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The BRAID: Moving Across Dimensions from Representation to Performativity

Introduction

I situate myself as an artist who performs research in the arts for the arts, as “Performative Diagrammatics.” My work includes conversations with other artists, diagrammatic co-creation and facilitation projects, and the study of related inquiries that engage with embodied, cognitive and institutional framings in tandem.¹ I am interested in artistic epistemes. The place given to the study of practice in art, in the philosophy, sociology and history of art creates institutional framings.² Cultural policy studies assess the other side of this coin, the institutional expression of beliefs about artistic practice and its value.³ Cognitive framings of practice I take inspiration from flow through Critical Pedagogy and Decolonial Research, specifically personal research narratives and methodologies.⁴

In 2016, I was pointed to Karen Barad’s writing, with the challenge to diagram some of it. The following narrates how a formal, visual solution I devised in creating a diagrammatic sketch of Karen Barad’s proposal to place intra-action at the center of a new, onto-epistemological world view (see Diagram 1, p. 228),⁵ subsequently evolved into the diagrammatic BRAID instrument (see Diagram 2, p. 233).

The stream that fed into the BRAID instrument was a long series of conversations with artists, initiated with the intent to support artistic identification of own epistemes, through conversations about making that are not object centered. Condensing this stream, the BRAID then became a diagrammatic facilitation instrument⁶ that invites artists and other

1 Dwight Conquergood. Performance Studies. Interventions and Radical Research. in: *Cultural Struggles. Performance, Ethnography, Praxis*. ed. E. Patrick Johnson. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013, pp. 15–25. Ben Spatz. *What a Body Can Do*. New York: Routledge, 2015.

2 Dieter Mersch. *Epistemologies of Aesthetics*. Trans. Laura Radosh. Zurich and Berlin: Diaphanes, 2015.

3 George Yúdice. *The Expediency of Culture. Uses of Culture in the global era*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003.

4 Norman K. Denzin. *The Qualitative Manifesto. A call to arms*. London and New York: Routledge, 2016. Linda Tuhiwai Smith. *Decolonizing Methodologies. Research and Indigenous Peoples*. London: Zed Books, 2015. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson. Land as pedagogy: Nishnaabeg intelligence and rebellious transformation. in: *Decolonization. Indigeneity, Education & Society*, vol. 3, no. 3, 2014, pp. 1–25. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson. *As we have always done. Indigenous freedom through radical resistance*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017.

5 Karen Barad. Posthumanist Performativity. Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter. in: *Signs. Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, vol. 28, no. 3, 2003, p. 801–831.

6 There are currently three distinct types of diagrams I make, each functioning differently. A drawing or digital graphic, the first scores a text. Users of such a diagram may recognize familiar input or, if not, devise a

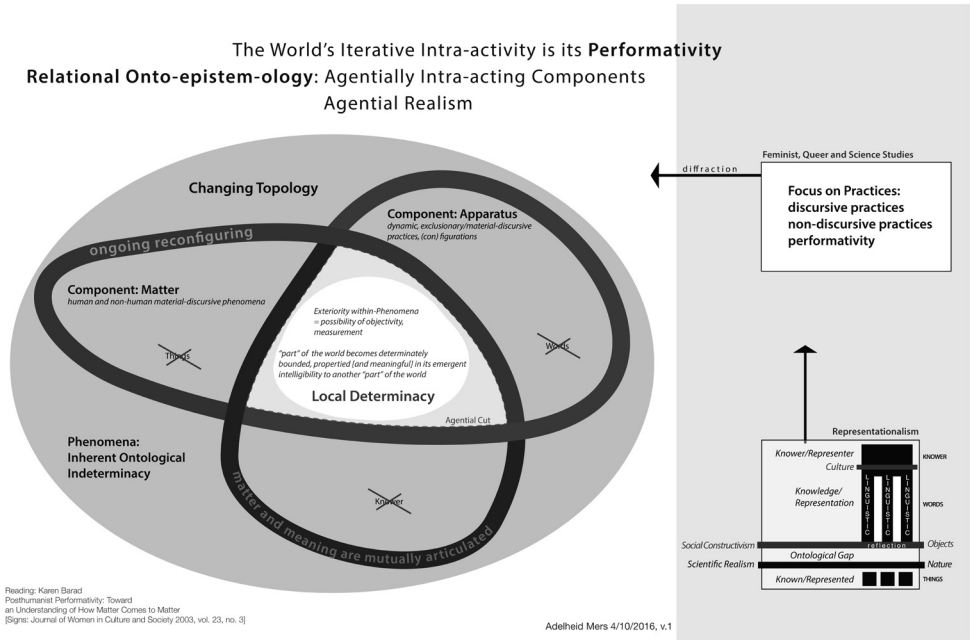


Diagram 1 Reading Karen Barad. Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of how Matter comes to Matter. Diagram, 2016.

