

Ulrike Hamann  
Erden Kosova  
Zuzana Tabačková  
Julian Bauer  
Maja Figge  
“sharing/learning” audience/participants

What practices constitute the commons? What are the conditions of the situated processes of *commoning*? What and how do we thereby learn? What would constitute a new sense of sharing, distributing, partaking? And, how can we take the idea of relationality seriously and institute structures of reciprocity between art, academia, and activism? To address these questions the round table *commoning/communing* brings together three projects focusing on urban practices of *commoning*.

Transcription of the Round Table and Participatory Discussion  
*commoning/communing*

With

Ulrike Hamann (sociologist, postcolonial theorist, urban activist) /  
Kotti & Co  
Erden Kosova (art critic) / Apartment Project  
Zuzana Tabačková (architect, urban planner) / Spolka Collective

Moderated by

Julian Bauer and Maja Figge

In English

On 29.06.2019

During the symposium *sharing/learning: methods of the collective in art, research and activism* by the DFG-Graduiertenkolleg “Das Wissen der Künste” in cooperation with / at District \* School without Center

Editors’ note: This text is a transcription of an audio recording of a symposium, which took place over one year ago, and which was not conceived to be published in this form – although the decision to document the event was made beforehand. The arrangement of the audio documentation privileges the spoken word. Since the recording device was plugged into the mixing console, the microphones functioned simultaneously as an amplifying and a recording system. Thus, the microphones not only decisively co-shaped the proceedings of that very event, but also its remains. In this way the technical apparatus conditioned how the event was (not) captured and provided a scale for closeness-distance.

In order to make this transcription more easily accessible for a reading mode that is akin to languages of the written word, we have made some adjustments to grammar and syntax. However we decided to maintain the speaking tone by leaving in colloquialisms, as well as referencing recorded actions in the space (which we have marked in italics and square

parenthesis). The time stamps appearing in the text give a sense of the duration of events, and the moments in which persons speak at the same time. In order to preserve the safety and the closeness, which developed during the symposium, we have anonymized the audience/participants and omitted some references in comments or presentations.



Fig. 1.

Panel (from left to right) Julian Bauer, Erden Kosova, Maja Figge, Ulrike Hamann and Zuzana Tabačková

Photo: Verena Melgarejo Weinandt. Courtesy: DFG-Graduiertenkolleg "Das Wissen der Künste"

#00:00:10-1#

Maja Figge (Maja): My name is Maja Figge and I'm also part of the organizing team of this symposium and together with my colleague Julian Bauer I will moderate this session. This is the third round table on *commoning/communing*, which brings together two different projects focusing on urban practices of commoning or communing, which are all at least partly based in Berlin. For those of you, who aren't familiar with the terminology: "Commons" can be understood as commonly produced, cared for, shared resources or products. These could be resources like water, air, knowledge, open-source software or housing. Finding rules of the consensus by self-organizations is called "communing". So one could say, "there is no commons without communing" - this is a quote by [Peter] Linebaugh. This means that the rules found are enforced by the community collectively and according to their needs. And in this workshop today, the feed of commoning, the practices which constitute the commons and communing in the sense of making a community or a collective, is addressed through the lens of the following questions: What practices constitute the commons? What are the conditions of the situated processes of commoning? What and how do we thereby learn? What would constitute a new sense of sharing, distributing, participating? And, how can we take the idea of relationality seriously and institute structures of reciprocity between art, academia, and activism? We collected these questions in the conversations we had with our guests, in previous meetings and phone calls. Together, we want to discuss how different methods of communing and commoning can respond to different neoliberal conditions (one, a highly-trimmed welfare state, another a post-socialist situation or authoritarian capitalism) and to the question of how to protest.

Now, we want to present our guests and the first one I want to introduce is Zuzana Révészová. She is an architect, an urban planner and part of the collective Spolka. And Spolka deals with the production of space and

engaging with the public in the collective making of our cities. Their focus is on Central and Eastern Europe with the aim of cultivating the public realm through educational activities, artistic and architectural interventions, and institutional and public dialogue. Their projects address issues related to the city, public spaces, participation, co-creation, equality and communication. And their activities mainly centered on Košice, Slovakia, the hometown of the members of Spolka, but who are currently based in Berlin, Prague, Brno and Košice.

#00:03:14-2#

#00:03:20-5#

Julian Bauer (Julian): Our second guest is Ulrike Hamann, who is a postdoctoral researcher at the department “Diversity and Social Conflict” at the Institute for Social Sciences at Humboldt University Berlin. She researches and teaches on questions of racism, migration and the city. She currently leads two larger research projects on conviviality, housing, refugees and neighborhoods, partly at the Berlin Institute for Empirical Integration and Migration Research, also situated at the HU. As part of her activist work, she co-founded the neighborhood initiative Kotti & Co in 2011, where she still is an active member and which is one of the reasons why we invited her here today. Most of you will have heard of or know Kotti & Co, based at Kottbusser Tor in Berlin Kreuzberg. The initiative fights locally for rent, controlled social housing, and against racism, and has established forms of knowledge production and learning from each other in the course of their protest.

And our third guest is Erden Kosova. He is an art critic who currently contributes to the organization of *Young Curators Academy*, a side event of the forthcoming *Herbstsalon 4* at Maxim Gorki Theater Berlin, which will be held in October 2019. Last year, he received the fellowship “Weltoffenes Berlin” of the Berlin Senate with the support of Apartment Project Berlin and Artists at Risk. He recently published the *Sess* newspaper in the frame of Sis Collective’s exhibition *In the Blink of A Bird*, which was hosted by nGbK this spring. The Sis collective is a group of artists from Turkey, who met when living and working together at a Berlin based artspace Apartment Project which is run by Selda Asla, who unfortunately had to cancel her participation due to her engagement in observing the elections in Istanbul last weekend, which were won by the oppositional CHP. And she proposed that we invite Erden instead and we are very happy that he stepped in. Thank you. The collective tackles the limited modes of public artistic expressions under “the accelerating trans-geographic state of exception” – that’s how they frame themselves. And Erden will draw from his experiences as a contributor to the exhibition, which addressed the topics of free speech, bureaucracy and immigration.

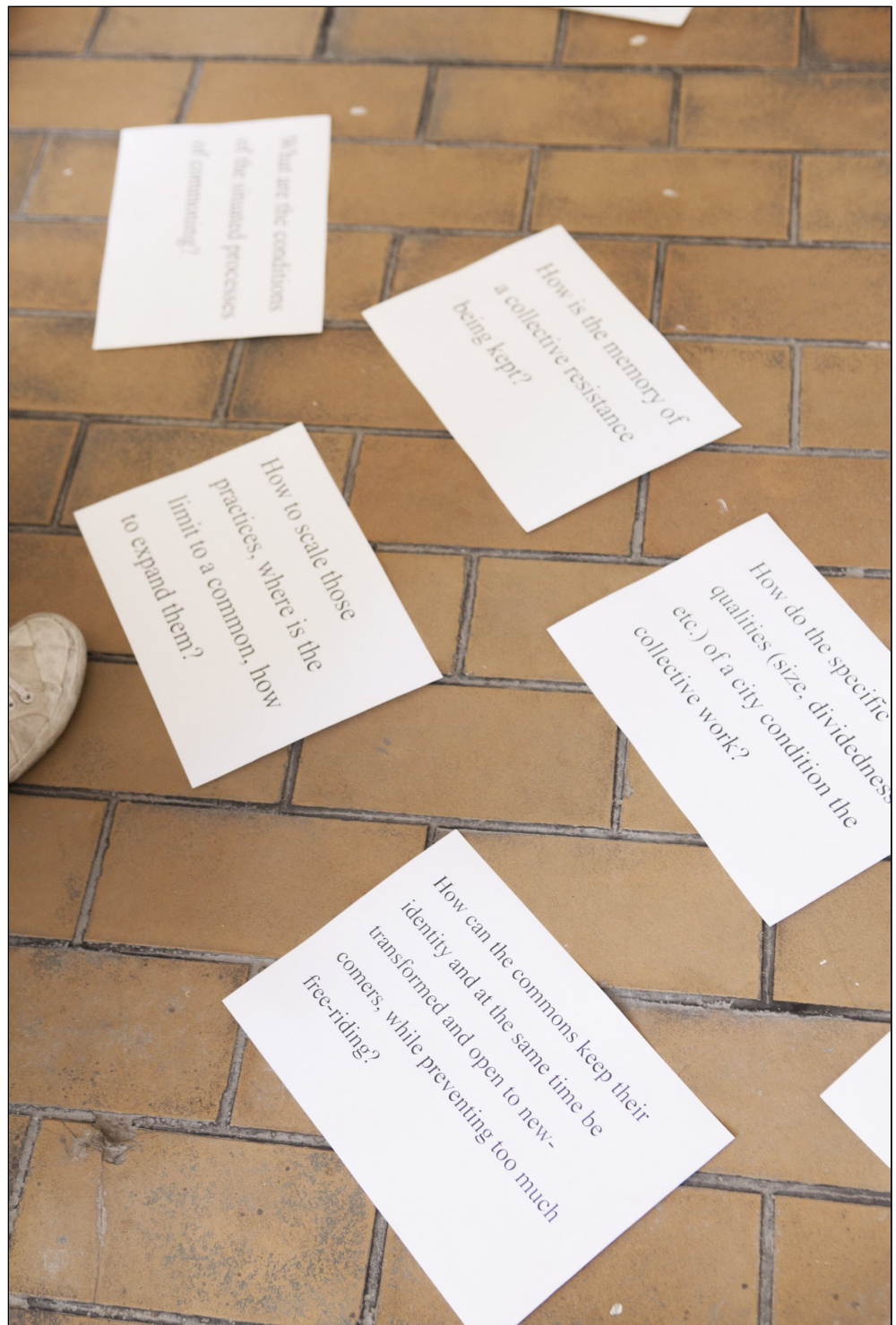


Fig. 2.

