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DIAGRAMS

VIRUS : WAR : CLIMATE

and

PERFORMANCE/MEDIA RESEARCH

I first read Jon McKenzie's text when his book *Perform or Else: From Discipline to Performance* was translated in Zagreb (2006). My attention was drawn to an ambivalent idea: (1) to extend the concept of performance to different areas of human activity and to different forms of life; and (2) to construct and derive a general theory of performance as tactical and strategic performance with consequences. McKenzie caught my attention with his interests in radical critique and "reenchantment" of everyday life and testing the boundaries of traditional art and aesthetics.¹

In response, what follows is a diagrammatic exploration of those ideas.

Why did I choose a diagrammatic format for discussing Jon's theoretical propositions? Because he himself uses the diagram as a *vehicle* for a radical critique and self-criticism of thinking about the relations of the performative event, the form of life (the living as a medium) and the productive powers of storytelling in quite different regimes of technology, politics and mediation. His auto/critical approach is recognisable by the indexing of transparent and non-transparent layers that appear in performativity events from theatre, art impacts to everyday behaviour or complex mixtures in social contradictions and antagonisms: "Diagrammatic storytelling operates through refrains of asignifying semiotics which in combination with discursive and symbolic events constitute layers or strata of mixed performativities. These emergent layers can be mapped and choreographed but never mastered" (Jon McKenzie 2015, 13).