cultural practitioners to think through own ways of working, particularly through dialogue among paired users. The Braid diagram shows a torus traversed by a trefoil knot, its three loops labeled Making, Mediating and Managing. (I indicate the BRAID instrument using all caps, the Braid diagram by using a capital first letter followed by lower caps.) Guided by a facilitator or using a brief, written introduction, actions with the BRAID and its auxiliary objects include listening and observing as much as speaking, writing, drawing and moving. The diagram is a significant part of, but not the full, diagrammatic instrument. Scale, type of substrate, mounting method and placement of auxiliary objects are equally important. Moreover, the BRAID instrument functions as part of a carefully orchestrated, flexible setting – an installation in a gallery, a space prepared to host a workshop at a conference, or my studio. Within the setting, users may find themselves drawing systemic, perhaps ecological conjunctions among parts of practice previously perceived as only loosely connected.

In the following, I will lay out how the Barad diagram was transformed into the Braid diagram and evolved into the BRAID instrument, and how its uses and modifications led to

narrative of their own. The second is a template. It consists of visualized organizing principles, and because of that can serve as organizing device for other content. Templates may be primed with some content, or conversation prompts. The third consists of a set of verbal prompts only, to be delivered by a facilitator, who elicits performative actions through which a diagram then takes place. Produced in a specific material and situated in a specific setting, each diagram becomes part of a diagrammatic instrument.

an increasing focus on performativity that in turn led to research in Performance Studies, specifically Dwight Conquergood's work.

This in turn led to a reassessment of the relations between the Barad diagram and the Braid diagram, leading to an enhanced understanding of "practice[s] of boundary-making and unmaking," across dimensions.

Reading Karen Barad

The Braid diagram owes its topological metaphor (the torus traversed by a trefoil) to its precursor, a diagram sketch I made in 2016, reading Karen Barad's text about knowledge creation, *Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter*. Barad's stated intention is to "sharpen the theoretical tool of performativity for science studies and feminist and queer theory."⁷

Reading Barad's text, I found performativity presented in a new and helpful way. Barad distinguishes her definition of performativity from Judith Butler's "iterative citationality,"⁸ understood to be at play in enacting gender within existing paradigms. Instead, she calls performativity "the world's iterative intra-activity."⁹ Intra-action is a far-reaching term Barad presents with much nuance, foremost as a practice of boundary-making and unmaking. Most profoundly, it "constitutes a reworking of the traditional notion of causality" by creating the boundaries that give rise to what might otherwise be thought of as "independent entities." In this world view, which I am tempted to call diagrammatic, relations precede "relata."¹⁰

Convinced by her constructs, my diagrammatic drawing of her text grappled mostly with the shift Barad proposed, from conceptualizing the production of knowledge through representationalism, to thinking it as part of the intra-active movement of performativity. What vexed me was how to show a transition from one state to the other. According to Barad, representationalism is rooted in the "triadic structure of words, knowers, and things,"¹¹ while performativity arises from the intertwined nature of knowing and being that can be theorized through the "study of practices of knowing in being."¹²

Only much later did I realize that I had built a performative solution into my drawing by embedding two ways of seeing.

⁷ Barad 2003, p. 803.

⁸ Ibid., p. 828.

⁹ Ibid., p. 823.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 815.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 813. See also: "The system of representation is sometimes explicitly theorized in terms of a tripartite arrangement. For example, in addition to knowledge (i. e., representations), on the one hand, and the known (i. e., that which is purportedly represented), on the other, the existence of a knower (i. e., someone who does the representing) is sometimes made explicit. When this happens, it becomes clear that representations are presumed to serve a mediating function between independently existing entities. This taken-for-granted ontological gap generates questions of the accuracy of representations." Ibid., p. 804.

¹² Ibid., p. 829.

Making the Barad diagram

Absent an explicit treatment of transition from a representationalist to a performative world view in Barad's text, I collaged representationalism and performativity, by superimposing them. I drew the domain of performativity as a torus, seen in top view¹³. The torus is traversed by a path, a trefoil knot that will become the device to locate representationalism.

Presented in the manner of a simple cutaway in my diagrammatic sketch, viewers are prepared by existing conventions to read torus and trefoil knot as spatial objects. On the picture plane, another interaction takes place, though. When dismissing the spatial interpretation, the trefoil knot effectively trifurcates the torus shape. The result of this planar trifurcation is that it offers equal compartments into which to enter words, knowers and things, Barad's representationalist categories to be eliminated.

At the same time, the planar perspective also produces conceptual traps by offering secondary, additional demarcations. At the time, those lured me into relating additional terms to each other, namely "material phenomena" and "discursive practices," in ways that no longer make sense to me. In her text, Barad indicates and warns of demarcation traps within language by amply using scare quotes around terms that conventionally indicate a separateness she does not wish to convey, such as "component" or "cause."¹⁴ Puzzling out Barad's text, I was nonetheless caught up in some of those traps. My diagram captured how I had parsed Barad's text at the time.