Working questions

Photo: Verena Melgarejo Weinandt. Courtesy: DFG-Graduiertenkolleg "Das Wissen der Künste"

And before we start, there are some remarks on how we've conceived this round table. So our idea was that we will have three short inputs by our guests and all of them prepared some questions that they - or rather all of us - want to discuss with you. So we printed them out. We also will have later on some slides. The idea is, to enter into a conversation all together, so it's sort of a reversed panel discussion, where we think and reflect together on these issues raised and the questions posted in the three presentations that you will all listen to soon. You can basically draw from your own experiences; you can answer with new questions; we encourage you to just use your imagination, and gather in small groups and we have paper. The best idea would be, that you decide on a question and then people gather together to talk about a certain question, but we can go into this a little bit further. I think we could start with

Zuzana.

#00:06:52-0#

#00:06:53-0#

Zuzana Tabačková (Zuzana): Hello and thank you, first of all. Thank you very much for the invitation, for Spolka. There is also my college Zuzana, Vicky and Lidia. And we are going to be also leading a workshop later in the afternoon and we can also continue these discussions afterwards. So this is more like a short statement, not so much going into depth of what we are doing. So we can perhaps continue on some of the topics, maybe more in detail, in the discussions. As already said in the introduction, in our project we are focusing on the production of space. And more concretely, we are interested in engaging people in the collective practices of shaping space. So the topic of the collective in our case is kind of twofold, because we could be also talking about ourselves, as the collective Spolka, and how and what we learned from each other, similarly to the collective yesterday, of how to exist in digital space and keep this kind of long distance relationships in digital space and physical space, since we don't really live in one place, as we have heard; and also how others joined our collective and leave our collective and how we function like that. And we could also talk about - and this is what I want to focus on in this short statement - how we tried to create other collectives. In more general, collective practices around production of space. So, what kind of matters we use, and how spaces and its co-production can be used, and how we try to use co-productional spaces to create various forms of collectivity. Space is what we are dealing with. Maybe shortly about that... as we already had a discussion about what is space for you and what is space for me. Especially, the material space is actually something that we all share, whether we want it or not. And you can unthink all of us here in this room, but it's not going to change the reality of the fact of us being physically in this room. So physical space in this kind of understanding and in this kind of context, which we all embody and inhabit with our material bodies, is our living condition, and therefore it is our shared concern - as kind of formulated in the abstract of the table. So, it is the thing that defines the 'we' in some aspect. And there is a pretty direct relationship between the two, so between the people and the space. Which allows the two to be shaped reciprocally, which is what we tried to do in our projects, where we use space as a means to create collectives which then in turn shaped the space and the space in turn shapes the collective and so on and so forth. So this is a kind of a circle or reciprocity process, which is kind of the idea of the commoning or of the commons. It is a tripartite of: people, resources (which in this case is the space, the physical material spaces), and processes (the rules which are in this case the use of the space, the care of this space, the transformation of the space).

These are just images from various projects [*referring to the slide show*] that we have been doing to demonstrate some aspects of how or what this theory, that I am talking about, looks in reality. So maybe we can talk about later what that means, if you have some questions. We try not always to build things in our projects. We have also build some, but I mean that 'building' of space will be a more direct 'shaping' of space. We also try to develop various matters that allow us to have a more diverse discussion about space, which is quite a complex thing. For example, developing together visions of space, or something that seems a bit banal, like just talking about what is this space, that actually it is right now. Because we all have different perspectives and different views on, actually: what is the physical space? We are going to test this thing in the afternoon, of how these different perspectives can actually come together. And with each method that we develop, we try to think about a particular audience, so different kinds of participants (and it's usually centered around one particular aspect of space) in order to give the dialogue a more precise quality of what we try to talk about. And we believe that everyone is an expert of space; thanks to our bodies that we inhabit and use the space. But also, each of us is an expert in their own right. Therefore, it is very important that we have a variety of forms

and also opportunities to participate. So we've tried to develop what playful matters and collectively speaking and thinking about space to engage also people like children or youngsters or people, who usually aren't interested in space or have never really thought about it. We tried to make it fun, otherwise no one really wants to speak about space with us, from this activist point of view.



Fig. 3.  
Zuzana Tabačková speaking during the discussion towards the end of the round table  
Photo: Juana Awad. Courtesy: DFG-Graduiertenkolleg "Das Wissen der Künste"

And we also make models. Like we wouldn't ask, for example, people "Hey, what do you want in this space?", but we will try to make models with them and speak through the form of model-making about a space. And then, we would also collectively build some one-to-one tests, and then use game elements to collectively talk and discuss the space and negotiate the various features of it. And we would sometimes also create partly finished interventions, so that they can be then appropriated by different people, change over time. And we, as the collective, are also always part of it and we are guiding the process and building also on our own special expertise. So, we are bringing our own expertise in the

process, like everybody else. But because we are trying to do, in these processes, as much as possible together with all the participants, the knowledge, that is created through these different methods, stays also with the people who are participating. So that the knowledge, that is created, is not something that we are extracting from the participants, but it's something that stays with them, so then they can further continue these processes and build on the things that they have learned.

And just shortly for the end, about the importance of a variety of opportunities and why that is so important to create different kinds of matters, and formats, and forms. And there, I find quite useful, to demonstrate, these two kinds of simple concepts of space. And I think these two concepts are quite useful, when we are thinking about commoning practices and common space. The one model of the space is that of a box, which is kind of a hard space - this is from architectural discourse -, where you are either inside of the box or your outside of it. You can at most peek through the windows, maybe, but it's mostly 'in or out'. And then there is the soft space, which is that of something like a fire; so that you can choose, where you position yourself in relation to the center. And the important thing about a soft space is that you can choose, where you want to be, and it's not either or. So in our project, we really try to construct the common space more as the fire, so that we can provide different opportunities to various people to engage and be involved in different ways that suit them, and also have different degrees of being involved. And it happens sometimes that we do need to construct a room, because of the conditions, in which we are working, but even then, we try to always keep the door open, so that people can always join or don't have to overtake a big boundary. Thank you.

#00:15:12-9#

#00:15:13-0#

[Applause]

#00:15:16-0#

#00:15:23-0#

Maja: So we just thought, if there are any questions on what was said, we could have a quick round of short questions, but otherwise we would just continue with the next presentation. Okay, so do you want to continue, if there are no questions?

#00:15:48-9#

Ulrike Hamann (Ulrike): I just have the question, if this is a soft space here, because it can vary?

#00:15:55-3#

Zuzana: It's a soft space and a hard space. So you can be still further away and not really be part of it or be more in the center. We are talking about the fishbowl discussion, which is a model of a soft space, because you can be closer to discussion or you can be further from discussion - that is one proposal.

#00:16:15-0#

#00:16:22-8#

Ulrike: So I am going to continue. I didn't bring slides. I brought you some of our material, which we produced during the last eight years that our initiative exists now. *[Passing along printed media]* Okay thanks. And it's a long history and I don't want to talk about all of it, but I engage with the three of the questions we were discussing in the meetings before, and against the background of our protests, I just want to elaborate a little bit on these questions, which we had also in the abstract.



Fig. 4.  
 Kotti & Co materials for viewing.  
 Photo: Verena Melgarejo Weinandt. Courtesy: DFG-Graduiertenkolleg  
 "Das Wissen der Künste"

So, the first question I want to talk about is, what are the conditions of the situated processes of commoning? And then, I want to talk about the structures of reciprocity between art, activism and academia. And I will end with a little talk about the different methods of commoning in response to neoliberal conditions.

