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TOWARDS ACADEMIC PUBLISHING IN MEDIAS RES

Abstract

The article discusses challenges of multimodal publishing in academic contexts with specific focus on the epistemic role of images in research publications in the area of artistic research. Through a series of examples, the article attempts at showing that research in and through the arts raises the stakes of epistemic presentation because it thematises the mode of presentation as part of the subject matter. This calls for media sensitivity and new conceptual models for epistemic operations. Some of the challenges at the core of artistic research are highlighted with regard to models of “aesthetic research” and “expositionality”. Finally, the article addresses the tensional interplay of aesthetic and epistemic research processes and proposes a diplomatic approach in the spirit of Isabelle Stengers’ “ecology of practices”, which the article presents as an incentive to giving more weight to radical situatedness of epistemic practices.

Keywords

Academic publishing; artistic research; ecology of practices; media sensitivity.

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In a well-known television interview with Jacques Derrida from 1993, Bernard Stiegler addresses the question of the epistemic value of images in academic discourse. He first states the importance of audiovisual archives for various areas of research and highlights then a problem related with recent media technological developments that are contributing to the emergence of “new material supports of knowledge”. Even if science is essentially “a modality of transmission of knowledge” there are various academic, legal and commercial restrictions that significantly complicate the transmission of knowledge embedded in new media structures. The integration of media specific articulations, such as images, in research publications is highly regulated, at the same time as the medial embeddedness of knowledge shows an increasing cultural impact and should become more acknowledged in academic publishing practices as well¹.

In his improvised response to this issue, Derrida focuses on the question on whether and how images can play an argumentative role in academic discourse. He tells an anecdote from one of his seminars in California. Two of his students had asked him, whether it would be possible to submit a video instead of a written essay in order to accomplish the seminar. His first impulse was to accept this then unconventional format, but he fi-

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¹ J. Derrida, B. Stiegler, *Echographies of Television*, translated by J. Bajorek, London: Polity Press, 2002, 141-142.

nally ended up rejecting the possibility of a video essay. “I did not accept them, however, because I had the impression, in reading or in watching their production, that what I was expecting from a discourse, from theoretical elaboration, had suffered from this passage to the image”². Derrida did not refuse the image just because it was an image and not a written academic text, but because the image had rather clumsily taken the place of what he thought “could have and should have been elaborated more precisely with discourse or writing”³. The problem was that the video images didn’t manage to fulfil their argumentative role, they just appeared in place of discourse without adequately replacing it.

During the course of their discussion, Stiegler and Derrida agree on the point that there doesn’t yet exist a “scholarly (if not scientific) practice of the image” but that integration of images in research publications should, however, be encouraged “provided that rigor, differentiation, refinement do not suffer as a result”⁴. Derrida sees that a new kind of research practice in medias res would be welcome and might actually emerge in wake of the quick technological developments in the areas of archiving and publishing. “There will come a time when, in effect, one will be able to and will have to integrate images into the presentation of knowledge. I don’t know to what point this is impossible today, but in any case, it is still very limited”⁵. Of course, while this was certainly true for philosophical discourse in the 1990s, Stiegler and Derrida seem to neglect the fact that in some areas of research, such as cultural anthropology, images had made their way into research publications already decades earlier.

Now, some twenty-five years later, we are in the situation where the epistemic operations involving images are not only much more widespread in various research contexts, but also increasingly embedded in computational networks⁶. The Open Science movement, with its policies for open data management and dissemination guidelines, is gaining more and more weight in the international research landscape, which reduces the formative power of various access barriers and, in the best case, enables multifaceted approaches to medially embedded information and knowledge. Despite of the still hegemonic position of the written academic text, research publishing standards are starting to embrace multimodal formats, enhanced texts and rich media presentations in many areas of research⁷. The buzzword ‘digital humanities’ signals a new orientation even in the traditionally very text-based humanities. Some of the proponents of this emerging research area argue that media literacy, that is, the capability for articulating passages from images and other media to text, is not enough for a humanities scholar today, a variety of digital methods and programming skills are needed as well. David Berry, the editor of *Understanding Digital Humanities* (2012), argues for ‘iteracy’, an iterative research practice that involves reflection on “what reading and writing actually should mean in a computational age”⁸.

