

Parliament of Things

BARN Core Team of the Brussels Artist-Run Network

Parliament of Things is a conversation format. It is inspired by Bruno Latour and elaborated by Building Conversation. They included it in their book *The Scripts* (2022). The following includes fragments from the chapter on Parliament of Things (pp 54-63).

The conversation is a space for collective practice, in which communication and interaction are explored.

Topics of the Parliament of Things have included the legal position of rivers and mountains, the possibility of another planet, the ownership of trees and many more questions in which human-made and more-than-human-made processes intertwine.

With BARN, we have been introduced to Parliament of Things by Maximiliaan Royakkers, whom we know through Jubilee. He proposed it when we invited him and Ciel Grommen to help us with a 'Framework of Competing Values' of artistic workspaces.

We found that the Parliament of Things is a great way to talk about 'wicked problems' and complicated situations or 'cases', with a group of stakeholders. That is why we proposed it for the last day on our visit to ComeCome, a 'colleague artist-run network' in Venice. There, artistic practices are increasingly pushed out by the forces of capitalism, tourism, and art world globalism.

In a Parliament of Things, many 'things' are chosen, as a network of notions, to articulate the different components of the case – the situation. Everyday objects symbolise those things, which speak and are heard, through the human participants – who each speak as the thing of their choice.

Sit down and take the thing in your hands. From that moment onwards you speak as that thing. You give voice to the thing. The meeting will not have a fixed agenda nor a chairperson. We decided about the case and the things present. From now on it is up to the things to decide how they wish to speak with each other while relating to the case.

As participants can become things that they do not typically identify with or defend, a Parliament of Things often brings to the table unexpected and provocative points of view. It allows for thinking off the grid, going beyond the commonplaces of each represented community.