The conditions of commoning, so as probably all of you know, commoning is a process, it needs time, it needs committed time over a longer period. So the urban commons, for instance, as David Harvey thinks about them, are something that we produce in a constant effort. It is nothing that is already there, nor will it stay, if you do not proceed with the process of commoning. So the commons, I want to talk about, is the protest, which we created as a collective protest of a neighborhood in Berlin Kreuzberg, Kottbusser Tor and it is, you could say, it's a commons that exists now for eight years. It originated out of the common recognition that the rents of social housing in Berlin are too high, if you have a very low income or even a middle class income. We realized during our first efforts of organizing, researching and discussing, that this problem of rising rents of social housing affects not only us at Kottbusser Tor, but about 140.000 households in Berlin. And it goes back to a period of more than 20 years of neoliberal housing politics in Berlin, such as selling huge parts of the communal housing stock to private investment companies, which was done by former senator of finances, for instance, of social-democrats, Thilo Sarrazin. We collectively realized also a second thing that nobody wanted to talk about at this moment. Back then in 2011, nobody wanted to talk about social housing, because social housing was something that belonged to the former period of the welfare state that didn't work out, and it was like it was finished. They stopped the funding and they did not want to talk about social housing anymore. So, we also realized that our position as social housing tenants is very, very marginal in several ways. For instance, there was no political representation for this kind of neighborhood, which is poor, partly on welfare and with a long history of labor migration mostly from Turkey. So we realized out of this very position of being on the margins, even if some of us had an academic background, but in regards to who wants to talk about the problems of those people, we realized that we had to articulate protest in the form of disagreement, you could say in the sense of [Jacques] Rancière: out of the position of being not heard or being someone, who is not able to be heard. When we realized that there is an unwillingness to talk about this issue, we occupied a public place



in front of our houses at Kottbusser Tor, and we stated that we will stay there until the rents will lower down. That was seven year ago. We built a little house there, a protest house in front of the Cafe Südblock, which some of you might know. And this house is called "Gecekondu", which means in Turkish "build overnight". It is now a place, a space where we celebrate, we discuss, we meet, we also do consultations for people with problems with the Jobcenter or with their rent or their landlords. So it is a collective commons, which we share and constantly renew. This protest has also been visited by many other people or many people also wrote about it in their academic research for instance Serhat [Karakayali]. I don't know how many MA or BA theses there are about this protest. And also it has been part of art projects as for instance the "Kotti Principle", which is being passed around [*referring to material shared with the participants*]. So I want to talk about the structures of reciprocity between art, and academia, and activism. If it comes to collaboration between art, academia and activism the question of reciprocity is a tricky question in a way. In many cases, if activists themselves are academics on a certain level, it is possible to translate the political work into academia like I do here now. But most of the time they function, I would say, in very different logics. So, while artwork and most academic work is project oriented, it has a beginning and an end; most likely defined by the funding. So the commitment of academics and artists depending on this funding is naturally limited and output oriented. So the output has to work within the logics of academia or the other institutions that need to be innovative, never seen or read before. It has, in the case of academia, to use references in a theoretical framework or test theories or methods. To find out something like a very banal relation of, for instance, how much income you can pay with how much rent, might be boring for social scientists, because it has been already stated. But it would be essential for the protest. How can different methods respond to the neoliberal conditions, which we all work under? The protest, I think, functions with different logics. It has to work with political conjunctions and also power relations. I think, it has to think about hegemonic counterprojects, as for instance to create a political window to get attention for certain issues. It has to analyze power relations and intervene into current discourses. Protest needs to find allies from different fields of society like organizations, public intellectuals and so on. And it has to create a moment of movement. Also I would say, a protest can work like we work in academic or art institutions, it researches, it teaches - protest movement, can also learn, which I have called "academy of protests", so protests also can work with these issues. But, I would say, protest also needs a social commitment, socially committed people, neighbors, academics, artists, who relate to each other, who share their voice and sorrow over a longer period of time. There I come back to the processes of commoning. I think it needs this time, this period, also, which is not oriented to an end, to relate to each other in this kind of commoning. And I would say, a really tricky question, I would also like to discuss: how can we relate to protest movements as artists, as academics over a longer period of time, when we work under neoliberal conditions, meaning that we have to be in projects? We have to look for another project, after the one project is ending. So, how can we relate to movements that work in a different time logic? That would be my last question for the discussion also.

#00:27:29-5#

#00:27:29-7#

[Applause]

#00:27:36-3#

Maja: Thank you so much. I just wanted to add, this one distinction you have made is really important for the whole discussion, that I understood as the difference between producing together or acting together. That was implied in the difference you made between political work, politics and academia or art. So I think it is an important point for the whole symposium, but also for this discussion here. But I also wanted to ask,

if there are any questions for the moment for Ulrike?

#00:28:27-9#

#00:28:28-1#

Zuzana: I have a question about this temporal character of commoning practices that you mention. That commoning practices are something that we are continuing, producing together over a longer period of time. What is the shortest period of time or when, from what point in time would you say that Kotti & Co was a commons? I don't know, if this question can be answered, but you know surely, there must have been a moment, you were just like "Okay, now there is something, something valuable, some commoning happening".

#00:29:08-4#

Ulrike: Maybe this question also belongs to space in a way, but I would say, still, if you would have continued to meet, like a typical, normal neighborhood initiative, these meetings would be the moment of communing, of becoming a group, which is very temporal. But as we also created the space, which is there, and has to be carried out, and we also have to care for it. That also kind of made this collective - that shared caring for the space.

#00:29:55-8#

Maja: Anymore questions? There is one.

#00:29:59-1#

#00:30:05-1#

Audience member: [*Unintelligibly*]... Anyway, I think it is an amazing project. I don't know if my question is too specific. But for the collective processes now, we have the Berlin Mietendeckel.

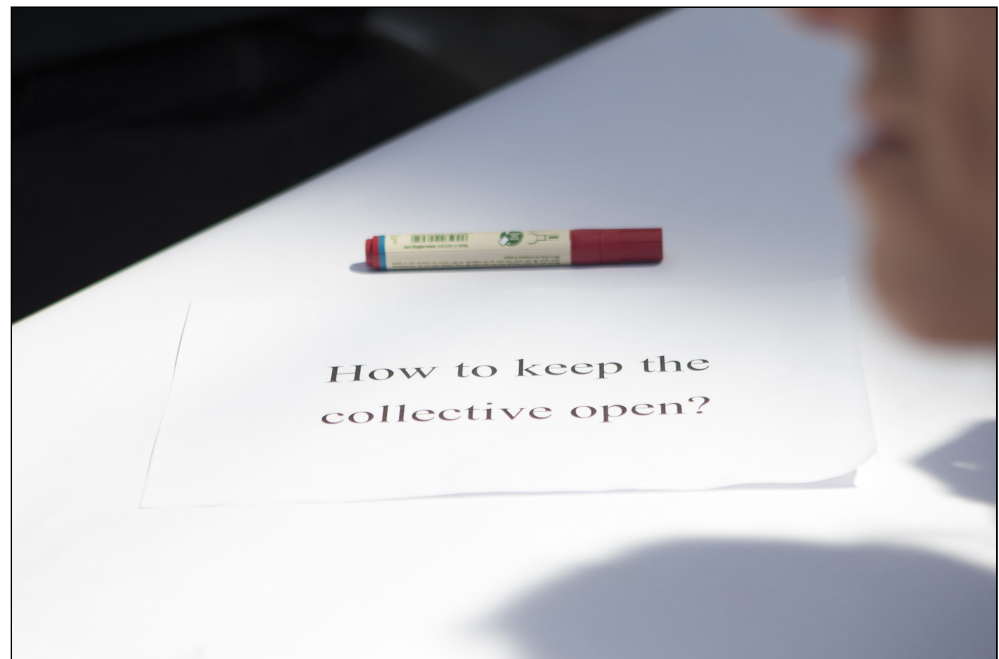


Fig. 5.

Working question

Photo: Verena Melgarejo Weinandt. Courtesy: DFG-Graduiertenkolleg "Das Wissen der Künste"

So this kind of stops the rising of the rents for five years. So, how do you feel about that? Is that a success of all these different groups and movements? And will it be sustainable in a way? Do you have an idea about that?

#00:30:34-7#

Ulrike: I think this rent cap, rent control is good for Berlin. It specifically excludes social housing, houses. So it does not affect us, which is also a problem, but I mean, it affects the majority. And it is definitely – let's say, most of the policies that were installed during the last years come out of a movement that becomes stronger and stronger. I would not be shy to state it.

#00:31:17-5#

#00:31:16-5#

Maja: That would also be something that came up last morning, in the first round table, when Serhat Karakayali talked about Gezi, and how this affects today's politics in Istanbul, right? In what we just saw with the elections. So that might be a good moment to hand the mic over to you, Erden.