² *Ibid.*, 142-143.

³ *Ibid.*, 143.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 143.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 142.

⁶ These networks tend even to bypass the human viewer, which complicates the epistemic status of images beyond the scope of this article. Cf. J. Bridle, *New Dark Age: Technology and the End of the Future*, London: Verso Books, 2018; G. Cox, “Ways of Machine Seeing”, *Unthinking Photography*, November 2016, accessed October, 13, 2020. <https://unthinking.photography/articles/ways-of-machine-seeing>

⁷ N. Carpentier, “Communicating Academic Knowledge beyond the Written Academic Text: An Autoethnographic Analysis of the Mirror Palace of Democracy Installation Experiment”, *International Journal of Communication*, 14 (2020): 2120-2143 (2120-2127).

⁸ D. Berry, Introduction to *Understanding Digital Humanities*, edited by R. Berry, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, 8.

In the situation where scholarly practice seems to be undergoing a fundamental change, we need to ask, whether the questions of rigor, differentiation, and refinement addressed by Derrida are still relevant. Can we say that individual researchers, some specific publication platforms or even whole areas of research have reached the point where images and nonverbal presentations can adequately replace or complement written academic discourse? Where can we observe a “scholarly (if not scientific) practice of the image” that would have reached the level of precision expected from more established forms of modern academic discourse?

It is worth considering whether the academic culture of today might still be facing, only in a radically new constellation, the risk of diluting the rigor and precision that Derrida (in the case discussed in the interview from 1993) associated with the passage from text to image. Perhaps it is not only the passage from text to image where the level of precision is compromised? Perhaps our academic culture, its workflows, protocols and publishing practices should become more attentive to the peculiarities of various passages of articulation. Perhaps we should become more “media sensitive” in our elaborations?⁹

Insofar as we are here not dealing only with historical transformation of scientific criteria and research protocols, we should focus on the mediality of epistemic presentations. In order to continue along the lines of the references I started with, I will focus on the question of the role of images in research presentations and academic publishing. When are images really needed in epistemic processes and when do they just illustrate states of things that have been worked out through other means? When do images demonstrate the power of an argument that would otherwise remain too vague? When do pictorial presentations establish genuinely new and viable epistemic constellations? When does the critical exchange of ideas within a research community take place through images as the envisioned “scholarly practice of the image” might suggest?

Many of these issues have been extensively studied in the area of image science (*Bildwissenschaft*), most prominently by scholars such as Hans Belting, Horst Bredekamp, W.J.T. Mitchell, and Sigrid Weigel¹⁰. Therefore, I will restrict my discussion here on aesthetic and artistic research strategies exploring the epistemic potential of images and multimodal presentations. These strategies share the premise that art can play many roles in a research setting beyond its traditional role as object of research. They agree on the point that art can offer an aim, a terrain, a context and a whole range of methods for research. Otherwise these research initiatives are often very different from each other.

It is perhaps no surprise that this diversity has led into a situation where methodological, disciplinary, and epistemological differences become visible on the level of terminology that tries to sort out the different combinations of art and research, their foundations, modes, and aims: arts research, research into/through/for art, arts-based, studio-based, practice-based, practice-led research, and so on¹¹. In the area of fine art, which constitutes my own academic home base, the umbrella term ‘artistic research’ is often used for a wide range of research practices across various forms of contemporary art.

⁹ M. Elo, “Notes on Media Sensitivity in Artistic Research”, in *Exposition of Artistic Research: Publishing Art in Academia*, edited by M. Schwab and H. Borgdorff, Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2014, 25-38.

