identification; they also enact them, helping citizens to envisage, experience, and, eventually, generate alternative forms of collectivity.

The topic of constructing alternative subjectivities and imaginary forms of collectivity has been of concern for many performance artists. For example, a Berlin-based team of author-directors, Helgard Kim Haug, Stefan Kaegi, and Daniel Wetzl, who have worked together since 2000 under—as they prefer—the label Rimini Protokoll, has been interested in this topic. First thing to mention is that Rimini Protokoll does not work with professional actors but with “ordinary people.” The performance critic Eva Behrendt (2003) refers to the presence of ordinary people in performance as “experts of everyday-life.” Writing on Rimini Protokoll’s play about death in *Deadline*, Behrendt lists experts of everyday life (or, in this case, experts of everyday death!) as the owner of a crematorium, a tombstone sculptor, a funeral violinist, and a student of medicine. The performance critics Ulrike Garde and Meg Mumford (2016, 5) described ordinary people in performance as “real people,” that is, “contemporary people who have a verifiable physical existence, and who usually have not received institutional theatre training and have little or no prior stage experience.” They write, “These real people literally appear on stage or are represented—through techniques such as verbatim text, film, pre-recorded or live-feed video—and figure as consensual protagonists in specific theatre forms and genres” (5).

Real, ordinary people, members of local communities, are the main protagonists of Rimini Protokoll’s performance *100% City* (2008). Working with one hundred residents of a particular city, i.e. Athens (2010), London (2012), Krakow (2013), Philadelphia (2014), Yogyakarta (2015), São Paulo (2017), and elsewhere, they wanted to envisage the city as a collectivity consisting of various democratic associations of people. I attended *100% City* in 2014 in

Brussels, during Kunstenfestival des Arts, a few weeks before the federal elections that took place on May 25. The casting of one hundred Brusselaars was done in accordance with the five criteria maintained by the Brussels Institute for Statistics and Analysis (BISA): age, sex, nationality, place of residence, and family composition. To make the population of Brussels even more representative, the data proceeding from the sociological surveys, such as language, employment, nationality at birth, religion, and sexual orientation, were also taken into account.^{/13/} In addition to these one hundred persons, five undocumented individuals—an immigrant, an asylum seeker, a diplomat, an expat, and a foreign student—were also invited to take part. Each participant was asked to select another, respecting the demographic criteria. As it turned out, the complexity of Brussels’ demographics, as well as the fixed dates of the run, September 2013 to May 2014, required some casting adaptations. Brigitte Neervoort, a Brussels-based representative of Rimini Protokoll responsible for coordination and casting of 100% Brussels, employed a cluster principle that sometimes engaged her and her six-member team to find people who would fit the statistics.^{/14/} Afterward each participant was photographed and interviewed on the basis of the following questionnaire: “I am unique because——. At home I speak——. On stage you can recognise me by——. I would join a demonstration for or against——. The slogan would be——. I have this tic or idiosyncrasy——. I belong to the following groups——.” The questionnaire served as a basis for the performance narrative, while the answers accompanied the participants’ portraits in the book, which also contained the statistical data, the description of the casting process, and a text by the sociologist Eric Corijn, who described the city of Brussels in all its diversity.

100% Brussels began like this: a person steps into the spotlight and starts speaking in the microphone in French and, for a moment, in Dutch. For instance, in French he says, “Je m’appelle Benoit Laine” (My name is Benoit Laine); then he continues in Dutch: “Ik werk

voor BISA, Staatsinstelling voor het Brusselse Gewest” (I work for BISA, the Brussels Institute for Statistics and Analysis). After giving some autobiographical information and showing the book that contains statistics on Brussels inhabitants divided into categories, such as sex, age, community, civil status, and nationality, as well as the list of citizens taking part in the performance, Laine—responsible for the Methods and Statistics unit at BISA—explains the process of casting. This is what he says in French: “Afterwards, we had to find 100 persons that would represent the city following a [statistically based] sampling plan. I live in Molenbeek-Saint-Jean, just like 8% of the inhabitants of Brussels. I should still find 7 [persons from Molenbeek]. Yet, I had to find 14 persons between 0 and 9 years old [from Brussels]. Therefore, I have started a chain reaction, and as number 2 I chose my daughter Marion who is 7 years old.”¹⁵ Just like Marion, Laine’s daughter, who appears on stage wearing the swimming goggles that identify her, every other person steps into the spotlight with an object of identification that extends their autobiographical narrative.

One hundred inhabitants of Brussels proceed to the microphone, one at a time, and introduce themselves. They are families with children, singles, or couples. We are introduced to people of different origins, from different countries, speaking different languages. Some are scientists, teachers, social workers, or volunteers; some are retired, unemployed, students, or pupils. Among them are people with disabilities, undocumented persons, people of color, a member of the LGBTQIA community. Slowly, people of different origins, language groups, colors, genders, sexes, ages, weights, and heights fill the stage. An elderly woman, Christian Gabriels, who introduces herself at the beginning as a retired person now dedicated to voluntary work, steps out of the crowd to explain that the 100 persons on stage represent 1,154,635 inhabitants of Brussels, and that each one of them is a representative of approximately 11,546 inhabitants of Brussels. Another person, Max Nisol, announces that 49% of Brussels inhabitants are men

and 51% women, and that the transgender community, to whom this person belongs, is not officially represented in BISA statistics. At that moment, the other 99 persons split into groups of men and women.