#00:31:39-4#

#00:31:39-3#

Erden Kosova (Erden): As Julian explained, I am sitting here as a replacement. All the Sis Collective flew to Istanbul to cast their vote. And I am actually a newcomer to the Sis Collective and also to Berlin. So, I won't be able to go into detail about the mechanics and dynamics of Apartment Project here in Berlin. I am also not an artist, I'm an art critic, and my job is to contextualize and of course I thought perhaps, I can contextualize here the background of the Apartment Project, which was established in Istanbul in 1999 and in 2012 it moved to Berlin. I also want to explain the project's economic background, which somehow interacted with the infrastructure of art in Turkey.

So, Turkey, the Republic of Turkey as a young state – established in 1923 – resembled, in terms of social policy, the Soviet Union before World War II. In 1945 it decided to switch to the Western political hemisphere. Incomes, the Marshall Plan. As you know, the whole Western Europe was financially upheld by the US funding system. But of course there were conditions attached to this support. Just to illustrate how it functioned: One of these unspoken conditions was that Turkey should not build public transport anymore. So after 1950, up until the end of the century, no additional railway, metro, tube and tram system was constructed. The idea was, of course, to promote private transportation and of course the money that the US gave, went back to the US by the way of exporting cars in the '50s and '60s. This gives an idea about the never ending decomposition of state-based economy by application of waves of privatisation and de-collectivisation of public sources. After this shift in the '50s generations have forgotten what collective property meant. There was a resistance to this wave in the '70s by the rising socialist movement, and it was crushed bloodily by a military coup in 1980, in which 600,000 people were taken into custody, thousands were imprisoned, and 50 were executed. The implementation of neo-liberal policies was accomplished by the help of a ruthless military intervention. Why am I telling this? It also had an effect on the art system. Previous to World War II, the artists were operating like public servants (professors, teachers and so on), who had the mission to create a national unity by a figurative and narrative art practice. But then, along with the Marshall Plan, abstract art practices were promoted as the expression of the free world and artists' individual freedom. Also the public funding was cut. In this new era, the arts were sponsored mainly by private institutions, big financial institutions and big bourgeois families, which is still the case in Istanbul, through the Istanbul Biennial, through new museums and so on.

That was the first episode that I wanted to talk about, and the second one is the emergence of contemporary art in the '90s. Because of the tensions in the political sphere, the young generations embraced the new language of Conceptualism and Contemporary Art by a highly politicised

art practice. So, for nearly a decade the emerging scene of contemporary art was a field devoid of the support of the state, naturally – that has always been the case, – but also, devoid of any private funding. This situation created some kind of a semi-anarchist atmosphere. So, you didn't have to give an account to a state authority or any kind of private source. The tone of the practice was quite anti-militarist, anti-statist, anti-patriarchal, anti-homophobic and so on – a quite political tone.

In the beginning of the 2000s, there came the government; which is still in power. Embracing neoliberal economics, it received sympathy and support of Western governments, who were willing to promote a soft version of Islam, somehow, liberal Islam.



Fig. 6.

Working question

Photo: Verena Melgarejo Weinandt. Courtesy: DFG-Graduiertenkolleg "Das Wissen der Künste"

And there was also the honeymoon period with the launch of Turkey's EU candidacy. At that moment, the local 'capital' discovered that contemporary art could be actually something quite sexy. So there was money coming into the scene... but then, the discrepancy between a highly political practice and a compromised ground for exhibiting it created a tension, because of the changing political dynamics. As a result of a weakening of critical reflection and discursive mediation, a lot of artists felt the discomfort of being co-opted into this system. A number of people tried to open up artist run spaces or low budget, non-budget spaces. This happened at the beginning of the 2000s, and because of gentrification, and the consequent rise of the rents, nearly none of them survived. There have been of course project spaces opening up and closing down in the meantime, but one of the few places that has achieved a sustainable life is the Apartment Project. I think this is because the space, the physical space, is owned by one person. And this is also the case here in Berlin. Selda Asal is one of the forerunners of Conceptualism in the Istanbul art scene. While her generation drifted towards this careerism in time, she kept on working with younger artists in a very collective way, and tried insistently to promote collective work and groups. In Istanbul, she initiated platforms of togetherness and they made some journeys to South Causasia and the Balkans and so on... so of course, there is a much larger network, but she created some kind of a smaller group of collectivity. When she decided to move the Apartment Project to Berlin, she had in mind to establish a bridge between the two cities with vivid contemporary art scenes. But, of course, with the changing politics back in Turkey, the functionality of the project space

changed. Along with the Gezi uprising in 2013 it became clear that the current government had a completely different character. It moved into a very authoritarian... but you all know the story. Thousands of academics had to flee the country, because of repression. And this also had an effect on the art scene. In the last couple of years, some of my friends have been taken into prison. Osman Kavala, the director of one of the 'sustained institutions', that I mentioned, the Depo İstanbul, has been in prison for two years. He recently had the trial after two years for the first time. Anyway. The Apartment Project became then the hub, for hosting the incoming human energy, human source from Turkey in Berlin. So in the last couple of years, Selda decided to dedicate this project space to facilitate the lives, and promote practice of these exiles or semi-exiles. Sis Collective is one extension of the longer term collaboration of hers which started in Istanbul. The first exhibition was held in Depo İstanbul in 2017, an emphasis on the restrictions on free speech in Istanbul. And the nGbK exhibition held this year concentrated on the switch of geography and these problems of becoming a part of a new geography. And of course I should state that these exhibitions were enabled by a focus on living for a certain period together before the exhibition, and concentrating on the conceptual framework. For the Istanbul exhibition every decision was held collectively (all the pieces, all discursive statements). But the Berlin experience was compartmentalized into small collectivities, because of the long distance between the two cities... some of the people were in Berlin, some of the people were in Istanbul - there was this problem of coming together, all the time. So they decided to create these small units of collectivities within the art exhibition. Maybe you have already seen the exhibition now at nGbK... But I think I should stop here. Thank you.

#00:44:31-7#

[Applause]

#00:44:34-8#

Julian: Thank you very much, Erden, for your input. I think it is really important to think about the contexts in which these collectives form. And we have heard it in your case... but I think you, Zuzana, also told us about how you work in your context and you mentioned the term 'zombie socialism' that is used to discard anything that has something to do with collectivity, because it's sort of 'socialism', right? So, we could think about that also later on. Should we go right into discussion, now?

Maja [*from the distance*]: Ja.

Julian: The idea is that we get into discussions in smaller groups for about 20 minutes and then... you can use post-its, and we have a lot of pens [*showing the working material*]... put up in small groups, a small poster. And then, after the 20 minutes, we gather together again on the big round table and talk about it and discuss together again. I would kindly ask you to get up... [*laughs*]... get to the front. We have printed out the questions, but we are also projecting them here.

#00:45:56-8#

#00:45:56-8#

Maja: Maybe we can just add that these are the questions that we got from Ulrike, Zuzana and Erden.

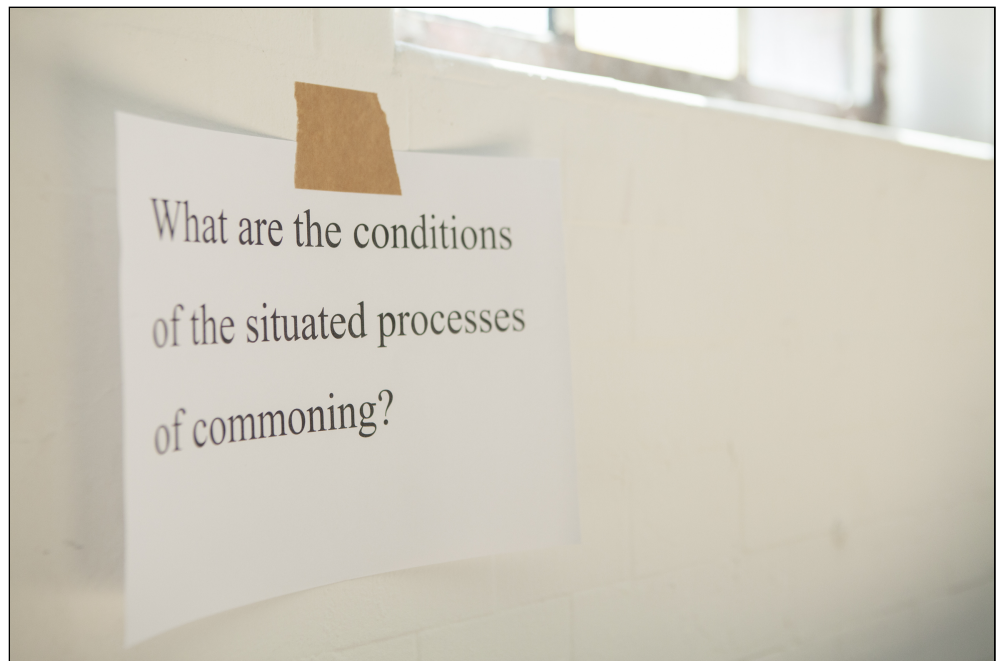


Fig. 7.