¹⁰ See for example H. Belting, *Bild-Anthropologie*, Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2001; Id., *Theorie des Bildakts*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2010; W.J.T. Mitchell, *What do Pictures Want. The Lives and Loves of Images*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005; and S. Weigel, *Grammatologie der Bilder*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2015.

¹¹ For a useful overview see V. Michelkevičius, *Mapping Artistic Research: Towards Diagrammatic Knowing*, Vilnius: Vilnius Academy of Fine Arts, 2018.

The field has been theorised extensively. Some discussions take the shape of a critical rehabilitation of the idea of ‘sensuous knowledge’ developed by Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten in the early days of philosophical aesthetics, others highlight the importance of materiality and embodied skills in artistic research processes and argue for their wider relevance¹². In short, artistic research challenges theory-driven models of research and signals a revival of pragmatogonic research settings. It places non-verbal articulations, including images, at the core of research culture. By doing so, it highlights aesthetic aspects of knowledge production and raises the stakes of questions concerning epistemic presentation.

In general terms, we can say that ‘art’ is a name for processes and articulations that take their material-discursive embeddedness seriously and commit themselves to developing a heightened sensitivity towards their own constraints and degrees of freedom within them. Artistic work, in other words, has tensional relation to presentation, since presentation itself is the medium through which the work proceeds and unfolds, and this requires appropriate ‘touch’¹³. This ‘touch’ or sensitivity (which has physical, ideational and social aspects to it) cannot be reduced to a technical skill. It involves both epistemic impetus and aesthetic intensity, it is marked by a ‘pathic moment’, which means that it touches upon the limits of knowability¹⁴.

The tensional relation to presentation that characterises art implies that methodical use of images in research processes or research presentations does not necessarily turn the research into ‘arts-based research’. Art cannot constitute a base in any strong sense, since in the contemporary ‘postconceptual condition’¹⁵ any specific skills, methods, materials, or even contexts, are not defining it. Art can present itself in unprecedented ways. Therefore, the base that a research approach might claim for itself in the arts is always unstable and contested. Similarly, the qualifier ‘artistic’ in ‘artistic research’ is not able to specify a particular mode of research, since virtually anything can be subsumed under art. At the same time, many artist-researchers deliberately develop their practices in directions that challenge even wide understanding of ‘artistic’ practice.

The Finnish painter Markus Rissanen, for example, delved into mathematical problems during his DFA project. This side-track of his artistic research grew into significant mathematical discovery. Using visual intuition, geometrical tiling methods and drawing, without any so-called artistic ambitions, he was able to discover the general law of rotational symmetry. The solid mathematical proof for his ground-breaking solution was then formulated in cooperation with a mathematician¹⁶. Drawings functioned in

¹² See for example S. Kjørup, “Another Way of Knowing. Baumgarten, Aesthetics, and the Concept of Sensuous Cognition”, *Sensuous Knowledge 1*, Bergen: Kunsthøgskolen i Bergen, 2006; L. Cotter, ed., *Reclaiming Artistic Research*, Berlin: Hatje Cantz, 2019; D. Mersch, *Epistemologien des Ästhetischen*, Zurich-Berlin: Diaphanes, 2015.

¹³ Cf. Elo, “Notes on Media Sensitivity in Artistic Research”, 29.

¹⁴ The sense of touch and the sensible experience at large can be addressed in terms of the ‘pathic moment’ (from the Greek *pathos*: sensitivity, affectability, suffering): “As pathic, the experience of touch is neither subjective nor objective; it is an event that surpasses my activities as it befalls on me, but only insofar as I contribute to it by my response. In its surprise character, the pathic moment of touch comes too early for us to be ready for it, and our response comes too late to reach the experience at its peak. Therefore, a touching gesture – be it physical, ideational or social – never coincides with itself. It finds its manner only amid pressing matters”. M. Elo, M. Luoto, Introduction to *Figures of Touch*, Helsinki: Academy of Fine Arts, 2018, 8. Accessed July 17, 2020. <http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-7131-46-6>

¹⁵ P. Osborne, *The Postconceptual Condition*, London: Verso Books, 2018.