Using the Barad diagram

Two of six key diagram characteristics that constitute the core of Sybille Krämer's diagrammatology are "own spatiality," describing the space a diagram lays out as a "homogenizing function, which mediates between divergent things"¹⁵ and "operativity," under which "diagrammatic depictions open up a two-dimensional space for handling, observing and exploding the depicted."¹⁶ Diagrams create specifically ordered spaces that permit and promote specific uses. In order to operate the diagrammatic rendering of my reading of Barad's text, a user should move between two image interpretations. On the one hand, the designated three-dimensional space, the area of the torus, indicates the location for the new, performative way of considering knowledge creation. On the other hand, the picture plane needs to be taken at face value, to mobilize the trifurcation that indicates the representationalist understanding of knowledge creation. What connects the realms is already a performance: the user's ability to shift between Flatland and Spaceland, as

¹³ "Top view" conventionally means that the torus is visualized from the outside, with the hole of the torus visible in the centre of the image.

¹⁴ For example, see: "Recall that an agential cut effects a local separability of different 'component parts' of the phenomenon, one of which ('the cause') expresses itself in effecting and marking the other ('the effect'). In a scientific context this process is known as a 'measurement.'" Ibid, p. 824.

¹⁵ Sybille Krämer. "Epistemology of the line." *Reflections on the diagrammatical mind*, 2009, p. 12, https://www.geisteswissenschaften.fu-berlin.de/we01/institut/mitarbeiter/emmeriti/kraemer/PDFs/Epistemology_of_the_line.pdf (accessed 26 June 2010).

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 13.

Abbott would have it.¹⁷ The Barad diagram became a candidate for reinvention as the Braid diagram because I sought to perform a Flatland (Barad's representationalism) to Spaceland (Barad's performativity) shift in another context.

Conversations with artists

Reading Barad, I drew connections to my art research practice. The specific context was a multi-year, dialogic inquiry into artists' epistemes, or how artist know. Working from the premise that a well-facilitated conversation permits aesthetic knowing to emerge into a collegial exchange, I conducted this work through one-on-conversations, asking other artists: "How do you work?"

Reifying, Dimensionalizing

Within this process, I gained new insights in two modes. During the exchanges, I observed and enacted behaviors I have become familiar with as participant in and facilitator for studio critiques in academic institutions. Through this repeated experience, I understand the performativity of a focused conversation as the enactment of multiple techniques under implied or better, agreed upon premises, that ultimately serve the emergence of the products of those techniques into forms of speech¹⁸. A second part of the work occurred later, when I sat with my notes and, through iterations, transformed them into diagrammatic sketches that fed into multiple, diagrammatic outcomes, including some I characterized as scenarios, and others that populated an existing, diagrammatic template that preceded the Braid. During the second process, theories, diagrammatically understood as "concepts joined by relationships,"¹⁹ emerged into images²⁰. Both processes, of being in conversation and of intuiting what I came to call artist's individual "epistemic engines" are highly performative, each in their own way. The first undertakes de-reification, re-reification and possibly first-time reification as thoughts form in conversation, the second, de-dimensionalization, re-dimensionalization and possibly first time dimensionalization²¹ as thought objects and their relations are visually ordered. These processes do not reverse each other, but are cumulative.

¹⁷ Edwin Abbott. *Flatland. A romance of many dimensions*. London: Seeley and Co, 1884.

¹⁸ Currently in prototype stage, my project titled *Micro-practices for a New Gentleness* is dedicated to working out premises, rules and techniques of focused conversations, such as critiques.

¹⁹ Joseph A. Maxwell. *Qualitative Research Design. An Interactive Approach*. Los Angeles et al.: Sage, 2013, p. 49.

²⁰ Early Grounded Research material, as presented by Anselm Strauss (1987) and his student collaborators, particularly Leigh Star, formalizes diagrammatic methods very similar to those I use in the visualization of my notes. Specifically, Strauss uses the terms "Dimensionalizing" and "Subdimensionalizing" to describe the process of making categorical distinctions in propelling a qualitative research process forward. Anselm Strauss. *Qualitative analysis for social scientists*. Cambridge, New York and Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1987, pp. 14–16, 154–160. Prior to encountering Strauss work, I created a diagrammatic template, called *The Fractal 3-Line Matrix*, that was used in the above-mentioned process of visualizing epistemic engines. Joseph Maxwell's college text draws on Strauss' early works.

²¹ My use of the term dimensionalizing is intended to exceed Strauss' use addressed in the footnote above. As a visual artist, my conceptual understanding of uniting mathematical or conceptual dimensions under the same terminology – the word dimension – as the intuitively available three dimensions of embodied space was surprisingly hard to achieve. I am hoping to make this tension fruitful for future work.

