

form.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, Christo had wrapped up parts of the landscape and created things that looked for all the world like moulded shapes.

Maps no longer depicted anything, and people started to focus purely on their function, the way that they could visualise movements. For Vilém Flusser, probably the world's most popular kinetic theorist, the "period of sedentariness, of village (Greek: political) life [...] is nearing its end."<sup>3</sup> Dismantling and dissecting maps gradually destroys the compositional devices, which are then free to have their functions and tasks redefined and to be released from their traditional obligations.

For Flusser, the world of maps is made up of nodes or points of communication that shift continually. But all they consist of – and this is crucial to their mobility – are relationships and connections. "The thing that was once known as 'I', the 'identity', the 'self', turns out to be nodes of relationships. I am whatever I am in relation to others."<sup>4</sup> The map, a new authority on movement and change that has left the world of images behind it, has given rise to the network, a form that can only be understood through axes in its spatial scope. The perfect visual expression of this is the diagram – probably the only medium that is still up to depicting an ever-changing kinetic energy.

Maps and diagrams possess a unique operational openness that reaches into infinity. They can refer to existing or imaginary things, to spaces or times, to numbers or music. Diagrams are based on a logic that cannot be captured in words. It is impossible to fix them to pictorial or written symbols, and they must be understood by the viewer. They are simulations that are fundamentally changing the way we understand the world, and we often regard them as a product of reality.

In the 1990s a specific term for this began to emerge: diagrammatics. Calculations, tables, simulations, scripts and notations have become the focus of a great deal of interest. They allow us to visually express how fragile our understanding of reality has become. PSJM, for example, work with five conventional colours which, rather than creating an abstract artwork, actually represent statistical values. The work is not designed to be viewed as a picture, but read as a text.

### Where to?

Probably the most fitting definition of an artwork that expresses this idea can be found in the work of a mathematician and electrical engineer, who was also a poet and a Buddhist. In 1971 George Spencer-Brown put it like this: "[...] a well-constructed work of art will pick you up, transport you, show the secrets of your being, return you, and plant you back on your feet again."<sup>5</sup> This sees the artwork as a kind of means of transportation, constantly moving through the coordinates of a network until it returns to the starting point (in an altered form).

The Ostrale has announced that it will be heading east next year, which means that we can read Elfi Andereggs Balkanexpress as a journey into the future. This year, though, the Ostrale wanted to explore our own perspectives, our own identity, our own boundaries. The organisers have chosen a good time to do this, since the stars are currently well aligned for a transformation that will turn abstractions into performance by shifting ideas from the verbal world into the active. Because this applies to contemporary society, we need to explore it by making a conquering tour of the debates currently in progress.

### Tackling terminology: boundaries and identities

Immanuel Kant believed that the abstract terms given form and made material by language and writing were the antithesis of sensory perception because they are a "general representation or a representation of what several objects have in common, that is, a representation to the extent that [they are] contained in several."<sup>6</sup>