Orchestrating Contingency: Framing Conditions for Multiplicity

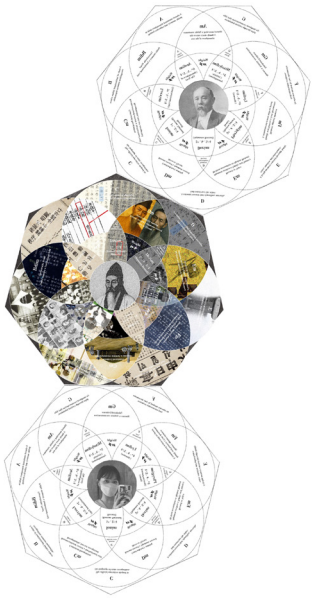


Fig. 1. My polyponic system made inspired by Babel's ibrary and Music Tree diagram.

If a system is a living, breathing body, a model might be its abstract skeleton: a structure that establishes connections without determining every movement. Looking back at my illustration practice, I recognise an attempt to build such a skeleton for collaboration. Through floor plans, unfolded forms and musical notation, I have moved between Translation, Voice and Direction, asking how contributions might connect while leaving their eventual visual forms undecided.

Jayoon Choi described my position as a conductor rather than a solo practitioner. I felt closer to someone bringing elements into relation than to a violinist playing one part. Could an illustrator create conditions through which others speak? My cue sheet grew directly from this question. Time organises sequence and duration; narrative distinguishes characters from events; musical dynamics become visual weight, with forte translated into a thick line or large form. These translations offer an initial grammar for working together.

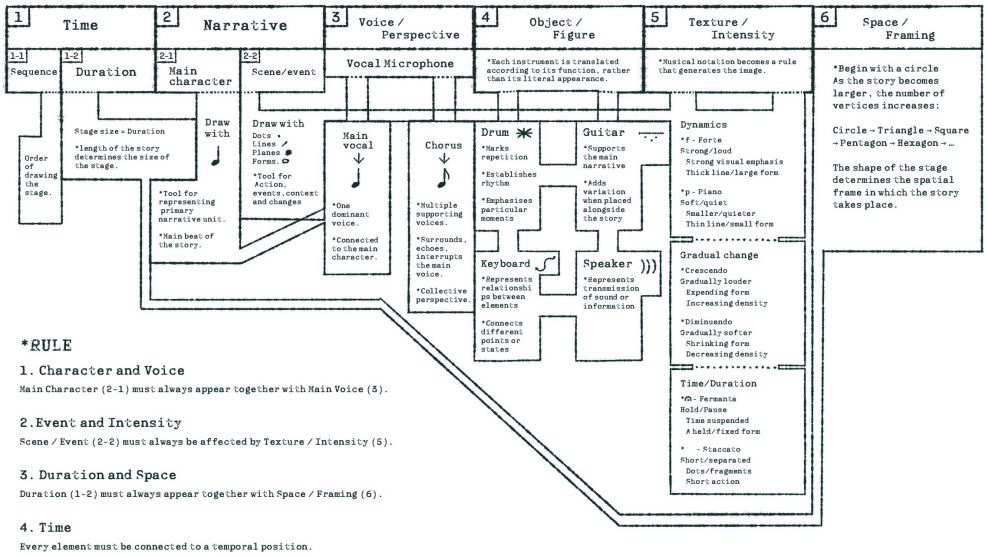


Fig. 2. Translating performance directing cue sheet as an illustration systen.

Minjeong An's artwork for HYUKOH's KoK initially seemed to realise my system-building ambitions. Its arrangement of figures, instruments and objects reminded me of my stage plans. I recognised my earlier approach: gathering information, constructing metaphors and assigning roles to elements within one image (An, 2026a). Yet visual resemblance alone could not explain whether our structures did the same work.

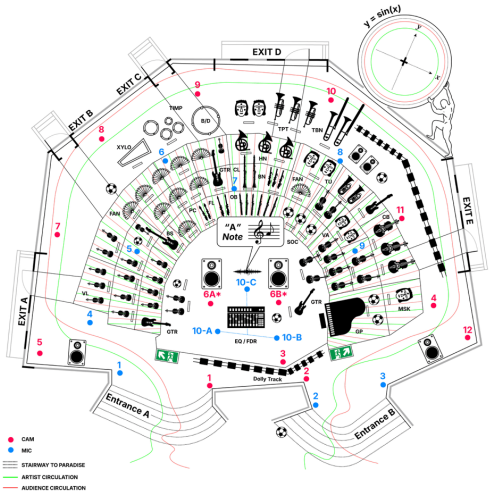


Fig. 3. HyoJeong An's artwork for HyukOh's album <KOK>.

Her Postpartum Care Center Detailed Diagram makes this question more precise. An records two weeks in a care centre following her second child's birth, when pandemic restrictions prevented visits from her eldest daughter. An emergency light represents her readiness to respond to the baby; a draining battery represents her daughter's separation from her, without the possibility of recharging (An, 2026). These devices connect institutional care with experiences that its routines cannot fully accommodate.

The battery makes an invisible relationship recognisable through the familiar logic of depletion and replenishment. Yet this clarity also narrows the relationship: longing appears as something that could be measured and restored by reconnecting a supply. What might this metaphor leave out? I read it as expressing the mother's sense of responsibility and absence, rather than providing a complete account of her daughter's experience. The diagram's apparent objectivity therefore carries a situated, personal perspective.