Making, Mediating and Managing

Within this dialogic inquiry into artists' epistemes, story patterns showed. Artists represented their interactions with organizations and institutions as rule bound bodies, addressing their understanding of processes, and of opportunities denied, afforded or created. Another core theme was studio practice, including bodily conditioning and awareness, work with others, the practicing and developing of techniques, and all forms of crafting and building, leading into performing and exhibiting publicly. Lastly, there were extensive references to discursive practice as it pertained to dissertations, grant writing and studio critique, interactions with academia and markets, and addresses to audiences and gatekeepers. Consolidating these strands, another triad emerged. "Managing" became a heading for topics of governance, both the experience of being governed and of participating in governance. "Making" centered on attention to own attention, and how it participates in cycles of material and conceptual artistic propositions. "Mediating" served as a repository for processes by which doing emerges into speech, and how language participates differently in specific settings.

Making, Mediating and Managing emerged for a reason. Throughout BFA, MFA and PhD levels, art school curricula constitute boundaries each artist I spoke with had contended with, as a student or as an educator. Common curricular divisions include studio practice, facilitated through advising and studio critique. This core is at minimum complemented by but also channeled through methodologies of art history, sociology and philosophy. It may be supplemented by exposure to professional practice skills, either by professors sharing narratives of access in capstone seminars, or actual access in extracurricular interactions. Cultural policy is rarely part of the offerings. At many institutions, career service centers introduce resumé writing and other professional skills, and support access to job or advanced education opportunities. These structures reflect historic distinctions between professions and academia, and within academia between creative, interpretive and managerial divisions, as much as avenues of privilege into, within and outside of those. Even as it is being actively rethought, this type of curricular structure resists performative forms of working, particularly if performativity is understood with Barad as a "practice of boundary-making and unmaking."

Moreover, this curricular structure is impactful across liberal arts education, broadly informing the landscape of arts organizations and the policies by which they are upheld. Because of its persistent prevalence and impact, the triad needed to be made clearly visible to those working within its reach. The Barad diagram addressed the next conundrum: how to move from a worldview that favors a tripartite, bounded structure to one that embraces a continuum of intra-active performativity.

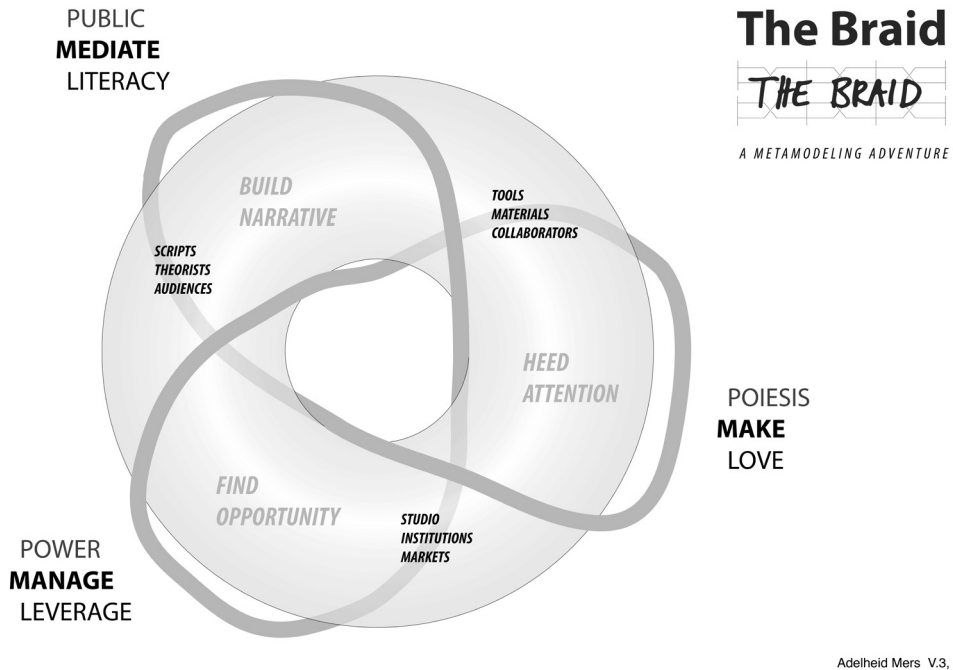


Diagram 2 The Braid: A Metamodeling Adventure. Diagram Version 3, 2019.