One hundred persons on stage split into different groups in order to simulate different associations based on age difference, nationality, or neighborhood; when one person declares she lives in Belgium due to the political and economic crisis in her own country, another person joins the same side of the stage. Participants express different opinions on topics, such as “I think there should be one common language within the European Union,” or “I think the EU should grow.” The demands of women to wear a veil, the unemployed to work, the gay to adopt children, and many other local actualities always split the citizens according to their opinion in different associations, left and right from the line that divides the stage. The same happens with questions about capitalism, belonging to political parties, and so on. And when those who decided not to vote at the forthcoming federal elections in Belgium are asked to leave the stage, they can only observe how the rest of the inhabitants of Brussels make decisions about issues that might concern them too, such as the Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership; financing Congo’s government, that is, keeping Congo in debt; tax paying; and reducing the number of cars in the city.

100% City demonstrates that inhabitants of a city may share some values and disagree about others. It also shows that each citizen may belong to different human associations constructed around mutually disparate and conflicting ethico-political values. This suggests that the city is an expression of an eternal tension between the multitude of human associations. It is not a smooth space but rather a striated space of constitutive division.^{/16/} Accordingly, the articulation of various social movements, democratic identities, and different demands in a

popular collectivity can only be seen as the result of collective identification with shared ethico-political values. This is clearly demonstrated at the end of the performance, when “all” inhabitants of Brussels began to dance, enacting an imagined (comm)unity. In the context of the Belgian federal elections that were to be held just a few weeks after the performance, the practice of dance consisting of discordant movements became a symbolic unity of different social practices, democratic identities, and public spaces in struggle for freedom and equality, providing “us” with agency. In 100% Brussels a call for unity does not propose a temporal fusion that avoids a strategic engagement of the people with the existing institutions. It suggests a unity through voter turnout, so far the most democratic way to engage with existing institutions, contest a hegemonic politics, and gain power over the right-wing political parties.

All this can only mean that a popular form of collectivity does not manifest in the temporal dimension of duration nor the dimension of acceleration. In fact, it does not depend on the qualitative properties of humans to move, be it fast or slow. Neither does it manifest in a form of unity that inhabits the smooth space without a constitutive division. In other words, it is not a matter of unity in an essentialist identity, whether workers’, women’s, or immigrants’. Rather, a popular form of collectivity is a consequence of identification between the multiplicity of democratic identities that inhabit a space striated by many lines of separation yet allegiant to shared ethico-political values. As such, it presupposes a unity in struggle against a common cause of subordination, against the capitalist forces that dominate, exploit, or discriminate both separately and collectively. Accordingly, populism is not an ideology, a set of normative ideas, political beliefs and attitudes, as Mudde and Kaltwasser advocate. Nor is it a coherent political style as proposed by Moffitt, a discourse reduced to semiotics and phonology as in Hawkins, or a strategy depending exclusively on the capacities of individuals as in Weyland. Rather, populism is a choreographing practice of constructing or articulating the people, or popular

forms of collectivity, that can take many forms. It is a fusion of social forces in a struggle against the elite. Only when populist movements from the left-wing political spectrum engage with the existing institutions, representations, and discourse, dominated by the elites, are they capable of contesting and transforming them and returning popular sovereignty to the realm of politics. In this sense, populism (on the political left) can be seen as a counterhegemonic, choreopolitical practice capable of dislocating the existing and articulating an alternative order of politics, symbolic representations, and discourses, evolving around the shared ethico-political values of freedom and equality.

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1 On “a consensus at the centre” and its consequences for the growing popularity of the right-wing political parties in the 1990s, see Mouffe 2005.

2 This chapter puts the focus on populism in Western Europe. Populism in Eastern Europe, just like in the other regions of the world, has different manifestations and requires a separate study that would provide insights into the local historical, geopolitical, cultural, and economic constellations.

3 Immigrations to Europe in the second decade of the twentieth century differ from immigrations to Europe seen previously, by an unprecedented number of asylum seekers and sharply divergent routes of arrival. See Collett and Le Coz 2018.

4 Anti-immigration has been playing a key role in the growing popularity of the right-wing populist parties across Europe since the mid 1980s. See Ivarsflaten 2007; Mouffe 2002.

5 Mudde and Kaltwasser (2017) write that the right-wing populist parties see immigrants as a threat to national security.

6 Akkerman (2012) writes about the significance of immigration and integration policies for the radical right parties.

7 “The Populism That Is Not to Be Found” was first published in French in 2013.

8 On Laclau and Mouffe’s critical approach to Hobbes’s theory, see Laclau and Mouffe 1985; Mouffe 2013, 24–41.

9 Rancière’s model of communal anarchism is also inspired by the notion of the people. However, unlike Mouffe, he dismisses institutions and representations as foundations of domination and hierarchy. On the difference between Mouffe and Rancière, see Petrović Lotina 2018.

10 Mouffe’s view on society in conflictual terms has been influenced by Carl Schmitt. See Mouffe 2005, 36–69.

11 When subjectivities are approached in collective, relational, and ethico-political terms, identities such as women and workers do not disappear; they stand for the feminist and labor struggles on every level that these identities are subordinated to the capitalist forces of domination.

12 Taking a lead from the theory of hegemony, I have been developing the idea of articulation as a choreographic practice (Petrović Lotina 2017).

13 BISA gathers information about population based on age, sex, nationality, place of residence, and family composition. All other data are provided by universities, NGOs, or institutes.

14 I am drawing here on the phone interview that I conducted with Brigitte Neervoort, a Brussels-based Rimini Protokoll delegate responsible for coordination and casting of 100% Brussels on October 9, 2017.

15 Video link to the performance: <https://www.rimini-protokoll.de/website/en/project/100-brussels>.

16 The performance scholar Christopher Balme (2014) suggests that the “theatrical public sphere” too consists of a multiplicity of spaces.