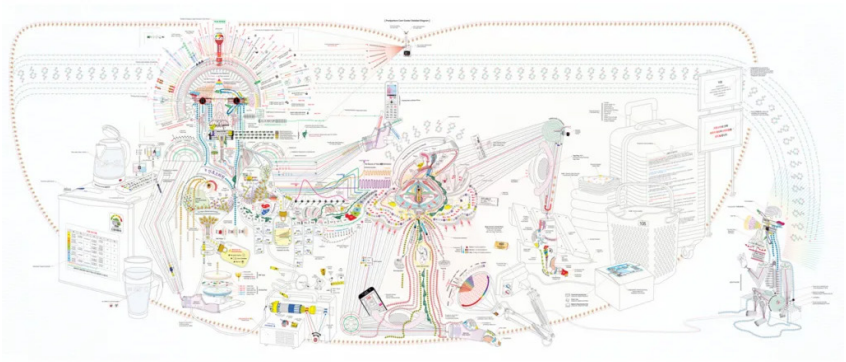


Fig. 4. Postpartum Care Center Detailed Diagram (2026)

The emergency light works differently. A device associated with safety also describes a state of constant alertness. It makes me question whether the systems intended to support recovery can also intensify demands on the person receiving care. The diagram's orderly appearance holds these conflicting experiences together. Its precision invites trust, while its improbable combinations interrupt a purely technical reading.

An explains that scientific imagery helps her give significance to overlooked emotions and relationships, even when the connections are not physically possible (Jung, n.d.). I read her diagram as borrowing scientific authority while exposing what measurement cannot adequately explain. Viewers must move between recognising a familiar symbol and reconsidering its meaning. The image may be materially fixed, but the reading it generates need not be. Calling it a finished product would overlook this activity.

This changes how I compare her diagram with my score. Diagram, model, score and system are not successive stages of reduction. Here, a diagram shows relationships, a model selects relationships to explore, and a score proposes actions. The working system would include makers, materials, instructions and exchanges. My cue sheet can serve several of these functions at once; calling it a score does not automatically make it collaborative.

The more useful distinction concerns what our symbols ask others to do. An's battery invites a viewer to interpret dependence. My forte asks a maker to act on an interpretation of intensity. Her choices organise an encounter with an image; mine organise decisions during production. Both involve translation and direction, but an instruction has consequences for someone else's material choices. My score must therefore be evaluated through what makers can do with it, not just what its notation communicates to me. There is also a difference in pace. An's diagram lets me revisit connections within one surface, moving between an initial impression and closer reading. My score would distribute decisions across time: a maker's response might only become meaningful when another responds. This could reveal dependence, but could also make the overall relationship harder to follow.

Why should forte become a thick line? An animator might express intensity through acceleration; a textile artist through stitch tension. An's precise metaphors give her experience specificity. Applying that same degree of prescription to collaborators could remove theirs. Yet leaving every cue undefined could make coordination difficult. The problem is deciding where precision supports a shared relationship and where it unnecessarily determines someone's expression.

I could retain a cue's relational function while opening its material interpretation. For example, makers might agree that one contribution becomes more intense in response to another, while deciding how that change appears in their media. A first trial would test whether those responses remain intelligible together. I would record where participants need clarification, where they reinterpret a cue and where the cue itself needs revision. In terms of second-order cybernetics, my criteria for judging their responses would also enter the feedback process (von Foerster, 1979).

An's work also helps me identify what this collaboration might investigate. Her symbols make a body's dependence on people, equipment and surroundings visible. My score could explore dependence through making: what changes when one contribution cannot develop independently of another? This provides a connection to my interest in environmental communication. I need a subject for which these relationships matter, rather than a theme that merely supplies different images.

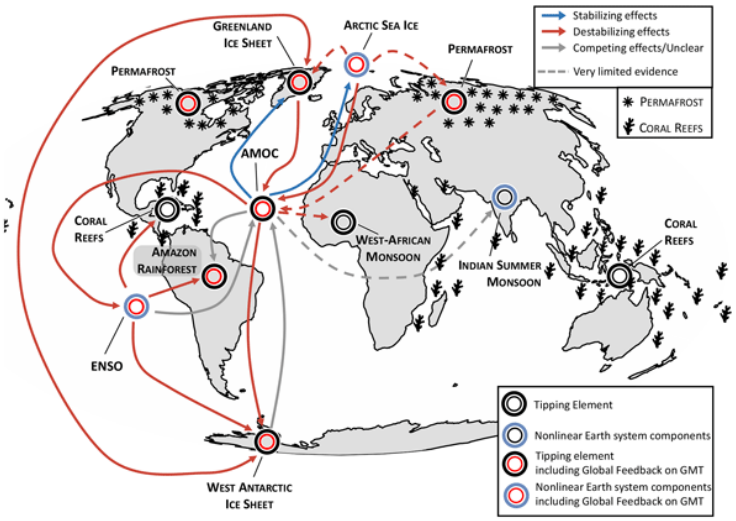


Fig. 4. Earth System tipping point diagram

Earth system tipping points offer such a test. They are thresholds beyond which change in part of a system becomes self-sustaining (Lenton et al., 2023). I imagine connected rooms representing selected environmental systems, with researched interactions determining which changes prompt responses elsewhere. Different media could communicate contrasting durations and forms of change. Their value would lie in what these differences reveal about relationships, rather than simply producing visual variety.

This also changes the responsibility carried by scientific language. An can use a battery to communicate longing without claiming an electrical mechanism. If I represent an environmental interaction, however, an invented connection could be mistaken for scientific evidence. Makers can negotiate its visual expression, but cannot establish its validity through agreement. The score must distinguish researched relationships from speculative choices and account for uncertainty and delay. An immediate response between rooms should not imply an immediate environmental process.

Through An's work, I have come to value both the specificity of an authored metaphor and the interpretive space it can create. My task is to carry that attention into a score whose instructions can themselves be questioned. I can coordinate a collaboration, but I cannot conduct the Earth. **My question is now: how can an illustration score coordinate makers across different media while allowing them to revise its terms and remain accountable to the relationships it represents?**

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