Diagrams 1A & B (below): **Diagrammatic bifurcation with performing dance (me)**



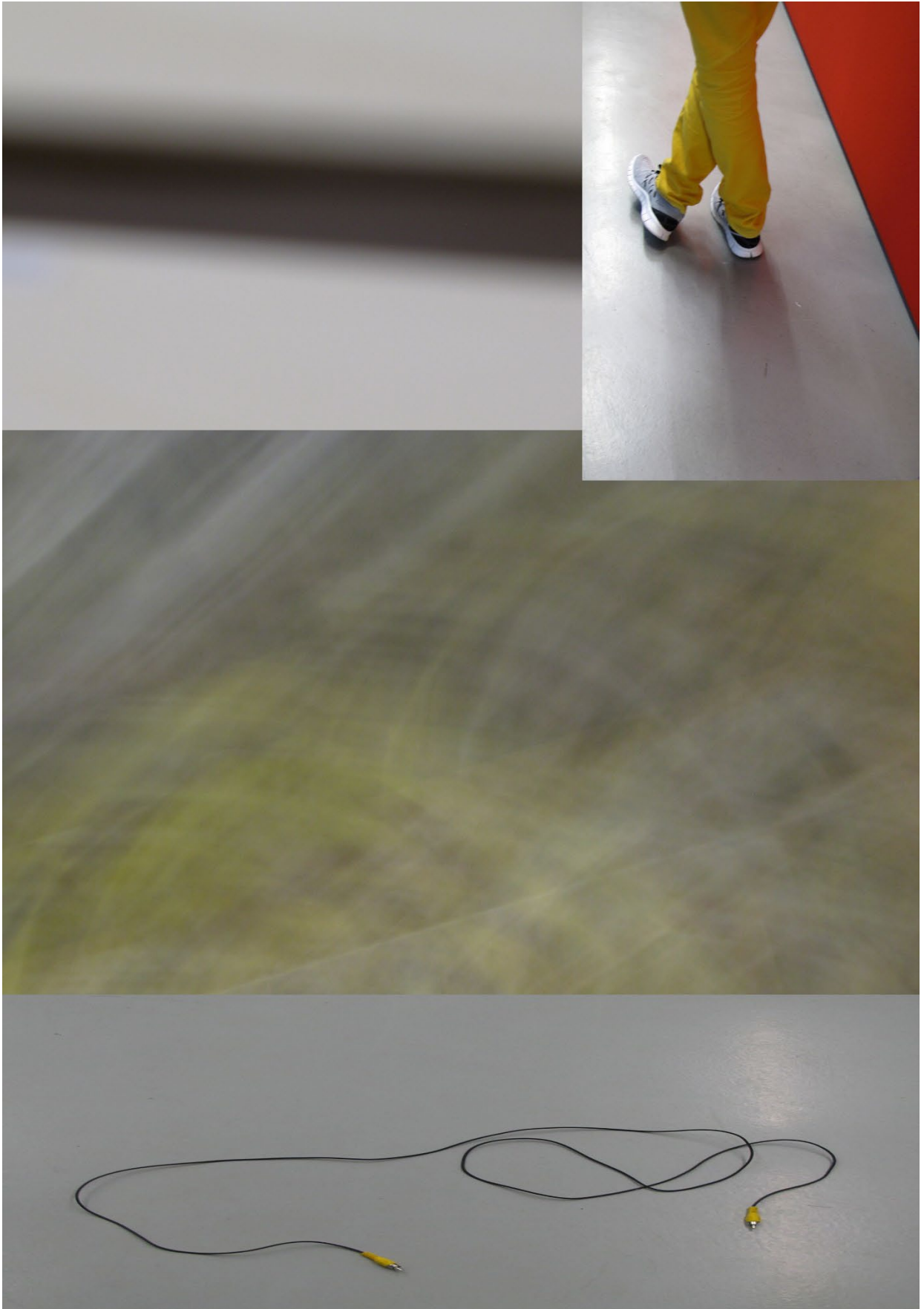
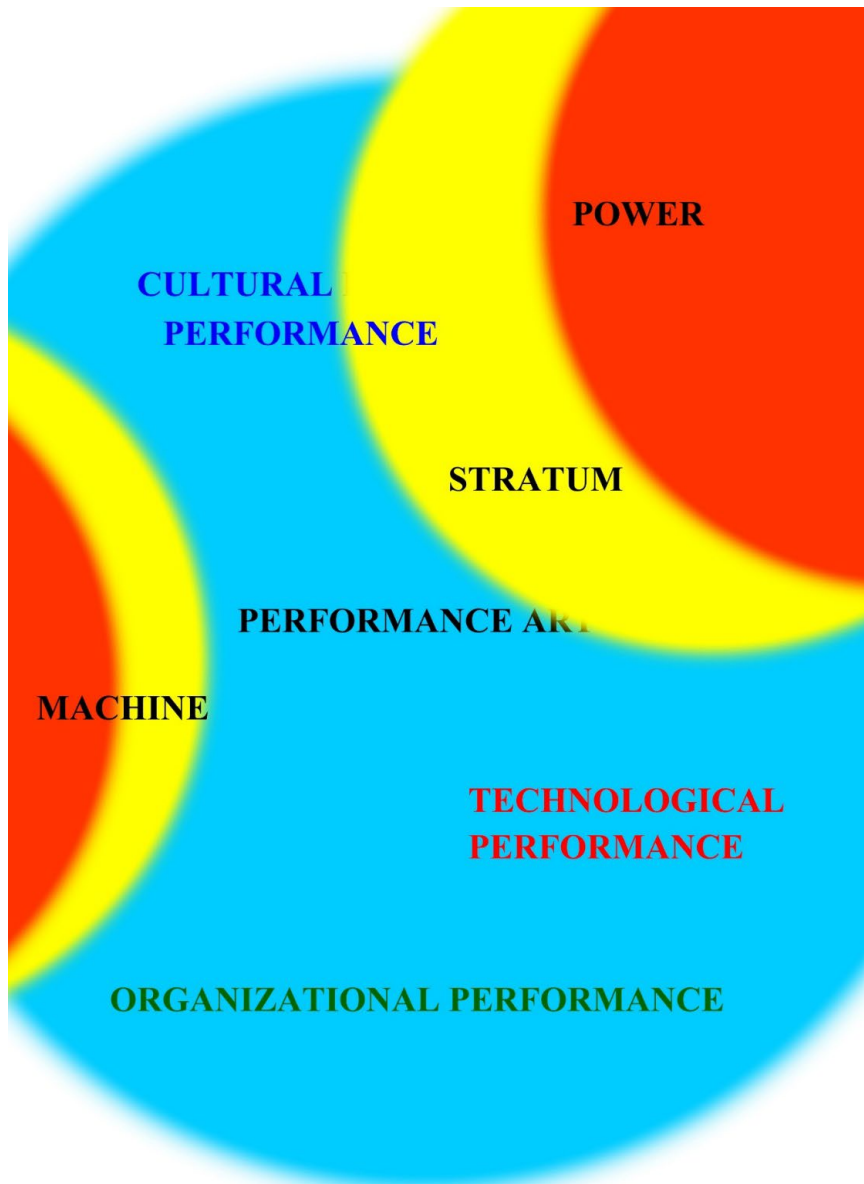
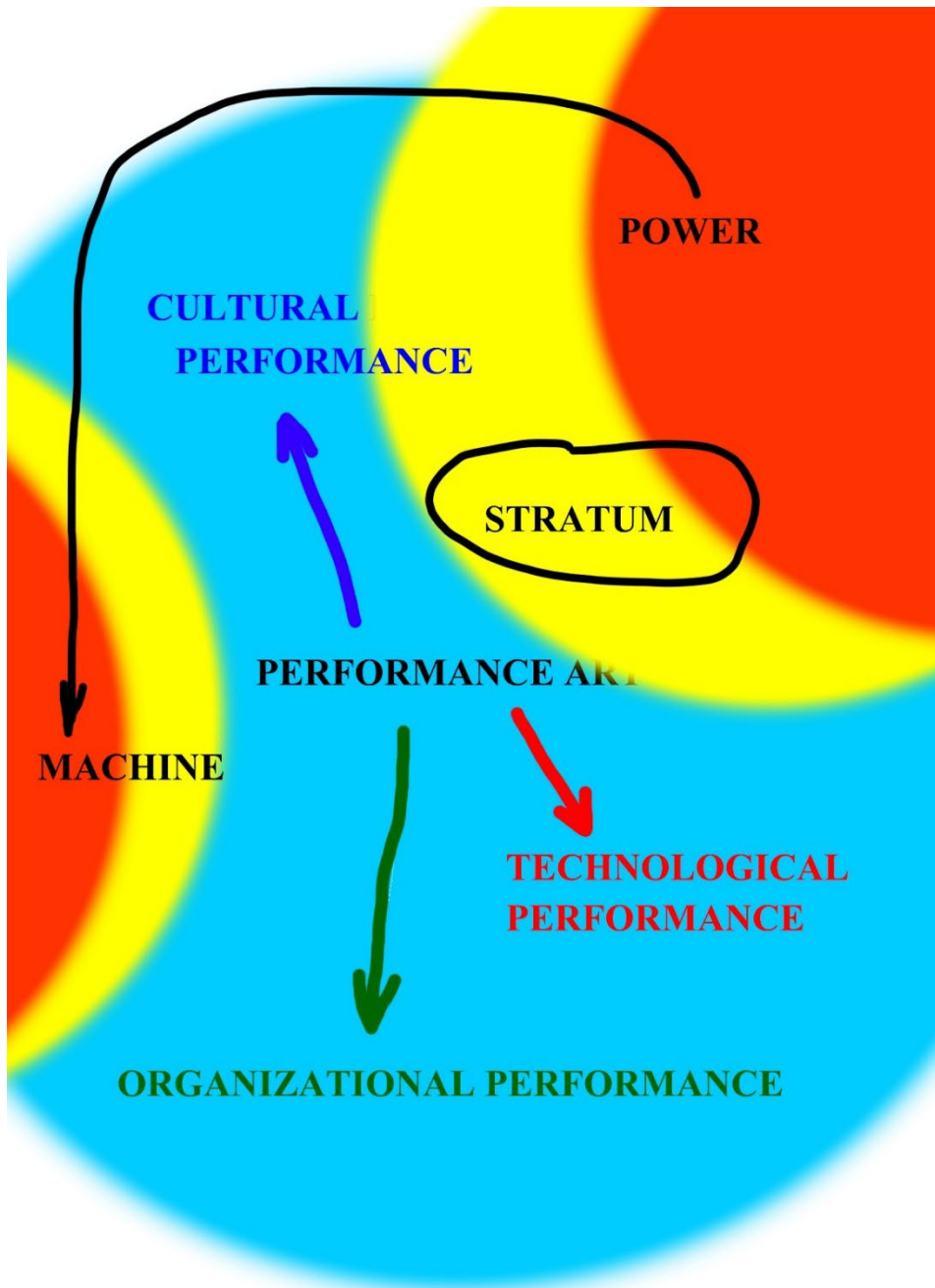