Working question

Photo: Verena Melgarejo Weinandt. Courtesy: DFG-Graduiertenkolleg "Das Wissen der Künste"

And Ulrike actually started her whole presentation from those questions, but... they are just... you can see them here [*paper rustling*]... but maybe you want to also say something about it again, or is it just fine like that. Ja... and we're also going to join the working groups... And you can just choose a question, you wanna talk about, and then we come back together. So the idea is, if you wanna write something down, you can, and you can work together on those sheets, but it's not gonna be a presentation afterwards. But we can hang everything on the wall. So, let's come back to a joint discussion together after 20 minutes.

#00:46:49-1#

#00:46:49-2#

Ulrike [*from the distance*]: May I ask? So people can choose their question?

Maja [*from the distance*]: Yes.

Ulrike [*from the distance*]: And gather around it?

Maja[*from the distance*]: Yes.

Ulrike [*from the distance*]: Ok.

#00:46:57-8#

[*Voices, talking, rustling, movement noises*]



Fig. 8.  
Audience/participants  
Photo: Verena Melgarejo Weinandt. Courtesy: DFG-Graduiertenkolleg  
"Das Wissen der Künste"



Fig. 9.  
Working group  
Photo: Verena Melgarejo Weinandt. Courtesy: DFG-Graduiertenkolleg  
"Das Wissen der Künste"



Fig. 10.  
Working group  
Photo: Verena Melgarejo Weinandt. Courtesy: DFG-Graduiertenkolleg  
“Das Wissen der Künste”



Fig. 11.  
Working group  
Photo: Verena Melgarejo Weinandt. Courtesy: DFG-Graduiertenkolleg  
“Das Wissen der Künste”

#01:15:39-2#

Maja: So...*[blowing into the microphones]* Ok, this works, yes. *[Aside]* Do you need this? I don't need this?

Julian *[from the distance]*: Soll ich die Mikrophone... *[inaudible]*

Maja *[from the distance]*: Ah ja, ok.

Maja: It's really great that you, that all of you didn't want to stop discussing, I think... but anyhow let's come back to the larger round to try to follow up your smaller group discussions, to discuss it in a larger round... It looks like that there is a lot of material that has been



produced. And I'm already keen on having a look at it.

But before we start, I just wanted to add one point following up on your input, Erden. What came to my mind was that, when I saw the exhibition at nGbK, which I found really interesting or important in this whole context that you open up with Turkey and how property is so necessary in order to actually work together or act together collectively. What also intrigued me with the exhibition was that the whole political situation really seems to shape the aesthetics, right? Not only of the works presented, but also the whole space, how the space was created. So there seems to be not only a relation between the aesthetics and the collective work, but also to the political conditions that shaped them. I just wanted to bring that in, because I think it's important, if you think about working collectively under situated conditions in the art world. Would you want to comment on that?

#01:17:53-9#

#01:17:53-9#

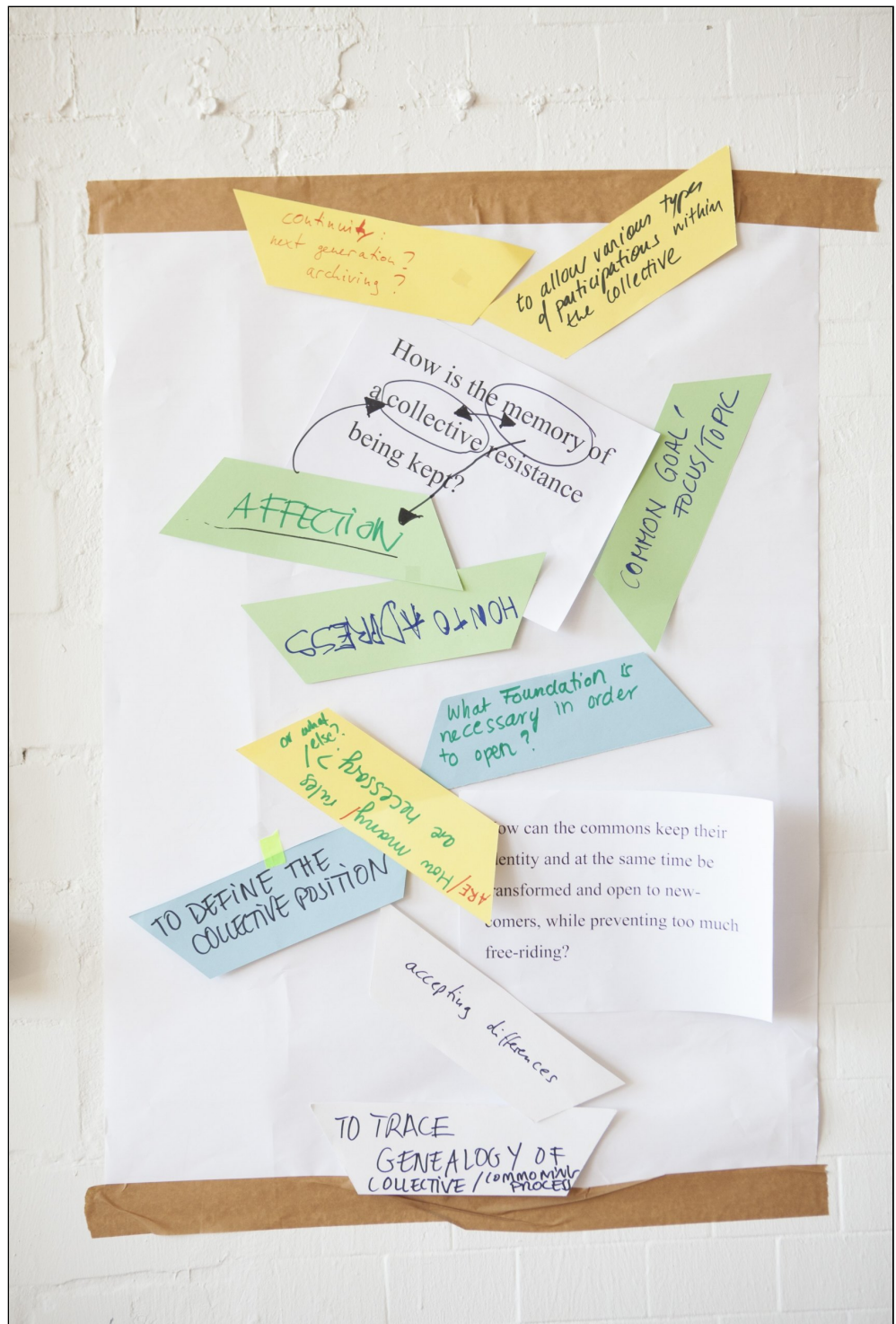


Fig. 12.  
 Working group notes  
 Photo: Verena Melgarejo Weinandt. Courtesy: DFG-Graduiertenkolleg  
 "Das Wissen der Künste"

Erden: Of course the aesthetic aspect has not been produced for the exhibition, because the exhibition hosted already existing collectives. There is a memory of... for example... the groups like Kaba Hat, HA ZA VU ZU... they had an already existing memory of one decade or even more. So, this sense of collectiveness is also being deduced from these already existing memories.

#01:18:28-4#

#01:18:31-8#

Maja: We have two mics for all of you and Xin and Sarah will hand them around. So, who wants to share something that you discussed in your smaller groups? Maybe answer to the questions raised in the three inputs...

[*laughs*] It's really didactic now.

Audience member [*from the distance*]: Das ist aber viel verlangt, schon antworten.

Maja: Not answering the questions, but answers to the inputs [*smiling*].

Zuzana [*from the distance*]: Or more questions.

Maja: Or more questions. I mean, they are always welcome, 'cause there are no solutions most of the time [*subtle laugh*].

#01:19:09-2#

#01:19:15-0#

[*Noises from passing over the microphone*]

#01:19:15-8#

Audience member: Our group had the topic of reciprocity between art and academia and activism, and it was a really nice group. Here, in green, there are profiles of everyone participating. We collected the notions of what kind of struggle and challenges we have in the connection of academia and art and activism. And we took one really smart part, but we were about to have a great discussion, if we would have had more time [*laughing*]. I think the biggest challenge is, if we have both: artistic practice and being a member of academia... How to manage these two totally different mindsets, two totally different patterns of work? You necessarily have to kind of cut off one part of yourself, and the challenge is to combine those two.