¹⁶ Rissanen, *Basic Forms and Nature: From Visual Simplicity to Conceptual Complexity*, DFA diss., Academy of Fine Arts Helsinki, 2016. Accessed July 17, 2020. <http://hdl.handle.net/10138/182807>.

this research setting as indispensable supports for the epistemic process and collegial communication. Therefore, it might be legitimate to speak of ‘scholarly’ practice of the image in this case. The label ‘arts-based research’ seems appropriate as well, insofar as ‘art’ in it refers to skill (*tekhné*) of drawing and not to contemporary art, as the term often misleadingly suggests. Then the notion ‘artistic research’, in turn, seems somewhat misleading, except if taken as a formal umbrella term.

Rissanen’s research offers a helpful point of reference for highlighting a further issue pertinent to considering the possible relevance of images in academic research, namely the relations of art, knowledge and aesthetics. Rissanen didn’t consider his drawings as artworks; they were epistemic tools for him and had only secondarily an artistic or aesthetic value. He exhibited the drawings together with his paintings in a show that was part of his doctoral research project, but they were shown in a back room together with news clips and other informational material.

Often in the area of artistic research images are treated both as aesthetic objects and as epistemic articulations. The role of art in linking these two aspects varies, however, significantly. In some cases, it is the artistic framework, that is, an artwork or a series of artworks and their material-discursive conception with regard to the field of arts, that embeds the epistemic and aesthetic aspects of pictorial presentation into the research setting. In other cases, the epistemic and aesthetic aspects of the research are brought together through some other kind of framing, such as philosophical, societal, or scientific contextualisation. This is the reason why some artist-researchers prefer to make the distinction between ‘aesthetic research’ and ‘artistic research’.

Alex Arteaga, for example, defines his approach in terms of aesthetic research. His understanding of aesthetics builds on a combination of enactivism and phenomenology with a strong emphasis on processes of sensory experience, *aisthesis*. For a research practice to be aesthetic, in the sense outlined by Arteaga, it must be performed in “aesthetic conduct”, that is, “in a form of interaction between practitioners and environment that privileges the mobilization of each practitioner’s sensorimotor and emotional skills and neutralizes her will-based and target-oriented varieties of action”¹⁷. In the research presented in his recent article published in the rich media publication *RUUKKU – Studies in Artistic Research*, Arteaga uses visual and auditive recordings both as a means of documentation and notation. As documents, the images included in the article add visual information to the verbal descriptions of various methodical settings and processes. As notational elements, they show, after the fact, what kind of recordings were done during the notational practices. In both cases the images in the research presentation are subordinated to linguistically accomplished differentiations and verbal argumentation. Something similar happens with the sound files included in the article, although their role is a bit more complicated, since some of them include also linguistic information, such as talks and discussions.

¹⁷ Arteaga elaborates his view on “aesthetic research”: “The inherent and constitutive features of the intended results of an aesthetic research practice must be fundamentally conditioned – if not determined – by the non-teleological, that is, open-ended and distributed character of aesthetic conduct. [...] The results of an aesthetic research practice are immanent to the practice: they are transformations of the components of the practice – the subject-matter, the practitioner, the environment and the practice itself. Aesthetic practices, this is my thesis, enable a particular kind of transformation of the system practitioner-researched issue-practice-environment that manifests as the destabilization of the subject-matter for the practitioner and for those who, somehow, participate in or of the research”. A. Arteaga, “Aesthetic Practices of Very Slow Observation as Phenomenological Practices: Steps to an Ecology of Cognitive Practices”, *RUUKKU – Studies in Artistic Research*, 14 (2020): n.p. Accessed July 13, 2020. DOI: 10.22501/ruu.740194.