The BRAID Instrument

Making the BRAID Instrument

To reinvent the Barad diagram as the Braid diagram, I initially modified the body of the diagram by shading the torus and positioning the trefoil knot more clearly as surrounding it, creating the illusion – exceeding what previously was a mere implication – of three dimensionality and transparency. I then re-inscribed the diagram with new text. Krämer’s category of “Hybridity” explains the “show and tell” character of diagrams, mixing iconicity and discursivity.²² By changing discursive references, the iconic element of a diagram is reassigned. In applying a strikethrough to the Flatland categories of words, knowers and things, I had emphasized Barad’s indication that Representationalism needed to be overcome. I did not want to apply that same device to the new terms, Make, Mediate and Manage. Instead I placed them outside of the topological object, next to each trefoil loop. This way, the terms became labels, not territorial markers. In addition, this treatment opened the blank substrate into an enveloping void.

Instead of radically claiming a shift, which Barad does as a writer, I am thinking about my approach as performatively facilitating performances of a radical shift. As a facilitator,

²² Krämer 2009, p. 12.

I take on the role of a guide who assists travels across dimensions, seeding the body of the new diagram with open ended prompts for future conversation. The diagram's scale relates to the body, 2/3 the height of outstretched arms, mounted at eye height. Such a rectangle fills the field of vision and the grasp of a person standing in front of it. A good material is vitreous enamel on steel – a magnetic whiteboard, integrated into a rolling easel for all around manipulability. Vitreous enamel is smooth and writeable. It cleans easily. Baked onto steel, auxiliary objects attach magnetically and move as needed. Auxiliaries are markers and an eraser. Other additions may be improvised. Later, a looped string (also a trefoil knot) was added, hanging from a magnetic hook.

In the summer of 2016, I invited cultural practitioners to my studio in Chicago to explore uses of the BRAID as diagrammatic instrument. The invitation stated the desire to reflect on creative processes, and that video documentation was to be made public. This was not about collecting data for later interpretation, but about sharing lived experience, in the moment among those present, and later with others, through documentation. Tim Ingold suggests thinking with the world, or reading with a book, joining the doing of anthropology with the doing of art. The BRAID instrument could serve such a “prospective” purpose²³, by promoting techniques of dialogue and drawing in interaction with a diagrammatic scaffolding. What I expected to be enacted for mutual benefit was how and what cultural practitioners know about how and what they know. In short, I asked if by inscribing themselves onto a generic epistemic engine, could they access their specific one?

Using the BRAID Instrument

It was fortunate that the first users to accept the invitation were an artist and an arts administrator who had not previously met. Larger groups and individuals also came, but pairings, even of collaborators who knew each other well, turned out to be the most focused arrangements. Strangers tended to work out their practices more broadly, while teams probed more deeply into ongoing projects.

I introduced the Braid diagram to users by naming its parts, the torus and the trefoil knot, briefly describing the topological qualities I wanted users to keep in mind, imagining the torus and the trefoil knot as being able to stretch and deform without tearing. Pointing to Making, Mediating, Managing, I set up the terms as categories derived from conversations with artists and other cultural practitioners, indicating additional terms as prompts, available for use if desired. Activating the full instrument, I mobilized users physically, asking them to stand facing the board. I gave each a marker, showed them the eraser, and asked them to share with each other how they work, starting anywhere, and marking up the board as they saw fit. A typical first reaction was professing not to know how to begin, only to be swept up in conversation almost immediately. Most exchanges continued strong for up to 45 or even 60 minutes, resulting in a board intensely marked.

Users named the diagram the donut, giving linguistic primacy to the uninterrupted space of the torus. Hand and arm gestures repeatedly picked up on the trefoil's rotations when ad-

²³ Tim Ingold. *Making: Anthropology, Archaeology, Art and Architecture*. London et al.: Routledge, 2013, p. 8.

dressing practice as a whole, at times expressly appreciating the diagram design as reflective of their experience. Turn taking, participants stepped onto and to the rear of the scene, giving each other room or acting simultaneously. Many stated the importance of visualizing torus and trefoil knot as topologically elastic, emphasizing changes over time to where attention and practice were concentrated in their practices. In two-dimensional, surface focused reading, the trefoil knot was used as a multidirectional path, modified or augmented with many other lines and arrows, but also as a pipeline that could be broadened or constricted. Also operating in this mode, one participant not interested in management concerns described the remaining loops of the trefoil knot as pretzel, sufficient for their needs as someone who made art, but whose primary practice was located outside of arts and culture.

As inscriptions accumulated, participants noted how throughout their careers, systemic concentrations within or across sectors impacted what they were able to accomplish. For examples, someone who focused mainly on making work had neglected to mediate it, leading to low visibility. Others performed their facility with working systemically across multiple institutions. There were participants who made discoveries this way, also in comparing divergent experiences. Many exchanges proceeded with intellectual curiosity and with warmth. Participants took an interest in each other, were affectively engaged, and even emotionally moved by realizations. Condensed video recordings of these conversations were made publicly available in 2017.²⁴

A simplified version of the Braid was produced in the spring of 2019. Containing fewer prompts, it nods to Félix Guattari's concept of automodeling, by adding a subtitle to the Braid – A Metamodeling Adventure. Invited to speak about institutional practice and politics, Guattari had asked: "What is your model to you? It does not work? – Then, I don't know, one tries to work together. One must see if one can make a graft of other models. It will be perhaps better, perhaps worse. We will see. There is no question of posing a standard model. And the criterion of truth in this comes precisely when the metamodeling transforms itself into automodeling, or auto-management, if you prefer."²⁵ This speaks to the fact that one aspiration of this project is mutual benefit. Another way to think about access to one's epistemic engine is the notion that a benefit of this may be an increased sense of self management.