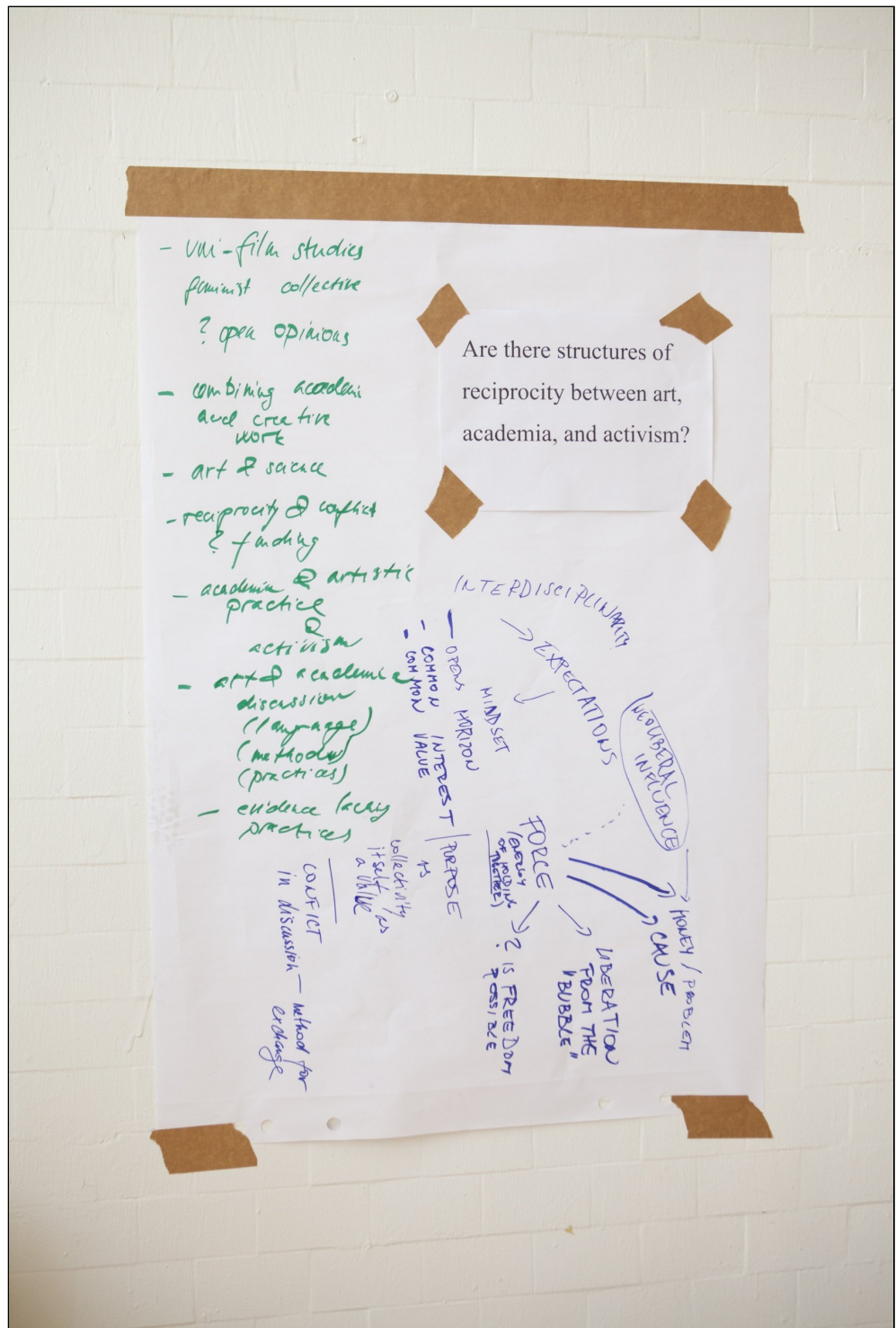


Fig. 13.  
 Working group notes  
 Photo: Verena Melgarejo Weinandt. Courtesy: DFG-Graduiertenkolleg  
 "Das Wissen der Künste"

Or how to bring people from both of these backgrounds, institutional setups, together and work effectively or create something or create a collective. We were discussing possible joints or mergers that have to... maybe... in these different discursive environments - like neoliberal influences or some kind of purpose that brings these people together with different expectations, - how they can be together and if there needs to be a cause? Or if there needs to be a common problem? Or if there needs to be something that combines these interests? Or if there is a possibility to create an open environment with interdisciplinarity and make it more free, more interactive? And also... how to combine those people, who are maybe from a different bubble? Let's say, they don't have... any common characteristics... generational or privilege. So, how to create this common value? Even if there is nothing... nothing... no purpose,

no money or cause that brings... Maybe a conflict that creates a discussion, within this interdisciplinary background, is useful for heating up the discussion and then trying to create the discussions that then enable more communications and more matters for exchange. We had a lot of discussion. I don't know if this was understandable, but this was what we discussed.

#01:22:15-3#

#01:22:15-3#

[Applause]

Julian: Thank you very much. I also was wondering, if it's more of a question of how to share tools, actually, in-between these different spheres? And if you maybe have experiences with that in your project? If that is, sort of, a way of getting together? Because that's, for me at least, I always think of, how can we actually share these different tools, that we have, and create some sort of common language or common practice, together. And another question was: if you would think of reciprocity as something more, as a general term - if that could be also some sort of infrastructure for actually getting together from art, activism... and the sciences?

#01:23:07-5#

#01:23:07-7#

Ulrike: Well, I think in our protest, in certain ways, also all the different skills or methods, we bring in, are also connecting in a way, beautifully. When, for instance, the artist, who does design work, translates the discourse or the analyses of the neighbors into images and symbols, which are challenging for his work, for instance, because he has to also find images that can combine a certain meaning... or can find a certain image for very, very different backgrounds. Like, for instances, this "I love Kotti" image, which also transports a critique on the official... or the discourse about the Kottbusser Tor, which is stigmatized in a way of being a place with racial profiling... it's always talked about that it's a criminal place... And then to stay, as the neighborhood wanted it to stay. We also love this place and we don't want to be displaced. It was an important contribution to translate this into an image that is also positive. So there was this shared skill of analyzing on the one side, and creating an image of this internal discourse, that can counter the official discourse. So, I think, there are ways to find a combination of skills.

#01:25:13-9#

#01:25:13-9#

#01:25:18-3#

Zuzana: Maybe I always understand these questions a bit too strictly, like: "Okay, let's have some academic institutions, and some activists, and then some artists working together." But if we talk about it more widely... I am definitely... In our practices we borrow and appropriate and take loads from art practices, especially from the '60s of course, with all the participatory arts. And many of those things were developed also in academia and were theorized. And you know, me learning at the UdK about participatory practices, and the functions behind it, and all the theories behind it, helps me then to better do my activist work and to create methods and tools that can allow people to speak together. I mean, in that sense to me, it's not like one-to-one coming together, but it's more that it helps me to reflect in the academic world about certain methods... understanding how they function, the dynamics behind them. So that we can then better structure the discussions during the activists' times and be more passionate, let's say, or more creative. There is no one-to-one. We have all come together. But it's more like, what do we learn from each other and how do we structure those dynamics?

#01:26:47-8#

#01:26:47-9#

Julian: Maybe someone else has an idea about that too? Do you want to say something?

#01:26:54-7#

Audience member: Well, I don't have an idea of that directly, but there is something that I want to raise. I read this question: How can different methods of communing respond to different neoliberal conditions?

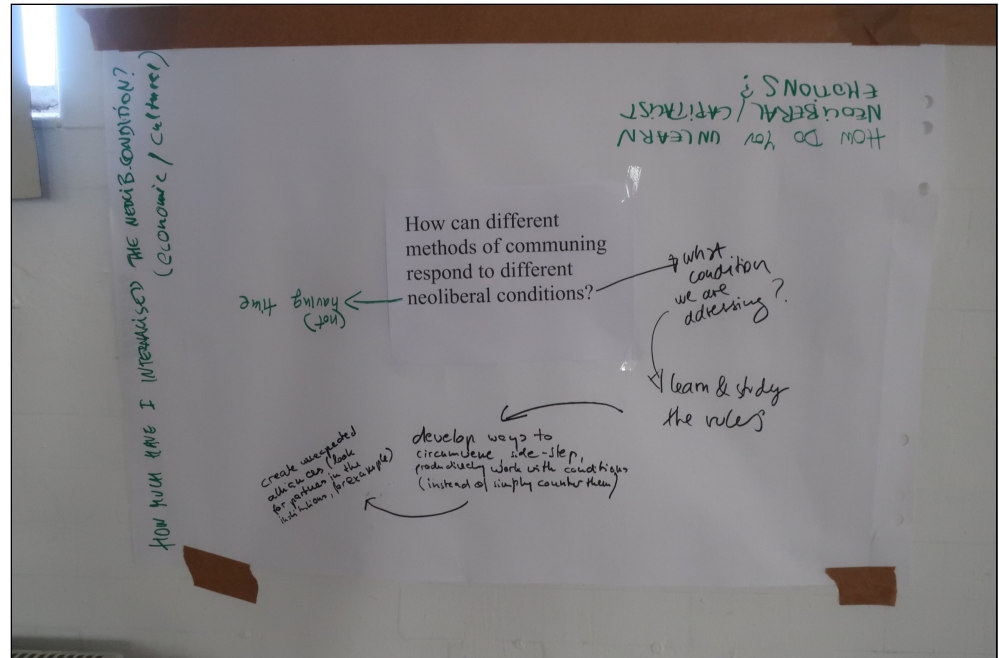


Fig. 14.  
Working group notes  
Photo: Maximilian Haas. Courtesy: DFG-Graduiertenkolleg "Das Wissen der Künste"

I think it's at the stake of, also, this round table... the processes of communing and neoliberal methods or new strategies to create capital. And in the case of Kotti & Co, the process of communing is in resistance, also in the Apartment Project, and also in your intervention [addressing Spolka], it was a specific community project. But at the same time, I'm wondering, at what point those processes of communing as a form of resistance can become integrated into the sharing economy or be reappropriated from neoliberal structures? And this was already a question we had yesterday in the round table... Between those two poles of institution and collective. So, maybe, my question is - to each of you and to the public, to everyone - how do we, as a collective position, resist falling into a sharing economy and neoliberal dynamics?