Another view that places aesthetics at the core of artistic research finds its concise formulation in the recent *Manifesto of Artistic Research*¹⁸. The authors of this manifesto consider artistic research a kind of basic research intimately related with philosophical aesthetics. In order to unfold its full potential, artistic research should, in their view, emancipate itself from the research protocols upheld by the university system, from the theoretical frameworks and scientific models adopted from other disciplines and from the neoliberal demands of knowledge production¹⁹. Artistic research can achieve this when it develops its own notions of practice, theory, and knowledge, based on aesthetic thinking:

Aesthetic praxis, the field of action with which artistic research is concerned, itself induces explication with its own – other – means and in – other – media. Doing (*praxis*), creating (*poiesis*), and skill (*tekhné*) thus intertwine in a specific way: the drawing of a line is already an explicit kind of knowledge which presents itself *as this line* [...] Aesthetic thought is not subordinate to philosophical or scientific thought, or its explication through language; it simply uses other medial forms and types of expressivity²⁰.

The manifesto, composed of concise theses and fragmentary explanations, is published as a bilingual book (German/English) where the language versions are accompanied by two slightly different image sequences, puzzle-like collages successively, page by page, assembled from pieces that show fragments of landscape, buildings and bodies. The image sequence is entitled “a declination of the collage by Sabine Hertig”. In terms of their formal elements the text and the image sequence form a dialogue, but it is hard to avoid the impression that the images are there to illustrate the points made in the text.

The tension between these two closely related but diverging approaches that highlight the importance of aesthetics in arts research is reminiscent of the double root of philosophical aesthetics that finds its formative articulation in Immanuel Kant’s critical philosophy: transcendental aesthetics of the first critique with its focus on schematicism versus the third critique with its focus on aesthetic judgement. It remains a debated issue, in which sense artistic research could or should be seen as an aesthetic mode of research, and whether it delves into aesthetic processes in order to gain knowledge through them or should it, on the contrary, be seen as epistemocritical practice.

The tension between epistemic and aesthetic engagement roughly outlined through these examples implies that the research gestures that are made operative in an artistic research setting are marked by an *ambivalence that counts* in the research community of artist-researchers. This again constitutes a highly challenging starting point for developing appropriate research protocols and quality criteria in artistic research.

The *Journal for Artistic Research* (JAR) has done some pioneering work in this area. Michael Schwab, the editor-in-chief of JAR, has, over the past ten years, theorised the possibilities and challenges of peer-reviewed publishing in the context of artistic research²¹. The key notion ‘exposition’ that Schwab developed in order to conceptualise the idea of ‘exposing practice as research’ in the frame of JAR has meanwhile become

¹⁸ S. Henke et al., *Manifesto of Artistic Research: A Defence against Its Advocates*, Zurich: Diaphanes, 2020.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, *passim*.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 31-32.

²¹ JAR builds its publishing ideology on the possibilities offered by the Research Catalogue (RC) that was originally conceived partly for the purposes of JAR. Currently, RC hosts a number of peer-reviewed journals, and it is supported by more than 50 different research institutions (www.researchcatalogue.net).

widely recognized and is now part of the jargon of academic publishing in artistic research. In the editorial of the inaugural issue, JAR0, Schwab describes expositiveness in following terms:

This choice of word indicates that a contribution to the journal must expose as research what it presents using the technological framework offered by the Research Catalogue. Depending on your field, ‘exposition’ might not always be a suitable word. For this reason, we encourage you to believe that instead of exposing practice as research, you could also stage, perform, curate, translate, unfold or reflect practice as research. Your chosen descriptor here is less important than the doubling it entails, which creates distance within practice through which understanding can operate²².