Isolating the Trefoil Knot

When an invitation to bring the Braid to a place that offered neither walls for mounting nor a shipping budget to send an easel-mounted version led to experimenting with a rope, the trefoil knot incarnated as a freestanding object. I explored this transposition with volunteers. We knotted a long, light rope into trefoil shape and spread it on the floor, large enough that 5 or 6 people could comfortably traverse it. We evoked the torus by circling through the trefoil, effectively declaring the floor a diagrammatic ground. We found that a walking conversation, during which focus is shared with attention to surroundings, ac-

²⁴ Adelheid Mers. *Nell Taylor and Allison Yasukawa: The Braid*, 2016, <https://vimeo.com/channels/talkingwhiteboards> (accessed 23 June 2020)

²⁵ Gary Genosko (ed.). *The Guattari Reader*. Oxford et al.: Blackwell, 1996, p. 133.

tivates different cognitive registers than a face-to-face or face-to-board exchange, and we explored what those might be. We slowed down, became empathetic in new ways, and easily included each other in physical play, for example lifting and reshaping the string. Here, we enacted the topology I previously asked participants in Braid dialogues to imagine. Recognizing the String Braid as an instrument in its own right, it also came into play in partnership with the Whiteboard Braid, each eliciting different voices. This exploration created an acute awareness of performativity as the core force of BRAID actions, leading into to the exploration of Performance Studies literature.

Confluences

Performance Studies

Dwight Conquergood's *Performance Studies: Interventions and Radical Research*, opened new avenues. Conquergood's treatment of textualism provided an intuition of the difference between cool, face-to-face or face-to-board conversation, from the ground and environment-aware, slowed, pacing talk. Most surprisingly, Conquergood had coined a paradigm set virtually identical to the one I had arrived at when conceptualizing the Braid diagram. He wrote: "Performance studies is uniquely suited for the challenge of braiding together disparate and stratified ways of knowing. [...] at Northwestern, we often refer to the three a's of performance studies: artistry, analysis, activism. Or to change the alliteration, a commitment to the three c's of performance studies: creativity, critique, citizenship."²⁶ A kindred spirit indeed. But why? It had not been my understanding that Making, Mediating and Managing mirrored Barad's Words, Knowers and Things, other than being a triad. In parsing other material with increasing intentionality, it became clear that the connection was intimate.

Methodology

Thomas Kuhn's *Structure of Scientific Revolutions* is the book by which the term "paradigm" was coined. How Kuhn's ideas entered both popular and academic thought is a fascinating story. According to Margret Masterman, Thomas Kuhn's 1962 *Structure of Scientific Revolutions* contained 22 definitions of "paradigm." Masterman recast those as three, concise concepts in 1965.²⁷ Kuhn, in the postscript to the 1970 edition of *Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, narrowed it to two: paradigm as exemplar²⁸, and as the term that matters to me here – disciplinary matrix. He defines disciplinary matrix as a number of variables, namely "the entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques, and so on, shared by the

²⁶ Conquergood 2013, p. 41.

²⁷ Margret Masterman. The Nature of a Paradigm. in: *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge. (Proceedings of the International Colloquium in the Philosophy of Science, vol. 4)*, ed. Imre Lakatos and Alan Musgrave. London, 1965, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970, p. 59–89.

²⁸ Paradigm as exemplar is taken up by Donald Schön under reference to Kuhn, in his exploration of design studio conversation at MIT (Donald Schön. *The Design Studio. An Exploration of its Traditions and Potentials*. London: RIBA Publications Limited, 1985), a concept I paid great attention to while I led conversations with artists that precipitated the Braid.

members of a given community.”²⁹ Even though Kuhn sets up with three terms, beliefs, values, and techniques, “and so on” opens the door to more. Still, lists of three were and are ubiquitous³⁰. Using these variables, as a member of an art research community, I would list Making as shaped by techniques, Mediating as guided by socially shared or contested values, and Managing rooted in normative structures that express beliefs.

A player in the academic paradigm wars that ensued in the wake of Kuhn’s book among positivist and constructivist researchers, educator Egon Guba transposed Kuhn’s matrix of ‘beliefs, values and techniques’ into the ‘ontology, epistemology, and methodology’ triad that shaped future research.³¹ Things, words and knowers. And with that, both my and Conquergood’s triad is mapped onto Barad’s.