Diagram 2: Diagrammatic bifurcation with performing dance (unknown)



Transindividual knowledge: From an event to assembly of transmedia productive potentials

(The technical object taken according to its essence, which is to say the technical object insofar as it has been invented, thought and willed, and taken up by a human subject (assumed), becomes the medium (*le support*) and symbol of this relationship, which we would like to name *transindividual* ... An inter-human relation that is the model of *transindividuality* is thus created through the intermediary of the technical object (Simondon 2017, 252, 253)).



Transmedia Knowledge: From the relation to the process production

(... three simple steps: first, create transmedia knowledge to connect the expert spaces of seminar, studio, and lab; second, build collaborative projects that share transmedia experiences; and third, connect these experiences into the common field of community to effect change in the world.)²



Diagram 3: **life of images (lecture: direct knowledge)**

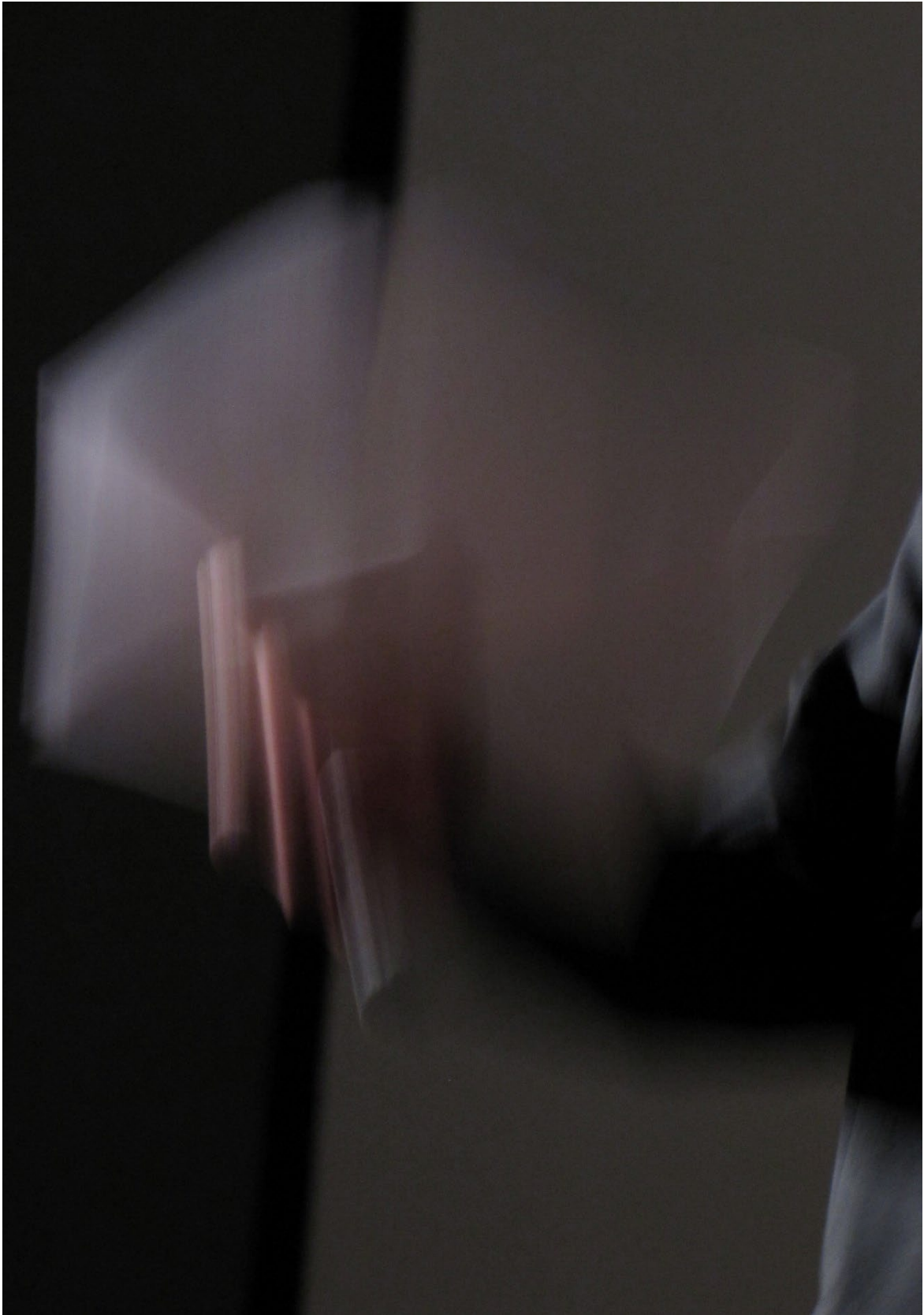


Diagram 4: **what is not an image** (lecture: inverse knowledge)