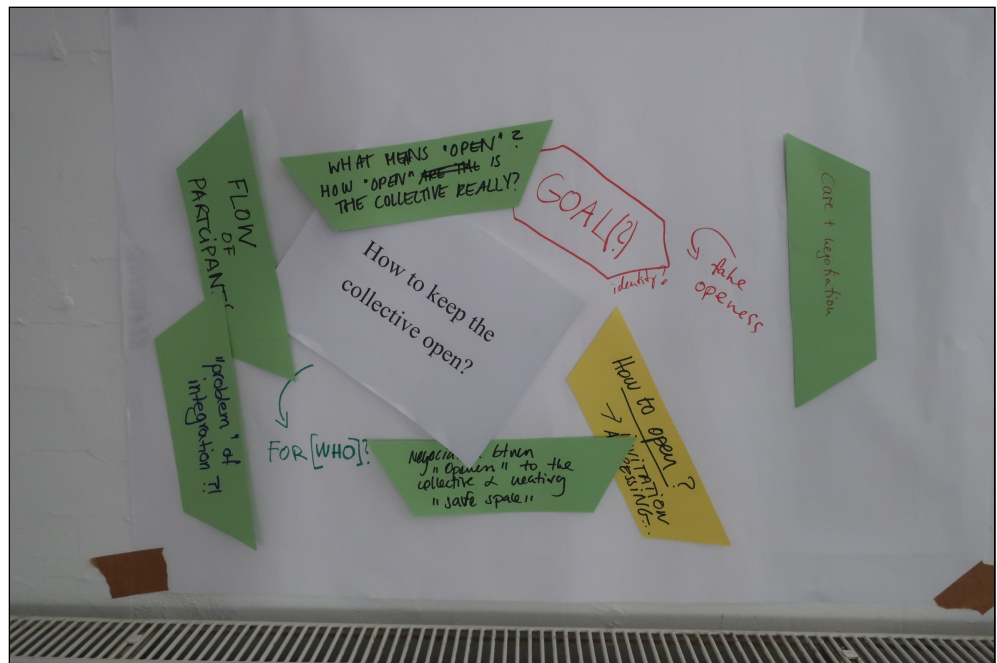


Fig. 15.  
 Working group notes  
 Photo: Maximilian Haas. Courtesy: DFG-Graduiertenkolleg "Das Wissen der Künste"

In my group we were thinking about: how to keep the collective open? And one of the... tensions in the discussion was "Do we need to open? What does it mean to open?" And again, it's a question of knowledge. So, does the process of commoning produce knowledge? And if it's open to a wider space, to a wider audience, then what happens to the knowledge that allows a resistance, a specific located resistance?

#01:29:01-9#

#01:29:02-1#

Zuzana: Maybe, I can just shortly say something from our experiences in creating common spaces in the city about how this could be co-opted by the neoliberal system. And that definitely happens quite a lot, right? You invest into creating these wonderful gardens or into fixing your own house, and then they take it away from you, because now it's all good, now we can sell it. And I think it is just important to be aware of what we were discussing - what are the neoliberal conditions, in which you are creating these things and understanding those. And to be able to structure your communing practice in such a way that you can be able to protect yourself. That is something that you can learn, I think, through practice. And it would be great, if we would have all the knowledge of how we could do that. But I mean, to us, it recently happened... but there is a very similar project to what we are doing in Bratislava, where they invested lots of energy and resources to create and to open this wonderful terrace in the city center... creating wonderful community gardens... and they were like: "Oh, this is wonderful". And then the city took it away from them and created right there a hip bar, with an entrance fee. And it's like: "Fantastic. Thanks for cleaning up this space that was closed for 40 years and putting all your time into that." And they wouldn't have done it, now, this time. So they have learned and if you do it the next time, you have to be careful about how to... not be so naive, perhaps. And to be aware of the neoliberal conditions, in which we are working. What kind of power structures are there? In which kind of context you are actually acting and what could happen four steps ahead of you? And to be able to prepare yourself in the way you structure it. And I don't know if there is one way of doing it. But I think many communing practices are quite naive at the beginning and inexperienced... and then it happens that they are co-opted... and stolen from that. And I think, the question was, what are the neoliberal conditions in which you are

creating the common, in which you are reacting? - to be aware of them.

#01:31:15-5#

#01:31:16-3#

Ulrike: And I think, also the question of scale is an important question of, for instance, avoiding to be co-opted or to become a kind of a model project that is now showing how it can work. Because, for example, the housing question: you cannot answer it in one place, you cannot... It would have been an option to buy the houses around the Kotti, and then in a way to pacify the protest. But you would always have to ask the question, if that is an answer to the whole housing question. Everybody who has low income in Berlin... how can we live? So that always includes, of course, power relations and the question of who is structuring the housing market, and how can we intervene. And how can we also ask this question for most of the people of Berlin, in that case, and not just find a solution for a small part of the city.

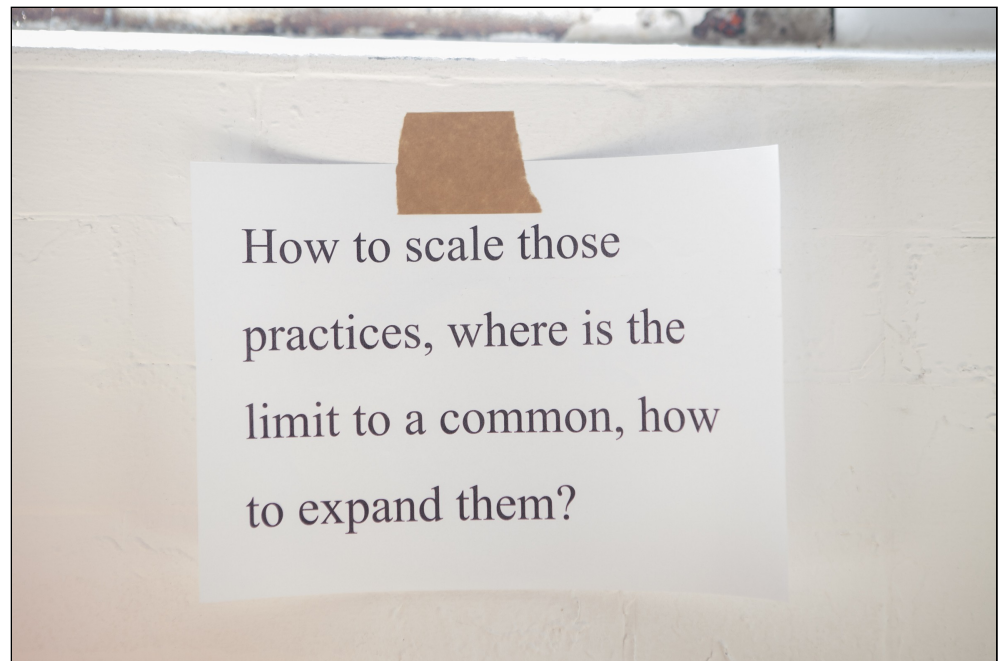


Fig. 16.

Working question

Photo: Verena Melgarejo Weinandt. Courtesy: DFG-Graduiertenkolleg "Das Wissen der Künste"

To just make a little communal housing... or a little Genossenschaft... or something that... owner owned, tenants owned little space, where everybody is safe - but it is not an answer to all the question of social housing in Berlin for instance.