In observing and applying categorization across materials, it is worth mentioning that, depending on the professional community at play, the ontological category is often intermingled with or replaced by explicit attention to governance. In the context of the Braid conversations, this opened a wide range of observations about political foundations of identity and access, mirroring Conquergood’s selection of citizenship as a category that more broadly opens into thinking with own positionality than Northwestern’s inherently polarizing “activism” did. What is set up here is a mingling of structures and values, joining ontology with axiology.

In chronological order, Figure 1 lists these triads, and an additional Guattarian triad discussed below. The matrix grid implies a rigidity that is in fact not strictly observed.

Figure 1

Techniques / Symbolic Generalizations and Exemplars	Values / Crises and Risk	Beliefs / Models and Heuristics	Kuhn (1970)
Labor of Subjectification / Mental Ecological Register	Microsocial Practices / Social Ecological Register	Micropolitical Practices / Environmental Ecological Register	Guattari (1989)
Epistemology / Methodology*	Axiology**	Ontology	Guba (1990)
Creativity	Critique	Citizenship	Conquergood (2002)
Knowers	Words	Things	Barad (2003)
Make	Mediate	Manage	Mers (2016)

* Following Kuhn’s combination of theoretic aspects with their pragmatic expressions within his categories, I take the liberty to join Guba’s Epistemology and Methodology.

** Axiology was a later addition to Guba’s scheme.

²⁹ Thomas S. Kuhn. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970, p. 175.

³⁰ Examples abound. I have taken to mapping them onto the Braid diagram as I encounter them. In addition to those cited here, current sketches are drawn from works by John Dewey, Robert Park, Paul Watzlawick, Giorgio Agamben, Donna Haraway, Jon McKenzie and others.

³¹ Egon Guba. *The Paradigm Dialog*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1990. In 1997, Heron and Reason pressed to include axiology, or attention to values. John Heron and Reason. A Participatory Inquiry Paradigm. in: *Qualitative Inquiry*, vol. 3, no. 3, 1997, pp. 274–294. Egon G. Guba and Yvonna S. Lincoln. Competing paradigms in qualitative research. in: *Handbook of qualitative research*, ed. Norman Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln. Thousand Oaks (Calif.): Sage, 1994, pp. 105–117.

The question remains how to respond to Barad's demand to replace representationalism, here shown to be deeply embedded in paradigmatic thinking, with the onto-epistemology grounded by performativity. It is becoming clear that Barad is proposing a change of worldview, not a shift within a paradigmatic world view.

Visual Ecologies

Cybernetic thinking opened the door to new perspectives, experimenting with other visualizations, through metaphor and diagrammatic imagery that blend categories differently, even as representationalist world views continue to hold sway. As examples, I will offer two instances of use of Bateson's *Ecology of Mind*.³² As laid out in *The Three Ecologies*, the triad of concepts Félix Guattari works with consists of first, a "mental ecological" register that could be associated with "knowers" (Barad), "techniques" (Kuhn) and "epistemology" (Guba). Secondly, a "social ecological register" intersects with "values" (Kuhn), "words" (Barad), and "axiology" (later Guba), while the third, "environmental ecological register" overlaps with "beliefs" (Kuhn), "things" (Barad) and "ontology" (Guba). According to this scheme, a parallel construction to Barad's onto-epistemology, a hypothetical Guattarian onto-epistemology, would contract into an environmental ecological register. Supporting the notion that Guattari is working within relatable constructs in the vicinity of Bateson is the fact that he prefaces his *Three Ecologies* with a quote from Bateson taken from a paragraph that constructs, an "eco-mental system."³³ Over and over again, Guattari the diagrammer makes efforts to join elements in new ways. He suggests "fitting ontological dimensions together in a circular manner."³⁴ Earlier in the same text he wrote "What distinguishes metamodelisation from modelisation is the way it uses terms to develop possible openings onto the virtual and onto creative processuality."³⁵

In the essay *This is Play*,³⁶ creative processuality is front and center, presented through a triad of (1) play as frame for playing well, or technique, (2) game as context for play and related, non-play issues, and (3) peace as onto-axiological structure. Musician Stephen Nachmanovitch also works from Bateson's *Ecology of Mind*. What drew my attention to the text was the writer's use of metaphor in a section title, "Pretzels and Klein Bottles." Klein Bottles are topological models, along with Möbius strips and Trefoil Knots. Nachmanovitch conjures levels of communication that "connect over, under, around, and through each other," suggesting "Pretzel" may be a better name than "level."³⁷ He continues "[p]

³² Gregory Bateson. *Steps to an Ecology of Mind. Collected Essays in Anthropology, Psychiatry, Evolution, and Epistemology*. San Francisco: Chandler, 1972.