A research exposition submitted to JAR, in other words, needs to make a case of itself on its own terms, at the same time as it is expected to engage in a negotiation with academic requirements, including the peer-review process. In this setting, some form of writing has to engage with practice, which on its own would not qualify as research. Here, ‘writing’ needs to be understood in a wide sense encompassing different modes of articulation beyond written language. In the technical confines of the Research Catalogue, ‘exposition’ is a multimodal text with its own navigational structure. Within these confines, JAR operates with exceptional openness towards the formats of presentation. “Radically extending the traditional academic model, JAR continues to require some form of distance or doubling that puts research into perspective while categorically refusing to define how such reflexive procedure can take place in the context of the journal”²³.

The notion ‘exposition’ implies a process of unfolding (ex-plication) that proceeds from a dense and uncompromising presentation to more accessible one, from a supposedly opaque mode of articulation to a more transparent one. Given the hierarchies between different “cultural techniques”²⁴ sedimented in our tradition, this passage from opacity towards transparency is often conceived in terms of a passage from non-verbal articulations to written language²⁵. Even if JAR is “radically extending the traditional academic model” and “refusing to define how [a critical] reflexive procedure can take place”, it still builds its peer-review process on a model that gives the critical voice to the written word of the peer-review statement. To my knowledge, no peer-review statements that would build on non-verbal elements, such as images, have been submitted so far in JAR²⁶. Should this be seen as a symptom of a prolonged immaturity of the “scholarly practice of the image” or ‘sensuous knowledge’? Wouldn’t academic publishing in medias res require a research community that could communicate also through images?

Let me propose a possible answer to this question in the spirit of Isabelle Stengers’ speculative ‘cosmopolitics’. Stengers philosophical work consists of a multifaceted cri-

²² Schwab, Editorial to *Journal for Artistic Research*, Issue 0. Accessed July 17, 2020. <https://www.jar-online.net/issues/0>.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Cf. G. Winthrop-Young, “Cultural Techniques: Preliminary Remarks”, *Theory, Culture, Society*, 30, 3 (2013): 3-19. DOI: 10.1177/0263276413500828.

²⁵ This passage is comparable with what Tim Ingold calls the passage from ‘differential sympathies’ to ‘agglutinative accretions’, from ‘knotting’ to ‘articulation’. It is to be noted, however, that Ingold uses the term ‘articulation’ in more narrow sense than I do here. For him, articulation is external linking of rigid elements (and... and... and...) in contrast to knotting that establishes internal correspondencies (with... with... with...). My understanding of ‘articulation’ includes media sensitivity and thus encompasses these both modes of joining. T. Ingold, *The Life of Lines*, London-New York: Routledge, 2015, 23.

²⁶ I can claim this with some certainty, since I was part of the editorial team of JAR during 2011-2019.

tique of modern sciences²⁷. Even if she often sets the focus on physics, her work prepares insightful starting points for immanent critique in many areas of research, including artistic research. In *In Catastrophic Times* (2015) Stengers highlights the problematic character of professionalisation of research within the frame of global capitalism and shows how the prevailing neoliberal knowledge economy is apt to enhance the shallow universalising tendencies of modern rationality. Against these tendencies, she develops the speculative idea of ‘ecology of practices’ that builds on practitioners’ research culture driven by the ethos of ‘situatedness’²⁸. ‘Ecology of practices’ is not a solution but a learning process and creation of new ways of resisting a future made plausible by the power relations effective in the present²⁹. It is a cosmopolitical tool for thinking that aims at “construction of new ‘practical identities’ for practices, that is, new possibilities for them to be present, or, in other words, to connect”³⁰.

The key question for cosmopolitics is whether and how epistemic practices could, on the one hand, live up to their potential without any programmatic agenda, and, on the other hand, engage in processes of exchange with each other without reciprocal capture. This ecologisation involves ‘delocalisation’ of epistemic practices, that is, their becoming exposed to higher degrees of generality, and thus gaining critical distance to their sedentary components and their own territory without losing the sense of their ‘situatedness’³¹. Relating this to Michael Schwab’s way of outlining the idea of exposition, we could consider the “doubling” and creation of “distance within practice” that the processes of exposing achieve as cosmopolitical gestures through which cross-disciplinary understanding can operate.