Transformative Knowledge

His (McKenzie's) as my method is an open or transitional set of inversions and broken narratives—not a thought that follows the focus of other thoughts, but interruptions and their inversions or decontextual remediations. This remediation practice results in transmedial possibilities, which impact transindividual indexing; traces—not objects or beings/creatures. For example, Heidegger's concept of “the image of the world” (“The fundamental event of modern times is the conquest of the world as an image” (2002)) is inverted in the *world of images* or *the world of images that are constantly circulating between networks* in *virtual space* (speculative media) or/and is inverted in the *world of images* or *the world of images that are constantly circulating between assemblages* of objects/events in cross sections of real and virtual space (De Re media) (Šuvaković 2020).

A diagram is posited in line with the chosen construction of the appearance and legibility of an imagined or discovered reality by means of elements (graphs, words, signs, images, drawings, photographs, media data or body acts) that do not imitate the form of that reality but are instead meant to develop it further away from that form, toward processings through, above, or beyond *form* through speculation (speculative media), or through connecting abstract media impacts with physical/social reality (De Re media). My intent is to apply the theory of *diagrams* as a basis for discussing the relationship between the sensory and conceptual performing of knowledge in the form of lives.

The image of the world has been remediated. For example, the world of images today is on Instagram as a form of techno-applied performativity. The image changes the image in relation to open sets of participants. An image is a photographic image transferred from one context to *numerous* other contexts. Images are moving independently of us, although we are a kind of transmitter—communicator that introduces the photos into *the game* of exchange. Exchange or distribution of performatively motivates impact. Wittgenstein's concept: “The sum-total of reality is the world [...] A picture presents a situation in logical space, the existence and non-existence of states of affairs. A picture is a model of reality” (2001, 9). *The image is a model of reality* is inverted into: *reality is in ideal and damaged forms a model of the image*. We see reality as the models of images (photographs, film and video frames, frozen moving images, screen-generated audio-visual impacts or behavioural events).

I focus on three critical effects—performing impacts: (1) the performance effect of the globalised virus I am trying to avoid, (2) the performance effect of a local war potentially approaching a total world war, and (3) the performance effect of climate change penetrating the centre of my/our individual and collective life. I hereby indicate the movement from speculative to De Re media.

Heidegger and Wittgenstein are followed by Hegel. It has always been challenging for me to translate Hegel's term *Geist* into English (“spirit/mind”), performing the difference between one *A* and one *Z*. Now *A* and *Z* are connected—connections of local *A* and *Z* in the field of post-media. The global Internet is a crude and cruel analogy to something that can be reduced by technologised Hegel's “spirit/mind” (*Geist*). However, this is not the only analogy—the analogy between Hegel's notion of *Geist* and the Internet. Other

analogies are possible with money or global capital, war and a devastating cataclysm that is both a global collapse of the economy and a hidden promise of economic expansion. One might think of the relationship between Hegel's *Geist* and the unintelligible coronavirus, the military-technocratic war of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, and the global warming shown every morning in the rose drops, fog or heat of the sunlight. It is always a question of the performativity of an uncertain political economy, which loses the political in its brutal ontology. After Hegel, I come to Spinoza; *the ethics of the geometric method of exposition* is inverted into the *ethics of technology*. This is focused on specific executive and performative technological acts and effects in relation to pragmatic principles and standards of technological production versus unintentional but causally focused actions of nature.

Therefore, my thesis is that the notion of performativity/performance takes over all other strategic and tactical modalities of work, destruction, production, distribution, management and governance, introducing us into the field of permanent real risk. Instead of a policy of sustainability, significant and catastrophic unsustainability pulsates on the surface of every and everyday performance practices.



