

Abstract

Socio-legal research must be based on stable and coherent ontological, epistemological and methodological foundations to prevent the analysis of data from creating paradoxical or incommensurable effects. This poster argues that Bruno Latour's rich thinking can help us to prepare the ground, by removing the traditional distinction between different 'frameworks' (philosophical, sociological, or methodological) that come to channel subsequent research by impoverishing it. His thinking takes the form of an **'infra-language'** that does not replace the object of study but accompanies its meanderings. Finally, this poster also aims to counter Latour's reduction in the socio-legal field to the sole reading of *The Making of Law*, which is therefore not addressed here.

'Irreductions' in *The Pasteurization of France* (1988)
We Have Never Been Modern (1993)
Pandora's Hope (1999)
Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory (2007)
What Is the Style of Matters of Concern? (2008)
On the Modern Cult of the Factish Gods (2010)
An Inquiry into Modes of Existence (2013)
Paris, Insisible City (2021)

UN-MODERNISING

Emptying dual metacategories

Modernity is a propensity to dichotomous thinking, applied to the whole world in a constant search for certainty.

| **Science/Nature vs Society/Culture** This leads to seeing 'social' life impotent against the threat of an incontestable (and therefore normative) nature, through an impoverished scientific reason.

| **Reality vs Inner mind** This implies the demarcation between rational and irrational and leads to accepting massive cognitive explanations in order to explain equally massive effects.

| **Subjects (humans) vs Objects (non-humans)** We live in a world of hybrids, quasi-objects and quasi-subjects. The subject courageously resisting objectivisation by Modern Science must be abandoned.

Getting rid of modern time and causality

Modern time is a sharpened arrow with two distinctive features: it has a direction that removes 'reality' for the past, as well as a goal, a target, towards progress. Un-modernised causality follows the events and does not precede them.

Making room for factishes

Modernity's religion of knowledge is the antifetishism, it is the belief in the belief of others. It leads to hermeticism between fact and representation. Instead, factishes mix them.

FLATTENING

Irreductionist philosophy

Nothing is, by itself, either reducible or irreducible to anything else. Nothing stands on its own, associations form along a continuum of resistance to various 'trials of strength.'

Actor-Network theory/sociology of associations

| **Unfolding 'matters of concern'** Starting from a magma of unqualified entities. | **Following the actants (H-NH)** Spotting the variously shaped agencies, whether human or not. | **Tracing a network** A very practical world-building enterprise that consists in connecting entities with other entities. | **Describing instead of explaining** Rearrange explanans and explanandum. The social has never explained anything, only a network 'accounts' for the provisional assemblage of agentic entities through which the 'social' (or the 'legal') pass.

Tools

Spot the different mediations/translations that links the actants such as goal translation, composition, folding of time and space or crossing the boundary between signs and things.

Flattening theory & power, tackling critique

Theories are not frames but panoramas/metrologies, attempts at totalising the world. Power is always the effect/result of the network, not the cause or an actant in itself.

EXISTENTIALISING

Enriching the picture

ANT accounts are devoid of values, every agency is counted as one. We have to bring back the weight the actors (humans or not) give to each other within the networks.

Prepositions [PRE]

To understand what is it to 'associate' scientifically, legally, technically, ... we have to spot an interpretive 'key' indicating the direction, the trajectory of the network.

Modes of existence (MOE)/ontological pluralism

Networks unearth beings that are ontologically open. They proceed towards existence via discontinuities we can spot. The conditions of success of this leap across discontinuity will shape a proper MOE and related felicity/infelicity conditions.

A pharmacopeia and a call to experiment

Latourian thinking offers both a way to experimentally discover new modes of existence when faced with new beings and practices, as well a list of provisionally shaped modes that can help 'colour' an ANT-based account in any field of research ([REL]igion, [ATT]achment, [POL]itics, [MOR]ality, etc.).

The **common index of falsity** to all three steps lies in [DC] or 'double click': impoverishing causality by erasing the intermediate steps and forgetting the interpretive key/preposition.

Keep in
touch!

- 1 Latour's fierce challenge to Modernity is the only way to dive into a complex field of theories and practices without being burdened by an endless checklist of 'qualifying' the data in 'facts' or 'representations'. Objectivity and reality stem from research, not the other way around. The Latourian 'un-modern view' is not only closer to reality, but also a **more comfortable and effective** way to conduct research with a clear view.
- 2 The ontological flatness of Latourian ANT remains, to this day, the only sociological approach which has managed to reconcile requirements often considered incompatible: the demand of richness and **experience-based** philosophy that is phenomenology, the attention to the kaleidoscopic **traces** of human activities that characterised the semiotic turn, and the pressing necessity to encompass sciences and **materiality** in a world that is continually filled with hybrids of humans and non-humans. Moreover, unfolded flat networks may be the unique serious way of **annihilating the impossibility of interdisciplinarity** and finally render all entities commensurable and describable.
- 3 The ontological pluralism of Latourian modes of existence provides us with the tools to enter the most hostile of all territories for a researcher, that are **values and beliefs**. The AIME explorer does not limit the list of settled existing beings but is given a way to access new ones into **regional ontologies**.

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