Stengers makes it clear, however, that the epistemic potential of art has its limits: “Artistic practices need diplomacy but cannot delegate experts. Art puts at risk the sedentary components of experience in themselves and brings them into existence for themselves. And from this anything can follow, except an ‘artistic’ knowledge claiming to promote its constraints and negotiate its scope and meaning for others”³².

Art cannot delegate experts, since it doesn’t have a territory of its own, no delimited set of skills, methods, materials, or even contexts. It has no base, nor can it offer one. It can only construct its medium, or, milieu, through practice that commits itself to its specific situation, to the pressing matters that motivate its ‘touch’. Art operates in medias res, making an issue of unprecedented passages of articulation. In order to live up to their potential, these passages need to be presented in their own terms, unfolded to connect with the peers, and exposed to wider surroundings.

Here, diplomacy comes into the picture. Unlike professionalised experts who are concerned with the implications of their theories, diplomats are familiar with the weight of specific situations. Practitioners are experts of their practice, but when given the mandate to promote the truth of their situated knowledge beyond its own constraints

²⁷ See for example I. Stengers, *Cosmopolitics I*, translated by R. Bononno, Minneapolis-London: University of Minnesota Press, 2010; Id., *Cosmopolitics II*, translated by R. Bononno, Minneapolis-London: University of Minnesota Press, 2011; Id., *In Catastrophic Times: Resisting the Coming Barbarism*, translated by A. Geoffrey, London-Lüneburg: Open Humanities Press & Meson Press, 2015.

²⁸ I. Stengers, “Introductory Notes on an Ecology of Practices”, *Cultural Studies Review*, 11, 1 (2005): 183-196.

²⁹ Stengers, *Cosmopolitics II*, 407.

³⁰ Stengers, “Introductory Notes on an Ecology of Practices”, 186.

³¹ Stengers, *Cosmopolitics II*, 372.

³² *Ibid.*, 455.

and problematics, they turn into professionals. What distinguishes practitioners from professionals is

the capacity to perceive the difference between situations and question the definition of what matters to them as a community, what causes them to gather, and to others for which their knowledge or expertise can be useful, even necessary, but will never allow them to define the right manner of formulating the problem³³.

The diplomate, in turn, doesn't have the mandate to function as an expert who would be supposed to be able to define the right manner of formulating the problem at hand. Diplomacy is about exposing problems in their constructedness. We might call it epistemic negotiation.

In light of Stengers' cosmopolitical proposal, artist-researchers exposing their practice as research and creating a distance within their practice in the milieu of epistemic negotiations are more diplomates than experts. Their research gestures are targeted at the challenges of presentation, that is, the layer of connections in the ecology of practices. Obligated by this specific focus or stratum, they work towards a research culture in medias res. The "scholarly practice of the image" envisioned by Stiegler and Derrida could be seen as one mode of epistemic exchange in that culture. It would need to articulate its connections to other modes of exchange, but it would not be condemned to demand a status of a generalisable practice.

In a viable ecology of practices, power relations between different passages of articulation that are at work whenever intensive practices meet, would have only a limited range and would, therefore, not turn into formative hierarchies. Judgements concerning the difference between opinion and truth would not be subjected to any universal rule. This, however, does not imply welcoming relativism. The so-called scientific facts would be recognized as "factishes", as products of specific framings³⁴. In this speculative scenario, the strength of academic publishing in medias res, for which artistic and aesthetic research strategies are currently offering promising models, would reside in its capability to multiply the ways in which it is possible and productive to act on pressing matters.

³³ Stengers, *Living in Catastrophic Times*, 92-93.

³⁴ Stengers, *Cosmopolitics II*, 306.