Diagram 5: **transindividual / transcultural : Mind/Spirit**



speculative media

globalized
VIRUS

local or world
WAR

De Re media

climate change : **ECO** impact

TRANSINDIVIDUAL / TRANSMEDIA / TRANSWORLD KNOWLEDGE



PRODUCTION OF TRANSMEDIA KNOWLEDGE
Conflict theory / Conflict practice
plastic experience



PRODUCTION OF TRANSMEDIA KNOWLEDGE
Indexing and Mapping through MEDIA PERFORMATIVITY



Diagram 6: **climate change**



Diagram 7: **global virus expansion**



Diagram 8: local ... world war
antagonistic powers

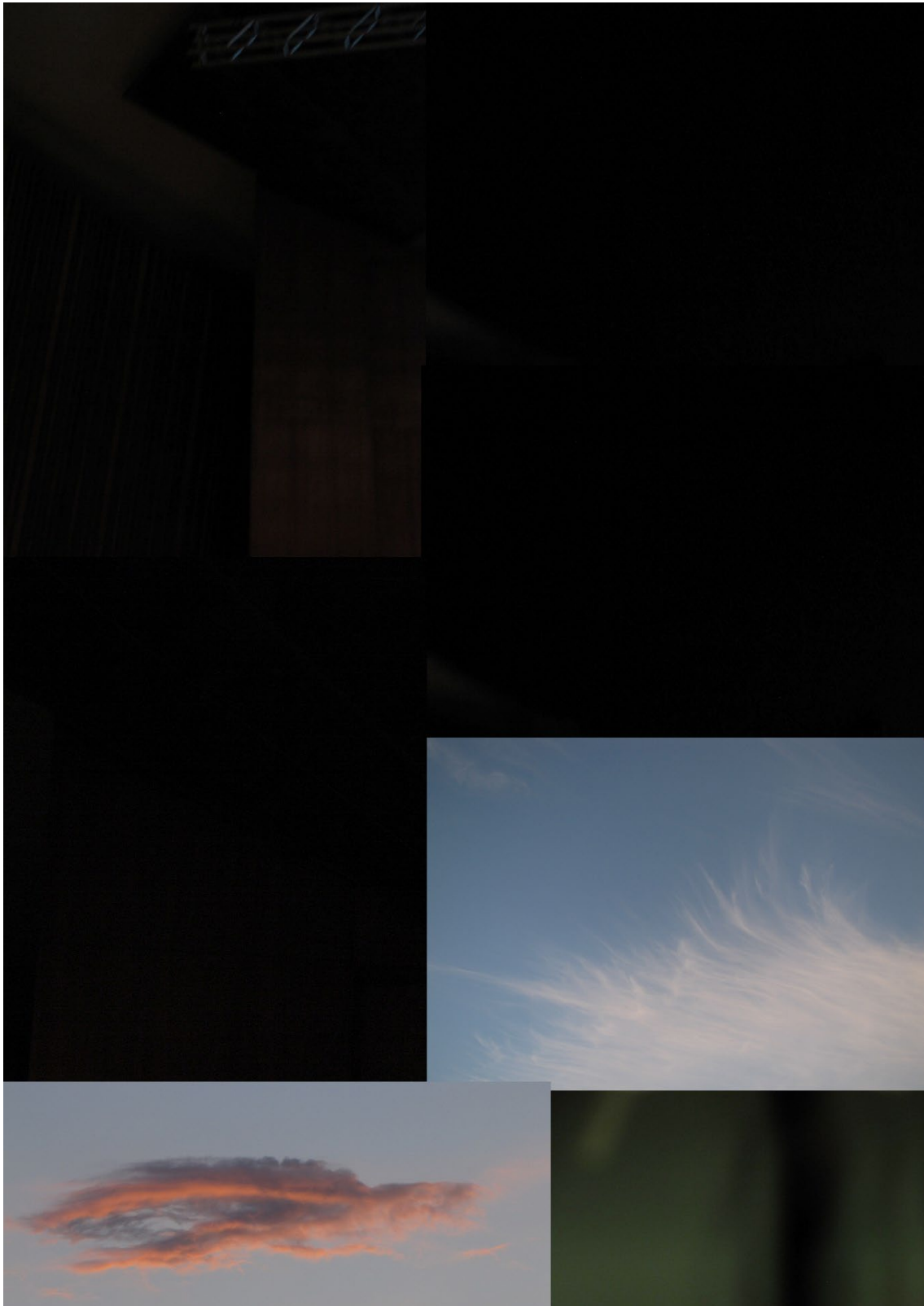


Diagram 9: **through war**
nothing: up and down – choreography

Definition 1 – SPECULATIVE MEDIA

The notion of *virtual space*—programme environment—is an important dynamic, generic attribute of the concept and technological identification of *speculative media*, within which user-based applications are generated and employed by way of meta-media.