#01:33:06-1#

#01:33:06-2#

Audience member: Thank you very much for your inputs so far. I have a question concerning temporality and affectivity, maybe of activist work but also artistic work. And you have said in your talk [*addressing Ulrike*], at the beginning, that there is often a difference between short term projects centered on the new in academic work or also artistic work, but activist work has a different temporality - that doesn't need to produce something new in a way, because it can also be about reproductive labor or other kinds of... living? ...maybe? So, I would like to know, if you can - maybe all three of you or whoever wants to - talk a little bit more about getting stuck in a project... and remaining in a project... and becoming interwoven into a project that takes on and on and on for many, many years. And becomes something different than the neoliberal connoted project of short term... and ephemeral etc. [*inaudible short callback from a person from at the round table*]



] Well, maybe that's my projection, but I feel... like getting sucked into something?... or becoming a part of a project that is so much longer that takes up much more years than one would have thought maybe beforehand? That's how I imagined it... maybe you all knew what you were getting into and you knew it would be a long term project. But in my experience, sometimes, I get sucked into things and they take up so many years and afterwards I think "Oh, how did that start?" Or how did I get into the different temporal economy, which has not been effective and which has not been what I wanted it to be, but which has opened up a new framework of collectivity or of working together? And that is what I connote with collective work - it takes a very long time, but enables different options of being an agent. I don't want it to be negatively connoted, when I say "getting stuck with something".

#01:35:39-7#

#01:35:39-7#

Ulrike: Well, the question is, is it a good thing or is it a bad thing or it is even a normative question? Because maybe, this is what happens if you relate to people. When we started this occupation of this public space, we didn't plan ahead, especially we didn't plan it for seven years. So, at one point of time, we found ourselves saying: "What have we done?" We cannot draw back, but it is a process... of course you get into it... and you have to relate to it - or not. I mean, you can step outside, and then you're done. But if it is a project or a protest, where you relate to people and you share - out of the discussions - you find a common base on what you share (worries... also analysis of what happens to you) - you move ahead. As I am sure, what you have also experienced, if you share a longer period of being together in a struggle or in a project, you develop much deeper questions, and you find more ideas of how to intervene next, or where to go beyond. So it has certain worth to deeply commit to a thing.

#01:37:39-3#

Zuzana: And it's also slightly addictive, no? I mean, if you find the right working conditions for a project, it is exactly what you were describing: You just want to investigate more and further. And I think it's great and it would be fantastic, if we had opportunities to do that more often. It's just more the question that we cannot do it more often, because of all the other conditions around.

#01:38:05-3#

#01:38:05-9#

Erden: Not that question, but probably the previous one... the tactic of the neoliberal thinking set. As I told you, that Apartment Project is coming from a context, also a context of collective resistance and so on. Sorry for always talking about the dramatic events, but I think that was the origin. There was an assassination on Hrant Dink, the Armenian-Turkish journalist in Istanbul back in 2007, whose funeral became a huge demonstration of dissent. 200.000 people came to the streets with Armenian banners, which was of course an unprecedented thing for Turkey - to come to terms with the Armenian genocide in 1915. So the next day, because everyone was so outraged, there was this establishment of a group called "19th January", referring to the date of the assassination. As a collective, we had continuous meetings and we organised some kind of public interventions... like making a public announcement in front of the court. Anyway, these meetings kept on going and at some point we asked ourselves: "Ok, what should we do as a group?" We are artists, art people and so on, so what we can do is, create some kind of public event, at which we say something about this crime. There was this initial idea of creating a big collective exhibition, but there was also some kind of reservation on that. Some of us said, perhaps we should not be in this planned exhibition as individuals, but implement one single, collective idea. Some of the artists in the group (mostly professors and professional curators) did not like the idea of sharing the same platform with, let's say, art teachers working in high schools. There was a split

of the group. All of these professionals left. And we were really happy about it [laughs]. And then, interestingly, we really managed to stick to the idea of coming up with just one single, collective work. It had to be something sharp and interesting to represent the whole of the collective. And of course, at the end, it was someone's idea that appealed to all other members of the group. So I really value that fact, that this person never, never came up and said, "that was actually my idea". I really, really find his choice of not claiming the property on that particular art work of diverting from individualism, career building, star system present in contemporary art.

#01:42:37-5#

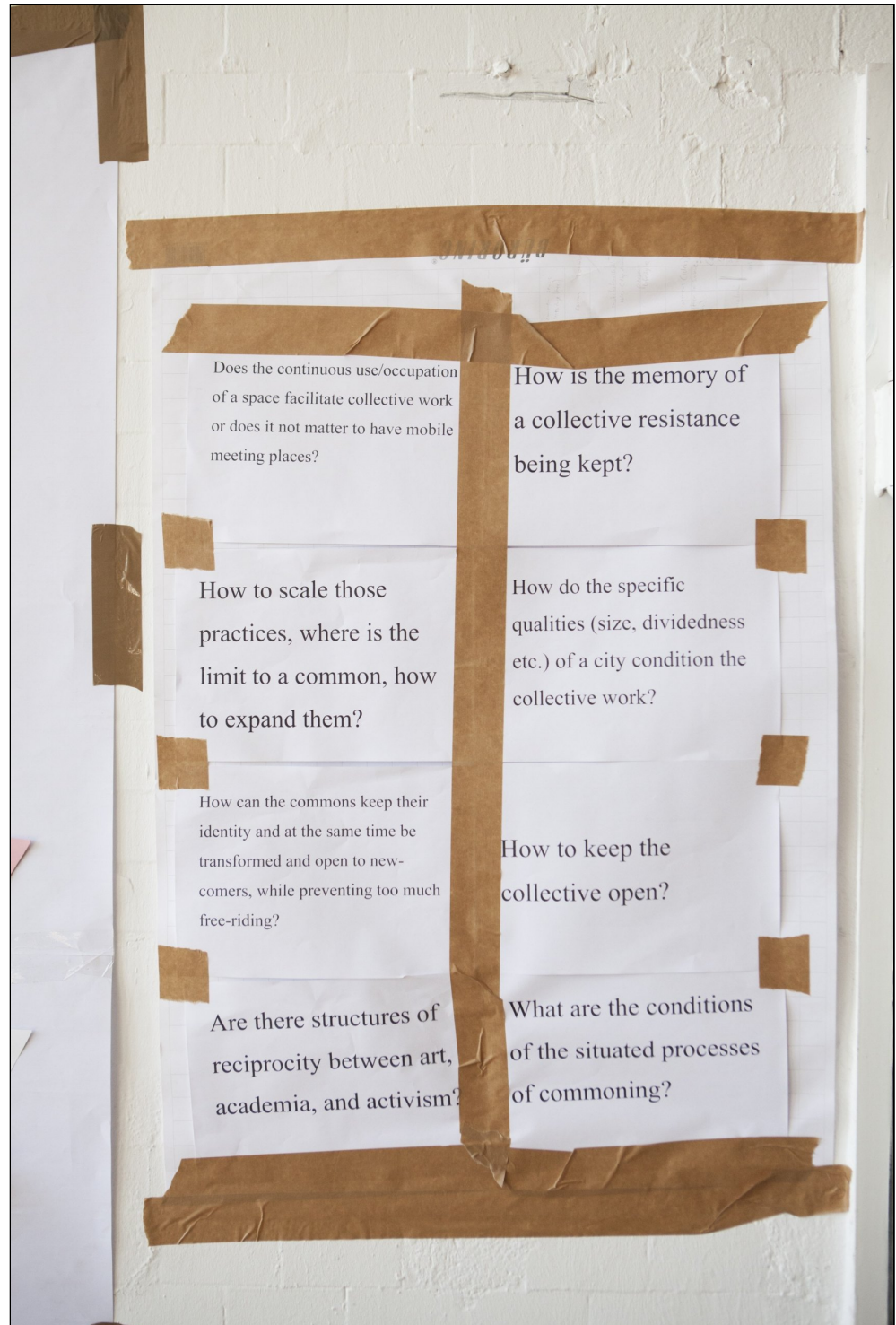


Fig. 17.

Working group questions

Photo: Verena Melgarejo Weinandt. Courtesy: DFG-Graduiertenkolleg "Das Wissen der Künste"

#01:42:37-7#

Julian: Thank you very much, Erden. I think we have to stop now, because it's already 12:50 and I'm sure you are all hungry. I can smell the food [*laughs*]. But I hope we can continue the discussions during the day, in a more informal situation. Maybe, you want to add something?

#01:42:55-3#

#01:42:56-1#

Maja: I just wanna say, there is also gonna be a workshop with Spolka at two. And there will be two other workshops. If you haven't registered yet, and don't have your little dot [*referring to the registering system*], please do so at the information desk. And is there anything else we need to mention?

Audience member [*from the distance*]: Will it be possible to put the papers...?

Maja: We're going to put them [*the papers*] up on the wall. And we are also going to document them - nothing will be lost [*laughing*] from your process. So thank you everybody very much. And to the three of you, thanks so much for coming and sharing your insights and experiences, and analysis. Thanks.

#01:43:41-3#

#01:43:41-3#

[*Applause*]