



**School:** Bath School of Music & Performing Arts

**Researcher:** James Saunders

**Project Title:** it is impossible for everyone to achieve everything they want

**UOA:** 33 - Music, Drama, Dance, Performing Arts, Film and Screen Studies

## 300-Word Statement

The piece explores democracy as an organizational principle in music, considering individual agency in group situations where each player has influence over the sounding result but is unable to control the whole. The players construct sequences of sounds by responding to what they hear preceding players do, making choices from a limited set of alternatives. Players have control over their own actions, but generally not those of others. They can influence some behaviours but not control the group totally, although forming allegiances might enable more control to be exerted on the group. The piece uses a set of artificially-constructed or presented sounds, including text-to-speech computer voices, recordings of real-world sounds, algorithmically generated music, synthesisers, radio, dictaphones, and spoken commands delivered over megaphones. The composition was written for a group of young musicians participating in the Nadar Summer Academy and is pitched at a level that is technically straightforward while challenging their adaptability and musicality.

The research underpinning the composition translates behavioural psychology and political theory to music. The approach was explained in a live interview with Robert Adlington at Transit Festival, 13.10.18. The role of group behaviours was presented in: Saunders, J. 2018. "Group behaviours as music". *Sound and Participation*, Kask, Gent, 26.02.18 and Saunders, J. 2018. "Notating group behaviours". *Material Cultures of Music Notation*, Utrecht University, 22 April 2018. The principles for heuristic decision-making in these pieces is discussed in: Saunders, J. 2015. "Heuristic Models for Decision Making in Rule-Based Compositions." In *Ninth Triennial Conference of the European Society for the Cognitive Sciences of Music*, 715–19. RNCM: ESCOM.

Commissioned by Matrix New Music Centre, funded by the Ernst von Siemens Musical Foundation for the 2018 Nadar Summer Academy. It was first performed by Nadar Summer Academy Ensemble at Transit Festival, Leuven, on 13 October 2018.