Definition 2 – De Re MEDIA

I am interested in a potential theorisation of “embodied communication” that acts on how objects act in the apparent world. Embodied communication is nothing but material work, production and action in the real material conditions of the world. This is what I call “De Re media”: processes with objects that do not always lead to direct communication but also to various effects—affects, drifts, traces, transformations, entropic effects, dissemination of the meaning of messages, initiations of activities, intensities of effects, influences on forms of life, interruptions or resistances to utilitarian communication: literal representation, persuasive storytelling, unambiguous message, etc.

I am talking about De Re media in dialectical tension with speculative media. For example, one important pragmatic, by no means metaphysical or esoteric, requirement is that the concept of human politics (*bios politikos*), as politics has been defined from Aristotle to modernity, includes nature or machines or urban systems, i.e. what is not human, in fact, the world with all the complexities of the natural and unnatural. People are used to negotiating through mediums (direct speech, written communication, diagrammatic communication, algorithmic formulas, telegraph, telefax, telephone, Internet and mobile-networked communication devices) about anything related to private, public and business relations. On the contrary, the concept of De Re media speaks of the opening and expansion of communication. It speaks of a situation in which the medium itself is involved as a negotiating party. Or, further, how to learn to negotiate with bees, forests, different bodies of water, geological strata and their heritage, automatic machines or systems of connected machines, digital networks or drones, urban formats and infrastructure, but also butterflies, bees or cats or houses?

If the baroque Spinoza saw the construction of ethics in geometry, the modern subject X-Y-Z can see the construction of ethics in the media, post-media and De Re media skeleton of inter/transindividual assemblage in the world of unstable and temporary relations of local and global communication. Geometry versus communication, and vice versa!

Conclusion



Diagram 10: YES and No dialectics between Speculative media and De Re media

But where do trans-mediatisation and trans-individualisation actually take place? One answer is: on generated software platforms. These platforms enable a temporary “software-generated terrain” or “springboard” for acting in a specific direction or directions. For instance, a platform gives rise to a transmedia narrative/piece of storytelling. The narrated/presented story is relayed and thereby spread through multiple different media or media forms or media platforms. It may but does not have to be interactive in attaining a certain aim: persuading a listener/viewer to buy a new product; the player of a computer game to follow or interrupt the narrative flow in collecting points; a politician who uses social networks (Twitter) to make pronouncements about current social affairs and his local or global intentions; a great contemporary artist to teach a masterclass via Instagram (Jean-Luc Godard, his masterclass on images in the age of the new corona-virus); or an artist to switch from one form of software to another form of software to confront the sensory and semantic, military and civil impacts in her/his visual work (Harun Farocki, *Serious Games I–IV*, 2009–2011). In his films as well as gallery installations, Farocki obsessively explores the productive new image and its ranges of possibilities in circulating in political space.

It can be said, therefore, that De Re media requires an exit from the technological continuum into the non-human world. What we need, therefore, is not a new technology but a new metalanguage over and over again, which will be used to describe and analyse and interpretively appropriate the complexity of the world in which technological and non-technological effects intersect. A technological, media or programming app way of thinking (solutionism) cannot locate, identify and solve problems within the complexity of the world. De Re media modalities are therefore needed: to get out of the trap of technological/media/digital immanence.

But ...

We are now in a trap set by the speculative media and De Re media, remediating a global performance with the agents of viruses, war and permanent ecological crisis. Viruses, war and permanent environmental crises are intrinsically linked to capitalism or, more precisely, to the corporate organisation of the state/states.

A new metalanguage is necessary but not sufficient. We need action—a performance that opens, breaks or solves this complex assemblage trap/traps. Again, action only makes sense in its ambiguous connection with metalanguages, and vice versa. Similar to a spider net/.../web.



Diagram 11: *action only makes sense in its ambiguous connection with metalanguages, and vice versa*
EMPTY SPACE

Notes

¹ Jon McKenzie personal email to me, July 17th, 2022.

² Compare: Marsha Kinder, Tara McPherson, "Preface. Origins, Agents, and Alternative Archeologies" in *Transmedia Frictions. The Digital, the Arts, and the Humanities*, 2014, XV-XVI and Jon McKenzie, "Critical Thinking + Tactical Media + Design Thinking", in *Transmedia Knowledge for Liberal Arts and Community Engagement: A StudioLab Manifesto*, 2019, 16.

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