³³ Félix Guattari. *The Three Ecologies*. London: The Athlone Press, 2000, p. 70. The Bateson quote is "There is an ecology of bad ideas, just as there is an ecology of weeds." The paragraph it originates from is quoted in full in the translator's notes.

³⁴ Félix Guattari. *Chaosmosis. An ethico-aesthetic paradigm*. Trans. Paul Bains and Julian Pefanis, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995, p. 126.

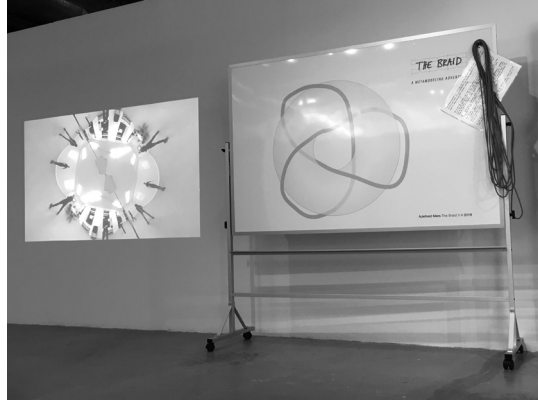
³⁵ Guattari 1995, p. 31.

³⁶ Stephen Nachmanovitch. This is play. in: *New Literary History*, vol. 40, no. 1, Winter 2009, pp. 1–24, <https://doi.org/10.1353/nlh.0.0074> (accessed 27 September 2019).

³⁷ Nachmanovitch 2009, p. 7.



Using the Braid String. Sullivan Galleries, Chicago, 2019.



The BRAID Instrument with Braid string, and projection of topological transformation. Sullivan Galleries, Chicago, 2019.

Perhaps the best image is a transdimensional shape like a Möbius strip with its half-twist that flips up and out into the third dimension, or its big brother the Klein bottle, which loops up and out between three and four dimensions.”³⁸

Summary and Outlook

The striking similarity of my three BRAID categories with the triad of concepts, developed by Performance Studies scholar Dwight Conquergood (2013) prompted a revisiting of Barad’s material, leading to the discovery of new connections between her discussion of representationalism as the relation among things, words and knowers and Thomas Kuhn’s (1970) isolation of paradigm frames, laid out as beliefs, values and techniques, and deployed by Guba (1990) as Ontology, Epistemology / Methodology and Axiology in research literature. Conquergood’s and my categories are equally implicated. Where Kuhn described scientific change as paradigmatic, Barad is proposing a new world view by interlacing ontology and epistemology into onto-epistemology. I had designed my project to discover artistic epistemes by thinking together, across the categories I now understand as paradigmatic.

Because representationalism is the worldview Barad is attempting to overcome, the question arose how the deeply ingrained tripartite modeling of meaning that onto-epistemology and intra-action are intended to replace can be dislodged. Ecological models show approaches to doing this. Working in Gregory Bateson’s forcefield, the members of Félix Guattari’s (2000) triad of mental, social and environmental ecological registers move towards each other, assisted by metamodeling processes. Stephen Nachmanovitch (2009) deploys topological metaphor to show movement across frames that promotes a coming-together in peace, through play.

³⁸ Ibid.

Reading Barad through my diagram, the move to onto-epistemology precipitates a jump from Flatland (the diagram surface) to Spaceland (the interior of the torus). Through that, an external point of view onto the diagram plane gives way to an imagined, interior perspective, located within the diagrammatic space, represented through shading as a spatial illusion. This interior view is closest related to the experience a BRAID user has who uses the auxiliary rope trefoil knot, an arrangement that designates an actual, three-dimensional space as diagrammatic space.

Using the rope trefoil knot, representational space is overcome by exiting into actual space. In this space, boundaries are negotiated less by existing text, and more by mutual openness if a performative mode is willingly entered into. This willingness is produced by agreeing to being part of a game.

The processes described above consisted of drawing and reading, of speaking with and among others and articulating hunches visually and performatively. What was learned in these settings emerges most immediately into the framework of follower projects, as new questions and emergent structure. A project immediately following the BRAID acquired the working title, the GAME. Co-creating with groups of volunteers at multiple locations, the third kind of diagram³⁹ emerged, consisting of a sequence of verbal prompts only, to be delivered by a facilitator, who elicits performative actions through which a diagram then takes place. This project was later titled *Performative Topologies*, and included the creation of topologically transformed video that placed participant performances within a torus. A second project, *Micro-practices for a New Gentleness* uses co-creation and facilitation to better understand how premises, rules and techniques propel focused conversations. A third project is seeking to reframe interview processes drawing on all the above, working with new forms of facilitative documentation. These are the outcomes of the BRAID, located in real space, in bounded situations among co-creators that make premises transparent and articulate located realities.

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³⁹ See footnote 6.